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A man's fate

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pt. 1 (chapter 1-6
p. 1-96)

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I.

A M A N ' S F A T E .

O N E

It seemed to us that we had been sitting since many hours in the hospital corridor, on the hard bench next to the Nurses' Station, anxiously looking towards the door leading to Chaim's room. At last we saw the door being opened. We saw the senior station doctor and his assistant leave the room. In their wake came the Head Nurse. She was followed by a Student Nurse wheeling the medicine cart. The Head Nurse and the two physicians turned into our direction.

Two weeks ago, when we had Chaim hospitalized, we agreed among ourselves, his nearest friends, that one of us was to be with him at least during the hours of the day. This morning, as far as I can remember, had been the first time since he had been hospitalized that all five of us had assembled at his bedside. For Rinat, who had spent the entire Friday morning with Chaim, had around noon alarmed us four other friends that Chaim had taken "a sudden turn for the worse", and that the Nurse had advised her to "inform the family".

Walking towards us, the Head Nurse looked into our direction and slowly but slightly nodded her head.

She, the bearded doctor and his assistant stood in front of us. Both the doctors wore kippas, I noticed. We stood up.

"He has passed away", the doctor said, with a tinge of feeling in his low voice. "I am sorry - but his heart had sustained far too much damage. It may console you that he had a peaceful end. Also throughout the last two weeks he did not suffer any discomfort. My sincere condolences. Please, contact the Administration Office for the necessary arrangements".

"Can we see him once more?", asked Carol.

"By all means", the doctor replied. "The Head Nurse will accompany you".

He signalled the Head Nurse who had gone to the Nurses' Station. She came back and we followed her into Chaim's single-bed room. The Head Nurse remained near the door. We approached the bed. The pink bedsheet had been drawn over Chaim's head. We saw his thin body outlined underneath the sheet. I lifted the sheet from his face. His face was flushed. His eyes were open, as if he was

contemplating the ceiling. His eyeballs trembled slightly. With both my index fingers I gently drew down his eyelids. He looked indeed at peace.

For a few minutes we stood silently around his bed. I do not know what the others were thinking during these minutes. I prayed inside me, that his soul may at last and finally have found the peace he had craved all his life.

I replaced the bedsheet over Chaim's face. We left the room through the door the Nurse had opened.

We descended the stairs to the Administration Offices.

There we had to wait for more than one hour until all the formalities had been taken care of. Again we had to spend the time seated on a hard bench. Each of us could relax now in his or her sorrows and memories. Rinat and Asher were crying into their handkerchiefs. Carol leaned her head on Avner's shoulder while tears were running down to her chin. Avner tried to hide his feelings behind the stony expression on his face. I stood up, and facing a window nearby, unsuccessfully attempted to control my tears.

We were justified in our sorrow. We had lost a good friend. Yes, Chaim had been a very good friend to each of us. He had been a very unusual personality. I cannot remember him ever making a demand of us - but he sensed whenever he could be helpful or useful to any of us. Instinctively he was helpful with the right words; and spontaneously useful with the most appropriate gesture. He was always ready with his wise counsel - whenever asked for his advice. We all had gained from his friendship. In some way or other the life - or better said the attitude to life - of each one of us had been greatly influenced by Chaim.

T W O

I had known Chaim since about ten years. Soon after Kate and I had taken up residence in Jerusalem, we had been invited to a Friday Evening Dinner in the house of an American family we had known long before we had immigrated into Israel. Besides us, the guests were made up of three couples and a single man. The latter, we learned - after we had greeted those of the guest we knew and had been introduced to those we did not know before - was a sculptor with the name of Chaim Rosenblatt. Kate and I tried to exchange some words with the sculptor while we stood around with our pre-dinner cocktails in our hands - but we were not successful. The tall, thin, grey-haired, balding, slightly bent man appeared dour, withdrawn, depressed. We noticed that none of the other guests was more successful. He seemed disinterested in maintaining a sustained conversation.

In due course - on the invitation of our hostess - we all sat down at the table. After our host had welcomed the Shabath with a Kiddush, and before dinner was served, he rose; took a few steps away; collected his three children - two daughters and son - around him; and, placing his hands on their heads, blessed them in the traditional Jewish way. This ceremony recalled in me some nostalgic memories - and I became aware of a certain sense of guilt. However, I could not for long indulge in these thoughts. While the other guests at the table had turned and watched with interest the father - the heads of his children leaning against his chest, murmur in a low voice some loving words in addition to the blessings - my attention was attracted by the man I have mentioned, Chaim Rosenblatt, who was seated opposite me. The sad expression into which his face had appeared fixed, had taken on an even deeper sadness. Even the furrows on his forehead and around his eyes appear to have deepened. It was more than sadness. I cannot remember ever having seen such a mixture of hopeless desperation; deep sadness; controlled pain on a person's face. I do not mean the tears glistening in his eyes, enlarged by the thick glasses of his spectacles. Nor do I mean the tightening of his lips. It was a total change of his face into a desperate, pained sorrowfulness.

After a few seconds the man's expression changed. There was now something like a firm determination added; a determined expression had hardened in his face. He straightened up in his chair. He looked towards the window. His lips were compressed. His opened and closed his fists.

I am afraid I must have been judged a bore by my neighbours at table; for I replied with a few short words whenever they tried to involve me in a conversation. All through the meal I kept watching, as discreetly as I could manage, the man seated opposite me. I cannot explain even now what had attracted my total attention. It would be wrong to say that I was fascinated or curious. If pressed for an explanation I might agree to say, that something in me vibrated along with the psychological upheaval I sensed in the man seated opposite me. He too hardly spoke to his neighbours at table. Mechanically he ate of the food he found on his plate. The determined look never left his face.

When the dinner was over and we had risen from the table, I tried again to start a conversation with Chaim Rosenblatt. I was determined not to be repulsed. However, it was less difficult - and certainly more interesting - than I had anticipated. But our conversation did not dissipate the feeling of worry, nor the sense of apprehension, about this man which had filled me all evening. I tried but could not explain to myself why I was reacting in this manner.

When the evening was over and we were about to leave the hospitable family, the explanation dawned on me that my attitude towards my new acquaintance - which had more than puzzled me - was due to my inner certainty, that the latter had decided to commit suicide. At that moment, and still to this day, I do not know what had induced me to form such an idea. But at that moment, when we stood on the threshold of the apartment, I knew within me that I should not let him remain alone with his thoughts; that I should not allow him, in his actual mood, to return home on his own. In a few words I explained to Kate, that after bringing her home I would have to leave again, because it was necessary that I spend some more time with Chaim Rosenblatt. Kate did not ask for any further explanation. She understood. Without the use of many words I had communicated my suspicion and fear to her.

"Mr. Rosenblatt", I then proposed to my new acquaintance. "I

was very interested in what you have told me about your view of the artist's place in modern society. I think we have much to tell each other. Would you mind if we continue our conversation now, this evening? We can do so in my house or in any other place of your choice?"

"First of all you must call me Chaim. Second, I would certainly not mind continuing our conversation. However, I prefer that we do so while taking a walk; or while seated on some bench anywhere but in a closed-in environment. The night, the temperature and the air are inviting such an arrangement".

We accompanied Kate home. For three hours Chaim and I walked along the streets of Jerusalem. When tired we sat on benches at bus stops or in parks. I sensed I had been justified in thinking that Chaim had been afraid of being alone that night - afraid of himself. After some initial hesitation Chaim conceded that my intuition had been right: that he had indeed planned to end his life that night. Having confessed this, he was willing to explain the reason, that is to say to tell me his life story. What was missing in the story which he told me that night and on other occasions, was later completed by Rinat and Asher, and by Carol and Avner.

Moshe Rosenblatt, Chaim's father, had been a Rabbi, the head of a Yeshiva, in Drohobycz, a small town in Poland. In the beginning of the war, soon after the German troops had invaded Poland, the Rabbi, along with most of the pupils in his Yeshiva, had been killed in one of the regularly occurring "actions" - as the willful killing excursions of the local SS-Obersturmfuehrer and his Ukrainian helpers were called.

Chaim was the oldest of four children - but not the one his father loved most. His father found Chaim not sufficiently dedicated to his studies in the Yeshiva. Chaim preferred to paint flowers on paper or wood to the study of the Scriptures. He liked to model animals in clay more than he liked to study the Talmud. He could carve wooden figures better than explain a midrash. Were it not for his mother's warm support of his artistic inclinations, Chaim would not have looked back with so much pride and pleasure to his youth. He described his mother as the most complete person, and the most perfect mother, he had ever known.

Like most other mothers of the unceasingly impoverished and

daily reduced Jewish community of his home town, his mother could maintain the steadily lowered economic level of her family with the assistance of relatives and friends. The small income Chaim occasionally earned with his work as a house painter and decorator in the houses of some of the no less destitute families in the stetl, was a great help to the family budget.

In spring of the year 1941, when Chaim was 15 years old, the Nazis organized their final "action" in Drohobycz and surroundings. All the Jews who had survived until then were packed into cattle waggons. They were told that they were going to be transported to a newly established settlement. When after a journey of over 48 hours, with many halts but without food or water, the train came again to a stop, those standing near the barbed-wire-covered window slit announced that they could read the name "Auschwitz" on the board facing the train.

But this time the wagon doors were at last opened. The captives faced rows of Ukrainian guards with dogs; of Nazi-soldiers with guns; and of SS-officers with whips.

With blows and kicks and shouts of "Raus ! Raus ! Schnell ! Schnell !" the arrivals were made to jump from the waggons and align in a wide, slowly forward moving column.

In due course Chaim's family - his mother and three siblings - reached the head of the column, that is to say the point where the group of SS-officers stood; and where their leader, the SS-Obersturmfuehrer, with a movement of his head sent aged people; sickly or weak looking people; all but the young and strong among the women; as well as all the children without regard to their age - to the right, and those fit for slave work to the left.

"How old are you ?", the SS-officer asked, pointing his whip at Chaim.

"I am nineteen years old !"

Chaim was a well developed and muscular youth, and could easily pass as a nineteen-years-old. To this day Chaim cannot understand what made him exaggerate his age.

Chaim was made to join a group of men who had been arraigned into the smaller, separate column to the left. After all the inmates of the "Transport" had been processed in this way, Chaim never saw his mother, his two sisters and his brother again. All the Jews

- Chaim's family included - who had been sent to the right, were at once 'exterminated'. It was truly a miracle that Chaim, fifteen years old at that time, survived. For it was at that time the Nazis' policy, that children, and adolescents below eighteen, were not allowed to survive. Of those above eighteen only the ones who appeared strong and fit were allowed to survive.

The column which had formed to the left of the selecting SS-Officer - made up of young and healthy appearing men - was ordered to move on. Nobody was allowed to retrieve the single suitcase or bundle they had been allowed to bring with them.

"Your luggage will follow in a truck", they were told.

Armed guards - mostly elderly men who were apparently no more fit for the battlefronts - led them; accompanied them; followed them; and drove them on with shouts and kicks which were made more effective by the gun barrels pushed into the backs of the prisoners.

After a 5-km march they reached their destiny: Monowitz or "Auschwitz-III", as a signboard at the heavily guarded entrance gate announced. Chaim and the other new-arrivals were sent to Monowitz to work in the Rubber Factory, which the well-known German concern I.G.Farben had erected in order to benefit from the cheap labour the Nazi-machine could provide - and regularly replenish - there. Due to the harsh, inhuman working conditions; and due to the insufficient food the prisoners received - the turn-over of the labour force was great. Chaim and the other new arrivals were to replace those who had perished in the last month or two.

Chaim was made to undress and put on a striped prison uniform. He was shown the place in the factory where he was going to work. He was allotted a couple of planks in a barrack on which to sleep. He was given a bowl for his food, and spoon with which to eat his food.

Chaim worked hard. He realized that his life depended on not giving his supervising Kapo; and the Kapo-supervising SA-Wachtmann; and the Wachtmann-supervising SS-man cause to be dissatisfied with his work.

The evening hours, after the camp inmates had passed the 'Appell' and had been confined to their barracks till the following morning, were often very difficult to live through. It was not easy for him to make friends with the older men who had nothing

to talk about except the fate which awaited them once their were classified as no more effective in their work - that is to say before they were classified as "Muselmänner" and sent to be killed. And he had even less in common with the younger men, whose conversation revolved around the women they had known and the gourmet meals they had eaten.

He found a solution for his loneliness. He belonged to the work-gang which handled the raw, still soft, rubber material before it was formed into tires and galvanized. Disregarding all the strict regulations, warnings and threats, he brought some of it 'home' to the barrack. In the course of a few weeks he had accumulated a small bucketful of the soft, rubbery stuff. Luckily he occupied a top bunker-bed not far from the small barack-window; and thus he had till late at night sufficient light to model the rubber mass into figures; into human and animal figures; into sets of human and animal figures. It took many hours over many evenings to sculpture one of these figures to his satisfaction - and after that he destroyed them and turned them back into an amorphous rubber mass, which he filled back into the small bucket he kept hidden next to his bunk.

One night, deeply immersed in the figure he was modelling, he failed to notice the SA-Man who had entered the barrack on a surprise inspection. Nor did the group of his 'bed neighbours' who stood around Chaim while he applied the last corrections to the figure he had molded from the rubbery mass.

"What is going on here ?". The rough voice of the German SA-man interrupted Chaim's whispered description of the figure he was delicately turning in his hands.

Chaim dropped the figure on the ground. He stood up. The others fled to their bunks.

"What is going on here ?", the Nazi-man repeated. "Pick up what you have dropped just now".

Chaim bent down. He lifted the figure from the floor and held it in his trembling hands.

The SA-man took the figure from Chaim's hands. It was the figure of a dog.

"What does this mean", the Nazi bellowed.

"This is Waldo, my spaniel, whom I could not bring with me and" - his voice turned to a whisper - "whom one of your men shot dead".

"Do you know what you have done, fellow ? You have stolen material from the factory. You have boycotted the war effort. Do you know that the penalty for this is death ? Do you understand what I said ?", the man looked with surprise at Chaim. He appeared to have expected Chaim to beg for mercy or to burst into tears.

With a resigned movement of his head Chaim acknowledged that he had understood.

"Show me the tools you have used for this sculpture ?"

Chaim showed him an iron nail; the broken-off handle of a soup spoon; a sharpened finger-long piece of wood.

"Where are the other figures you have made ?"

"There are no others. Whenever I complete a figure I have to destroy it so that I can use the material again".

The Nazi-man remained silent for a while. With a pensive expression on his face he kept looking at the figure in his hands.

"Come along with me", he ordered Chaim; and turning around he shouted into the barrack: "I do not want to hear a noise from you others, or see any of you even raise his head".

Chaim, as ordered, went through the barrack door, followed by the SA-man who carried the figure of the dog in his hands. They stood now in the moon-lit open area in which the prisoners had to assemble every morning and evening to be counted. "This will be most likely the last time I pass through here", Chaim thought. He was surprised that he could think calmly; that he was not afraid of dying.

"Follow me". The SA-man walked around the barrack and stopped in the dark passage between this one and the next barrack.

"I should report you to the Camp Commandant. You surely know this means the death sentence for you. But from the piece I have in my hands I can see that you are a talented artist. In peacetime I am employed in an art shop in Breslau and can, therefore, form an authoritative opinion. It would be a pity to finish you off at your age. What is your name ?"

"Chaim, Herr Wachtmeister. Chaim Rosenblatt".

"You are a Jew ? A Polish Jew ?"

"Jawohl, Herr Wachtmeister".

"How come you speak a passable german ?"

"I learned from my mother."

"Can you also work in wood or stone ?"

"In wood, yes. I have never worked in stone".

"Allright ! I shall think matters over, and decide later what I am going to do. Here take the figure back and repair the damage it has sustained by the fall. And do not destroy it. I shall fetch it tomorrow evening and have it vulkanized. I shall bring you also some wood and some simple tools. Carve such dog heads for me, but smaller ones; not bigger than my hand. This arrangement is strictly between the two of us. If this leaks out you will die a gruesome death. I see you have understood. I think we shall work well together. And never forget that you owe your life to my benevolence and to my artistic comprehension".

He carefully placed the dog's head into Chaim's hands. He gestured that Chaim return to the barrack. He watched until Chaim had safely entered the door.

Then he continued on his guard duty.

The following night the Wachtmann returned with a small block of wood, a carving knife, a chisel, and a bag containing a chunk of bread, a piece of sausage and an apple.

In the course of the following months a mutually beneficial collaboration developed between Chaim and the Nazi. Among the other inmates of the barrack he enjoyed now the reputation, that in case of need they could call on his patronage of the Nazi-man. These friends he had now acquired, formed a protective circle around Chaim when he worked on his carvings - and Chaim gladly shared with them the food the Nazi brought with him on his daily "private" visits to the barrack.

At the end of that month Chaim could not carry on with his work either in the factory or on his sculptures: while attending one of the vulkanizing ovens some hot stuff had escaped from there and had burned his right hand. His Nazi friend was that morning, fortunately, on guard duty nearby. He took charge of Chaim. He had him transported to the Infirmary, the 'Krankenbau', in the central camp, the 'Hauptlager'. The Nazi told the Surgeon-on-Duty, a Jew from Berlin, that Chaim was much favoured by the Commandant; that the latter expected Chaim to be given special treatment and attention.

Chaim was discharged after three weeks. His hand, though still looking somewhat raw, functioned normally. He was not returned to the Monowitz Factory, however. His Nazi friend had not been idle in the meantime. He appeared to have some influence; or at

least to have had contacts with circles in the camp who enjoyed the right kind of influence. Otherwise it was impossible to explain that Chaim was transferred to the "Kleider Kammer". This is the name of the barrack, where the clothing which the prisoners had been made to take off before they were gassed; and where the clothes and other articles they had brought along in the single suitcase they were allowed to carry with them - were collected, cleaned, repaired, and organized in accordance with the specific demands which arrived regularly from Germany, the "home front".

Chaim's Nazi protector in person acted as the guard who brought Chaim to the clothes depot. He handed him over to the Kapo-in-charge with the not too subtle hint - accompanied by a package of cigarettes - that Chaim enjoyed the special protection of the Camp Commandant. Although Chaim knew quite well that this was a lie; and although he also knew, that such a reputation was not likely to make him looked at with favour by the other prisoners - he decided to go along with the tale the Nazi guard had spun; and enjoy whatever advantages this unearned reputation might bring forth.

The following day his Nazi protector returned. He brought Chaim a set of tools - far better in quality and much better suited than the ones he had left behind - as well as a small lot of small wooden squares. And a small enamelled silver crucifix. And a bigger than usual bag with food: bread, a sausage, an apple, an egg and a piece of cheese.

"I want you to concentrate on carving wooden crucifixes exactly in size, form and shape as this metal one. They should be about ten centimeter long and not more. I shall come to see you once or twice a week and bring more wood and more food. I have squared your Kapo - he will not mind if you are hiding there behind the cloth bales. He will not say anything. And he will not see anything. This will allow you all the time you want. And never forget to whom you owe your life - and this relatively luxurious one here in addition"

"It was indeed a relatively luxurious life. From then on I was well fed", Chaim told me, "although I had to share the bag of food the Nazi brought along on every visit with the Kapo and the other prisoners in the barrack. But I could spend at least 4-5 hours every day in my 'workshop' on the upper store of the "Kleider Barracke". My working place, which I liked to call my "atelier", was made up of a small space left between walls made of the bales filled with clothes. For six months I worked diligently at the manufacture of the crucifixes". At this point in his tale I saw for the first time a faint smile linger on Chaim's face. "I produced about three of them every week. If ever you see a

wooden crucifix on which the Jesus figure has no navel; or where one of the big toes is unusually long, you may conclude that it had been produced in my small atelier".

T H R E E

For about half a year this arrangement functioned without a hitch. Although - once he was outside his barrack - he was exposed to the same harsh life as all the other prisoners, Chaim enjoyed a number of small privileges which - to a no small degree - made his life easier. This was in particular due to the additional food he received, part of which he regularly shared with the other prisoners in the clothing depot; and in part with those in the barrack who slept on the planks next to his. Chaim's open and easy comportment succeeded in due course to dissipate the initial mistrust which the visits of the Nazi guard; the extraordinary privileges the latter provided for Chaim; and the unusual forbearance of their Kapo - had aroused among the other prisoners.

"They soon came to realize, that they had no cause to suspect or to mistrust me. I can even say that most of them became my friends now", explained Chaim.

During his stay in the 'Krankenbau', the hospital barrack, he had also made a friend of Channa, one of the senior nurses. After his hand had healed and he was discharged, he brought her, and the doctor who had attended him, each a small carving of a dog. He had further reason to be grateful to the doctor and the nurse, when he was admitted again as a case of typhus.

"It was unavoidable that sooner or later you have to catch the typhus virus", the doctor told him on the day he was discharged. "Inevitably a place like yours - filled with old clothes and bales of hair cut off the prisoners' heads - will be swarming with lice. Fortunately, your's was only a mild infection".

The doctor had registered him as a "case of pneumonia". This saved him from being sent straight away to the gas chambers. For this was the fate of the typhus patients whenever a large number of these turned up in the camp hospital. And there were large numbers of typhus cases nearly all the time.

After his discharge he continued the routine which his illness had interrupted.

A year or so later a fundamental change occurred in Chaim's life: his SA-man failed to turn up. Chaim never found out what had happened to the man. According to some of the circulating rumours, the Nazi-man had built up a large number of illegal business. He had bought up - or confiscated - locally produced cigarettes and schnaps and had them shipped home to Germany. These - and not his business arrangement with Chaim - had been the illegal activities which had aroused the envy of his comrades. One has to conclude, that the SA-man had been able to hide the "art department" of his activities - which in the eyes of his comrades was most likely far more dangerous to the fatherland than the smuggling business - from his comrades and superiors. It was rumoured, that the Commandant had been well aware of what had been going on - for he regularly received a share of the quite large profits. However, the moment the private business arrangements of the SA-man were uncovered - the Commandant had to act. He had to show his displeasure. He had to discipline the culprit. He had the business-minded SA-man sent to the Russian Front. Chaim never heard from or about him again.

Chaim continued to carve. With the figurines he continued to produce he 'earned' some additional food; the necessary wood - and possibly also a degree of protection - from one or the other of the guards. In this way he could as well keep alive the goodwill of his Kapo; that of his immediate overseers; and that of his fellow prisoners.

"I stopped producing crucifixes", Chaim mentioned one day. "I began to specialize on a different produce: a small polished slab of wood with a bas-relief - that is a shallow elevated carving -- of a Hakenkreuz, a swastika. If you think I must have loathed myself for this, you are mistaken. If you think my fellow prisoners must have hated me for this, you are mistaken. Everything was alright and acceptable and permitted as long as it did not harm one's fellow prisoners; as long as it brought in an additional piece of bread; as long as it kept the cruelty of our guards at bay; and as long as it contributed to one's survival. Only now can I afford to loathe myself; and most of my fellow prisoners will most likely feel entitled now to hate me for what I have done.

"Do not think that all I have told you has to mean, that I had a relaxed, an easy life in the Camp. I got my full share of the Nazi German's and their ukrainian help-mates' hatred for the Jews they had in their sadistic grip. I was no less than all the other prisoners victimized by their unceasing effort to whipe out the last vestiges of our dignity. I too got my share of physical and verbal abuse. I too

was made to stand with the other prisoners for hours on the Appell-Platz in driving rain or freezing weather. I too was called out to witness with the other prisoners the punishment - abuses, beatings or hangings - given to some unfortunate who had been caught having done something which displeased the Nazi hounds. Once we were made to witness the hanging of a small boy. He was perhaps twelve years old. I do not know how he had come into the camp. I do not remember how he was caught. I have forgotten why he was hanged. I stood there and watched and cried and hated. It took the child, hanging by his neck from the gallows, about half an hour to die.

"It was hell - and for me more than you can ever imagine - as I witnessed nearly every day a repetition of what I knew my mother and siblings had experienced: people - Jews, Poles, Gypsies, Russians, but mostly Jews - driven with whips to the death house; made to undress; being asphyxiated in the gas chamber; their bodies extracted with hooks; their bodies burned to ashes in one of the ovens. Every time such a "Selection" had taken place - often one such happened every day, as I said - we had to sort into categories the coats and dresses; the trousers and shoes of those who had been killed. How many a time did I think I recognized the overcoat my mother had been wearing...."

Over the first weeks and months of our acquaintance - and over the years of our friendship - Chaim described to me in detail the cruelties and executions he had to witness; the ever new tortures the Nazis - and more even the Ukrainians - invented; the slow extinction of the last hope in the prisoners.

Over the months and years I heard from Chaim heart-wrenching descriptions of the sufferings of the prisoners - Jews, Russians, Poles, Gypsies and others - in the Auschwitz Camps. But I have no intention to add to the vast Holocaust literature already in existence - especially "second-hand" so - as I have a totally different purpose in what I am writing here. What I have described so far is only meant to serve as the introductory background. I leave it to the thousands of still surviving people with personal experiences - and better qualifications - to describe what one creature of God is capable to do to other creatures of God; to describe how much suffering and humiliation a human being can survive; and to describe what is left of and in a highly sensitive man who has survived years of such suffering. For this reason I shall not go into details. Nor do I mind if I am accused of not going sufficiently

into details. However, my intention is, that what I write in memory of Chaim should be a memorial to Chaim. I pray that I shall succeed.

F O U R

I have already mentioned the friendship which, notwithstanding Chaim's youthful age, had developed between him and Channa, the hospital nurse; and between him and one of the prisoner-doctors. In a certain sense the hospital personnel occupied - it would be ironic to use the word 'enjoyed' - a privileged position, although the Nazi-doctors and Nazi-nurses of the Camp Commando - especially those involved in the ongoing experiments on Jewish and other prisoners - were not far behind the common SS-Detachment and the other Nazi guards in the rude, crude and degrading way with which they treated the camp prisoners. Neither were they any different in the way they deprived their former colleagues of whatever human rights and dignity these latter thought they still could claim for themselves.

On one of his visits to the hospital Channa took an unusual long time in bandaging the hand Chaim had hurt with his carving tool. When she felt sure that nobody could overhear her words, she pleaded - without straightening up and in an urgent whisper:

"Chaim, I very badly need your help".

Chaim bent down as if watching what Channa was doing to his hand.

"Anything I can do, Channa, I am ready to do", he replied, hardly moving his lips.

Channa wanted Chaim to help her hide her two children, her son Avner aged five, and his sister Lena aged four.

Since three years Channa had been hiding the two children - for a time in her barrack, and lately inside the hospital. Three years ago all the Jews of her shtetl in Poland had been ordered to appear at the 'Umschlags-platz', the assembly point near the railway station. The family - made up Channa, her husband Yizhak, her widowed sister-in-law Rosa, and the two children Avner and Lena - was loaded with fifty other people into one of the cattle waggons waiting at the station. As had been the Nazis' routine at the beginning of the war, the deported Jews had been told that they were going to be sent to a new settlement somewhere in the south. By that time, however, information about the kind of camps to which the Jews were evacuated, had already filtered

back to Poland. Channa and Rosa knew already, that transports like theirs ended without fail in a forced-labour-camp. They were well aware of what all this entailed. It had also become known, that small children were not allowed to survive. During their long journey to Auschwitz they heard these rumours amply confirmed by the other men and women in their crowded waggon.

When the train reached the rampart of Auschwitz; and the prisoners were made to hurry from their waggons; and were ordered to form into a column - Channa saw gun-totting Nazi-guards lead away - without waiting for the order of the SS-Officers - all mothers carrying small children in their arms or leading such by their hands. Channa and her children were saved from an immediate death, because Channa was hiding Lena in the bundle hanging from her shoulder; and Rosa, the sister-in-law, had hidden Avner in the bundle she carried in her hand. All through the journey Channa had warned her children of the ordeal they were going to face. And with the help of a mild drug she had made sure, that they would not arouse any suspicion while in their uncomfortable hiding places at the time they had to pass the controls. When Channa and Rosa declared before the Nazi officers and doctors who were doing the "Selection", that they were professional nurses, they were made to join the group of survivors. Bearded Yizhaq, Channa's husband, who tried in vain to suppress his chronic cough, was pushed to the column destined to be marched to the gas chamber.

The women's wing of the Camp adopted Avner and Lena as their mascots. A hiding place was ready for the two children. It had been vacated by another waif - a girl of two years - whose mother too had succeeded to smuggle her into the camp without being caught by the guards. However, due to the mother's carelessness, one of the ukrainian Militiamen had seen the child playing outside the barrack. The mother and her baby were at once executed.

Channa and Rosa learned how to manage the children's security; how to care for the children's daily needs; how to feed and dress and wash the children with the scarce means available to them; how to hide the children day and night. They had learned to be ready at the hour when the regular inspection of the barracks took place. They had learned to be prepared whenever there was the danger, that the barracks might be suddenly entered by a Nazi guard passing by outside the usual hour of inspection. They had learned to be ready, whenever they thought that an unexpected visitor was approaching. And they had learned to be prepared whenever a 'selection' was on the way.

Also Avner and Lena had soon learned to adapt to the circumstances. They learned to react at once - and it did not take long before this became an instinct - to any apparent or even potential danger. They learned to feel safest in the darkness. They learned to be satisfied with the monotonous and minimal food they were given to eat. When, soon after their arrival, Channa was detailed as a nurse to the 'Krankenbau', the hospital barrack, Rosa took over most of the responsibility for the children. She fed and washed them. She talked to them. She taught them to read and write. In the course of time their hide-out on the top bunk in the outer corner of the barrack was no more sufficient and safe. The children had to hide in a hole which Rosa and the women had patiently and courageously dug for them underneath one of the corner beds in the back of the barrack. When for reasons nobody could explain to Channa, Rosa was pulled out from the rows of women arraigned outside the barracks at roll-call time and sent to her death, the other women in the barrack - in the absence of Channa - took over the children's care. They hid them during the inspections or whenever a camp guard came near the barrack.

After this had been going on for another year it proved more and more difficult and dangerous to hide the children in the barrack. In addition, many women objected to have a boy of Avner's age live in such intimate contact with them.

The Jewish doctor who was in charge of the camp hospital, and Channa's nurse colleagues agreed to hide the children inside the hospital.

A few nights later, when the Camp's sirens went off in warning of approaching allied airplanes, and all the lights had been turned off, Channa succeeded to smuggle the children from the barrack into the hospital.

"Was this not too risky?", I asked Chaim. "After all, there must have been a lot of traffic in that hospital; regular checks; a large staff; and a large turnover of patients..."

"This is true, but everybody of us had given up hope of ever getting out alive. Not only the decrepit people, the "Musulmans", were regularly gassed, but also apparently healthy people - and for no apparent reason. Somehow children were to us the only hope of a tomorrow.

Channa's children were hidden in a small room at the rear end of

the hospital barrack, behind the ward for typhus cases.

"The Nazi guards never risked entering that part of the hospital", Chaim explained.

The children spent their days and nights in a small walk-in cupboard behind a hardly used window-less storeroom at the end to barrack. They spent most of their time with the pencils and paper Channa could scrounge from the hospital. They endlessly copied the list of letters and words from the cardboard sheets with Channa could provide for them. They tirelessly recited the poems and rhymes Rosa had taught them; and to which Channa added others she in turn learned from the other women. With the small supply of wool Channa and Rosa had been able to gather, they had learned to knit. They knit, and again unraveled what they had knit, in order to knit again the simple pattern they knew to knit. In between they played with the primitive toys which some of Channa's friends in the barrack had made for them.

"And now I have to find another refuge for them", Channa whispered to Chaim while bandaging his hand. "They cannot remain in the hospital any longer. For I fear also my own end has come. The other day the Camp Commandant and his staff, accompanied by his dreadful Chief Medical Officer, inspected the hospital. They decided in our presence, that the typhus section will be closed; and that henceforth all typhus patients will have to be sent straight away "for special disposal". I fear, that our group of nurses - those of us who have looked after the typhus cases - will become redundant and will be eliminated too. You are my only hope, Chaim".

This was the first time Chaim learned of the existence of Channa's children. He did not hesitate. Without first enquiring from the Kapo or the other prisoners; without realizing the difficulties he was going to face; and without being aware that he was about to jeopardize his and many others' lives - he promised to organize in the Clothes' depot a hiding place for Channa's children.

"What about the Kapo and the other prisoners working in the Kleider Barracke?", I asked Chaim.

"He and the other prisoner-workers in the barrack did not object", he told me. "Neither did they agree. They acted and behaved as if they had neither seen or heard anything unusual. Their silent collaboration was eased by the bread, and occasionally some other rare food, which Channa could send or bring from the hospital. Even if the Kapo and the

other prisoners had changed their minds and denounced us, they too would in any case have been executed, along with me. They knew this".

Near a small window, and with the help of a stack of bales of clothes and bags of human hair, Chaim built a "hide-out" for the children. Here the children spent all the hours of the day. At night they could move around the darkened building; enjoy a simple wash facility; and use a primitive toilet which Chaim emptied every morning.

Avner and Lena never gave Chaim any cause to regret what he was doing for them. They had learned to be most inconspicuous and to avoid making even a minimum of noise. Chaim spent as much time with them as he could manage. He even tried to supervise their reading and writing. He taught them to play checkers with the simple figures and the primitive checker-board he had made for them in a hurry. Many a day, when he could not get additional food from other sources; or when he could not barter one of his figures for some bread - he had to go hungry.

The typhus section of the hospital was indeed closed; but Channa was not at the same time also eliminated - only about a year later. One day a posse of armed guards appeared in the hospital. They marched Channa and three other nurses, as well as three of the physicians, to the death house where they were gassed.

The steady supply of food Channa had organized ceased. Nobody dared to take the risk of being observed, caught - or reported.

But luck had intervened. The children could provide their own food. Indirectly, of course.

"I kept the children busy", Chaim told me concluding this episode. "All of a sudden I came to realize now the enormous responsibility Channa had laid upon my shoulders. But I was determined to see the day when the children could leave the Camp alive. This gave content to my life - which had become empty and not anymore worth caring for.

"I opened for them every few days one of the bales of clothing. I showed them how to go through the pockets; how to check the seams of every overcoat and jacket and trouser. Many of the Jewish prisoners had hidden money or jewelry in their clothes in the last hours before they had to present themselves at the dreaded 'Umschlagsplatz'. When they had hurriedly to undress in the anteroom of the gas chamber for the supposed 'cleaning shower', they had not had the chance - nor perhaps a reason - to remove what they had hidden. Indeed, the children's search

produced nearly every day some valuables: a ring or a watch here, some banknotes or a gold piece there. I made Avner hide their treasure in a safe place - hoping they might one day make use of it".

That day did in fact come.

F I V E

It was in October 1944. The personnel of the crematoria - made desperate by the evident hopelessness of their situation; and made reckless by the knowledge, that none of them would be allowed to remain alive to tell of the horrors they had witnessed - had formed a 'Sonder-Kommando' which one fateful day rose in revolt. It is not for me to describe what went on and how it ended. There exists already much literature about this rare episode of the Holocaust. Chaim had been vaguely aware of what was going to happen, for he had been asked whether he was willing to take part - and he had refused.

"I had to refuse, because I had taken upon myself the responsibility for Channa's children. They would not have survived without me". Chaim sounded apologetic. "However, it is not true that the people of the crematoria revolted in the hope of saving their lives or of getting away. They revolted because they despaired of ever getting free; because they saw no hope anymore; because they had reached the end of their endurance. I shared their pessimism, their prognosis, their desperation. Later on I cursed myself for having been a coward - but I realize now I had been unnecessarily harsh with myself".

Weighing the vague possibility that this revolt or any other opportunity might offer a chance for an escape, Chaim had kept a bundle with warm clothing ready for Avner and Lena. When the revolt began, he dressed the children in these clean and warm clothes, He told the children, how to get out of the Camp. He instructed the children in which direction to run. And he made the children hide on their bodies most of the easily disposable valuables they had collected from the clothes of the gassed people.

And what was more important: he gave them precise and clear instructions how to proceed once they were outside the gate.

"Run as fast and as long through the woods as your strength allows. Sooner or later you will get out of this area teeming with concentration camps and Nazis. You will sooner or later encounter a Polish peasant; be it in his house in his village; be it outside his village working in his field; be it attending his sheep on a pasture; be it when he is

walking along the highway; be it when he is riding in his horse cart along the road. Approach the Pole. Tell him that you have escaped from Warsaw or better Lvov. Ask him that he should help you get to Drohobycz where you want to join your family. Offer him one of your gold sovereigns in payment and promise him, that he will get two more from your friends in Drohobycz as soon as you reach there. There is no Pole alive, who will not forget his hatred for the Jews when he sees a gold coin in front of his eyes.

"When you reach Drohobycz - in this or whatever other way - contact a certain Andreas Brasky. He was my best friend. I am certain he has remained my friend. Tell him truthfully everything he wants to know. He will help you - at least he will hide you until better times come around.

"I made them memorize Andreas' address and where to find him".

As soon as it was dark, and while the shooting went on from all sides - the searchlights were off because the Sonder Commando had waited for an air raid to rise in revolt - Chaim took the children into the neighbourhood of the gate where he ran into a group of his own people. In a few words he explained the situation to their leader who promised to get the children through the gate into the open.

The revolt failed as was to be expected. Most of the rebels were killed as was expected. A number of others were caught and tortured to death, as was to be expected. Only few succeeded to escape - which had been hoped for but had not at all been expected.

In the Camp nothing was heard from or about the two children. It appears, that nobody even knew that they had escaped - neither those among the prisoners who discussed the revolt; nor the Nazi Command which had succeeded in suppressing the revolt. Those who had caught alive were executed. And in revenge the Nazis killed also an additional great number of the camp inmates who had not been directly involved. Chaim asked around and learned, that there were no children among those caught or executed. He learned also, that there had not been any enquiries about how two children could have lived inside the Camps without the Nazis' knowledge.

S I X

When the Camps were liberated by the Russians and the Americans, Chaim and other survivors landed in a Displaced Persons Camp somewhere in Germany. He requested the IRC, the International Red Cross, to search for the whereabouts of the children. Avner and Lena had indeed reached Drohobycz, he learned, and his friend Andreas had been very helpful. For a number of months he had kept the children hidden in the barn behind his house. They had entrusted him with all the valuables they still possessed - but in the end did not receive any of these back. All had been used up to protect the lives of the children, the Pole wanted to make the children believe. At war's end Andreas handed Avner and Lena over to the American troops who placed the children in one of the Displaced Persons' Camps in Germany. After some further search by the I.R.C., Chaim was able to learn of their whereabouts. He was allowed to join them in their D.P.Camp. However, the Red Cross Organization's prolonged search had failed to discover any surviving relatives of the children. They were offered the choice between an orphanage in the United States and their joining one of the clandestine transports to Palestine. They did not hesitate: they preferred to live among Jews in Palestine.

Their clandestine transport landed safely in Palestine. They were taken to a kibbutz at the shore of the Kinnereth Sea. There they were received with great affection and understanding. But they had great difficulty to adjust to the normal life conditions into which they had all of a sudden been transplanted. They could not overcome their fear their mistrust, and their defensive attitude. They had been too severely affected by the mentality of the hunted. They could not forget the many days of hunger, danger and despair. But at the same time they were ashamed of their envy - and no less were they also disturbed by their resentment - that the Kibbutz people, who had received them with so much kindness and love, had survived in relative peace and safety while their own families had perished. They knew their judgement was faulty; but they could not always control their thoughts - which started the vicious circle of resentment and shame. Above all, they could not free themselves of the indefinite feeling of guilt, of which they had first become aware when they had arrived in the relative safety of Andreas' barn; and which

had become greatly accentuated in the socially relaxed environment of the kibbutz. The Kibbutz psychologist tried to explain to the children - and from time to time also to some of the kibbutz members - that they had no reason to blame themselves for the death of their mother and aunt; that they could not blame themselves for having left Chaim behind - but he had not always, and if so not more than mildly, successful.

Also the other experts, which the Jewish Agency's medical and social services had made available for the many of the new arrivals who were burdened with such kind of problems, tried their utmost to turn the two children into socially adjusted individuals. The social workers, the nurses, the teachers had learned, that the best method to bring about a catharsis in the deeply traumatized Nazi victims - and innumerable thousands of these had reached Israel - was to help them bring into the open the painful experiences which crusted around their souls; to make them tell their life history; to make them verbalize their anguish; to make them relive their sorrows and pains.

Over the following years - to some degree at least - the various psycho-therapeutic approaches did show success. Lena grew into an apparently normal girl. She graduated with good marks from the High School. She studied to be an accountant. She found well-paid employment in the Haifa office of a South African business concern. A director of this concern, on one of his regular visits to the by then established and functioning State of Israel, fell in love with Lena. In due course they were married - and they settled in Capetown.

To Avner it proved far more difficult to overcome his tendency of concealing his sentiments and of calming the impact of his memories. It took some years, much effort and great will-power, until he could free himself of most of what the psychologist had explained to him was his self-hatred and his wrenching fear that he might lose his control and kill himself. He succeeded in the end, to get sufficiently adjusted to, and to function in, the life and environment of which he had become a part. He became less withdrawn. He taught himself to be less hostile and suspicious. But his aggressiveness - mainly whenever he got involved in conversations or discussions - gained very few friends. He studied architecture at the Technion in Haifa. He passed first in the final examinations and was offered a scholarship by the University of Los Angeles.

From Los Angeles he returned with an enriched professional knowledge and an enlarged experience. He returned from the States also with his

wife Carol. He had been attracted to her because she vaguely resembled his mother - and also because he was impressed by the above average intelligence; the balanced character; and the no-nonsense attitude to life of the blonde girl.

Carol had acquired a post-graduate degree in Ancient Philosophy and History. She was a fervent Zionist. Avner and Carol had fallen in love with each other and wanted to marry each other. Carol was willing to marry Chaim - provided he refused the offer of employment he had received from an architect's office in the U.S, and agreed to return to Israel instead.

On their return to Israel they settled in Jerusalem, because Carol had been offered a lectureship at the Hebrew University. Avner could find employment in the bureau of one of the leading local architects.

S E V E N

After this quick survey of the fate and development of the two children, I shall complete now - in no less quick a survey - Chaim's further fate and development. You will have to forego any lingering desire to learn more about Lena, Avner and Carol. You will in any case find yourself face to face with the latter two for a long time to come. You will also have to be satisfied with what you have read so far about Chaim's unusual fate. I shall not expand on my - all considered rather cursory - description of his life in the Concentration Camp. Neither do I think it will in any way be contributory, should I tell you more of what I know of his life with Manja in the States. This applies no less also to the very significant role Avner and Lena played in his life after he had come to Jerusalem. What you have read so far; and what is going to follow over the next few pages - I intend - as I have already mentioned before - to be only a kind of prelude to my description of a compact, a circumscribed group of people's sincere struggle for enlightenment. What I have written so far, I intend to be the background against which Chaim's unusual personality and remarkable character come into the right shape. And, finally, what you have heard so far, I intend to lead to the main part of my essay: that which I intend to be an invitation to the reader, to participate in the ever ongoing and never answered complex of questions about man's life, its purpose and outcome.

It did not take long - a month or two at the most - and Chaim did not feel as happy, as free and as relaxed in the long-wished-for freedom, as he had expected. It is true, he told himself, there was no more the unnerving fear; there was no more the constant threat; there were no more the never ceasing humiliations - which had corroded his adolescent years. But he could not overcome the increasing hopelessness; the grinding hatred; the crushing depression - which kept growing in him; which appeared to paralyze his will to plan his future; which left him without the energy to act. He placed the blame for his state of mind on the new environment in the Displaced Persons' Camp into which he had been plunged; on what he described to himself as a place made up of a miserable, grabbing, complaining and whining mass of human beings without

dignity and without self-respect. He felt repulsed - and at the same time ashamed and guilty that he felt repulsed - by the bent, broken, undernourished, prematurely aged survivors of the Concentration Camps who recited their woes; and exemplified their sufferings; and verbalized in their lamentations their guilt for having survived; for not having perished like their parents, their brothers and sisters, their children.

Chaim was happy when Avner and Lena left. He felt assured in the knowledge, that they were going to live in a saner and healthier world. He had never doubted; had no time even debated with himself - his responsibility for the welfare of the children whose life, whose very survival, Channa had entrusted to him. But he was greatly relieved when the responsibility for the future of the children was not going to be added to the sense of guilt which he felt relentlessly growing up within himself. He realized only too well, that he was becoming affected by the same irrational, unjustified, psychopathic guilt-feelings which were tormenting most of the inmates of the D.P.Camp - but he could not rationalize the guilt away.

Chaim lost all contact with the children after they had moved to Israel. He had reason to believe, he assured himself, that they were safe and well looked after. In moments of depression, however, he accused himself of cowardly believing this to be so.

His days - and he thought also his state of mental sanity - were only made tolerable by the presence, the arguments - and the love of Manja, the czecho-slovakian girl he had befriended in the D.P.Camp. Manja, three years older than Chaim, had been taken to Auschwitz along with her parents and two younger sisters. She was the only one of her family to survive. While in the Concentration Camp, Chaim had never known her or of her - Manja had only been a number among the many thousands of prisoners in the women's wing.

Manja did not want to go to Palestine. Nor did she want Chaim to go to Palestine. She wanted to go to the States. She wanted Chaim to go with her to the States. The 'Joint Distribution Committee', one of the American Relief Associations which were so untiringly active in the various Displaced Persons' Camps, discovered a relative of Maja's father in New York. This relative declared himself willing to support Manja and Chaim once they had arrived on American soil.

With the help of the 'Joint' Chaim and Manja finally arrived in

New York, where they found a warmer welcome than they had expected. When Chaim's artistic talent was discovered, he was provided with a suitable education. Manja studied Accountancy and Chaim graduated from the Arts College. Manja, who knew sufficient English already, landed a pleasant office job. Chaim and Manja got married and established their own small household. Their household was in due course increased by two sons.

Manja had greatly changed already in the first weeks after their arrival in New York. She had become a friendly and open person. She made easily friends and took part in the social activities of her circle. But Chaim had not changed. At least not much. He had remained a retiring, depressed, brooding individual. He avoided as much as he could all the activities which a normal social life imposes. His employers were very satisfied with, and impressed by, his work. His co-workers were very sympathetic and forthcoming. His wife and children were very understanding and supportive.

His earnings as a Commercial Artist, and that of Manja's as a Chartered Account, provided them with a good income. It offered them the opportunity to be accepted by, and to fit into their middle-class environment. The older of the sons is today a physician; the second an insurance agent. Both of them are financially doing well. Both are married and have built up their own families.

However, even the many years of such achievement had not turned Chaim into a happy person. He could not overcome the memory of what he had experienced, seen and heard while confined to the Concentration Camp. His pleasant family surroundings; his satisfying professional life; the sympathy of the people he and Manja met and befriended - had not that soothing influence on him which he and Manja had expected. He never ceased to be overwhelmed whenever he recalled and relived the enormity of the crime which the Nazis had committed. He felt crushed whenever he reviewed the dimension of the Holocaust. He could not defeat his self-tormenting urge to recall and to relive and to review his past. In an attempt to expiate the guilt he felt about the comfortable life he lived; about the many facilities he enjoyed; about the security he was granted now - he made his mind recall those who had not left the camp alive; he made himself relive the terrible pains and sufferings to which the inmates of the Concentration Camp had been exposed.

He was made to undergo group, and later individual psychotherapy. But he soon gave up attending the sessions. Over the years he got somehow

adjusted to his world - at least to a degree which permitted him to function socially. His frightening nightmares ceased. He learned to enjoy music, theater and his work.

"And still I could not forget", he told me. "I painted in my free time. In my art work I tried to restore my dignity. In the language of my art I wanted to tell my new world of the life through which I had passed and in which I had been dehumanized. This kept me on an even keel. But I hurt when people laughed. I resented when people were happy. I had to restrain myself from cursing and complaining when I saw people leave food on their plates".

Then came the day - some twelve years ago - when tragedy struck again.

Chaim had been in Washington to discuss in the Head Office of the Postal Authorities details of a project his advertising company had won, when he received a message to return home immediately. A fire had destroyed his house.

When he arrived home he learned, that Manja had perished in the fire.

Chaim lost all the inner support which had propped him up so far. He saw in the tragedy he had to face further evidence, that he continued to be persecuted by a hateful fate.

Chaim felt uprooted. Everything in his familiar surrounding mocked him, spoofed him, threatened him. He decided he had to get away so as not to embarrass his children and grandchildren by the threat of a possible mental breakdown - and also because he did not want himself to be further embarrassed by his caring family's efforts to soothe his unsoothable pains.

He decided he had to get away from all which had become familiar to him. He was mainly driven by the constricting fear that he might become insane should he remain in what seemed to him a continuation of his past. He decided he had to live in a place where nothing was familiar to him; where nothing reminded him of the happiness which had been his in the second stage of his life. He wanted to be in a new environment, where nothing and nobody could attempt to put a bandaid on his pain by making him participate in social activities. He wanted to live in a place, where his human dignity could not again be violated. He decided, he had to withdraw to a place where he had no responsibility towards anybody alive.

He came to the conclusion that only life in Israel would offer such an environment. He had the right to expect - he reasoned with himself and his sons - that this was the only country in the world where he would not have to meet disguised Nazis or their followers. He knew, that many victims of Nazidom had found a refuge in Israel; had been able to forget; had succeeded in building a new life.

His sons and their wives, notwithstanding their fear that Chaim's sanity was in jeopardy - or possibly for this reason really and in agreement with him that Israel might indeed restore his equilibrium - consented to Chaim's plan. They expected his absence to be of a limited time only and hoped, that Chaim would return - after a year or two at the most - rehabilitated and in balance again with his memories.

The sons promised to financially support their father while abroad.

Chaim made his family also promise, never to visit him in Israel unless he asked for their visit. He promised to write regularly at least once a month.

Next to Avner the only contact Chaim had in Israel were the Kovacs in Jerusalem. They were a distantly related family of whose existence Manja had learned from her New York relatives - they were cousins of a cousin of her father - with whom he and Manja had for some years kept up an exchange of Rosh Hashana Greeting Cards. On arrival in Israel Chaim contacted the Kovac family. On their advice he decided to settle down in Jerusalem. With the Kovacs's help - and with the money the Insurance Company had paid for his destroyed property in New York - he bought a 3-room apartment in the Katamons. After that he hardly ever visited the Kovacz family again - the husband was a minor official in one of the Ministries - but he formed a warm friendship with their daughter Rinat and her husband Asher. Perhaps it would be better to say: at first he reluctantly accepted and tolerated - and after a short while began to appreciate and enjoy - the attention and dedication, the love and sympathy which Rinat and Asher had developed for their adopted 'uncle'.

He renewed also his association with Avner. This was facilitated by the fact, that he and Carol too lived in Jerusalem. In the course of time - imperceptibly at first and soon accepted as inevitable - their former protective relationship was turning into a friendship. Although it was still as difficult as in the past for him to get along with Avner, it was apparent that Carol had a good, levelling, soothing influence on him.

In the course of time Asher and Rinat, Avner and Carol and I became very good friends.

Regularly and without fail Chaim wrote his monthly letter to his children in which he reported his continued wellbeing and acknowledged the receipt of the monthly cheque his children had sent him. It was a very generous allowance which permitted Chaim to live in comfort and without ever experiencing the kind of financial shortcomings which might have forced him to restrict his - from a financial point of view - rather careless way of life.

In the environment Chaim had created for himself, he felt at ease. He was unhindered by social obligations. He could now withdraw into the shell of the hermit-like life he had wanted to create for himself. He hardly ever accepted invitations to other people's houses. Our meeting at the dinner party I have described had indeed been a fortuitous event.

And he could at last enjoy what he wanted and could do best: express himself in his sculptures.

I do not think that with the exception of Rinat and Asher, and of Carol and Avner, anybody had ever been allowed to see his work. The door to his atelier was constantly kept locked. Whenever he allowed the cleaning woman to enter his atelier, she saw nothing but an empty working bench.

He only rarely accepted my invitation to a cup of tea or a meal in our house - and if so only under the condition that there were not to be other guests present. This misanthropic attitude did not change after I had become a widower and would have welcomed more of his company. I visited him frequently in his house - but he never allowed me to see his sculptures. I had to wait two years - in my impatience, as you will imagine, these months and years appeared to me an excessively long time - before Chaim appeared to be ready for me to see his work. After having once asked him to allow me into his studio - and he had answered with a short "No, I am sorry. I do not want anybody to see what I create" - I never repeated my request again. Whenever I rang the bell to his apartment - on many occasions I could conclude from the apron he wore and the clay on his hands that he had been working in his studio - he led me into his sitting-room. He did not return to his studio but washed up in the bathroom.

E I G H T

However, there came at last the morning when he showed the hoped for softening in his attitude.

"I know I have offended you by my refusal to allow you into my studio - but I know also that you will understand my reluctance. For by showing you my work I would be revealing to you my wounds; and I would be showing myself in all my nakedness. I just could not do this to myself - and to you. I know you now since quite a long time now and I could assure myself, that you possess that sensitivity and strength of character which will protect me and you from getting hurt. Come into my studio".

I have never been inside a sculptor's studio. I expected to see Chaim's studio look as I imagined the studio of a sculptor is supposed to look. However, except for a single clay sculpture; and apart from his tools on the end of one of the two benches lining two opposite walls; and besides a barrel filled with what must have been the clay he used for his work - the benches were empty and the walls bare.

He asked me to sit on a chair next to his, facing the foot-high sculpture. The sculpture represented a group of figures. They were a woman stretched out on the ground grasping with her hands one of the boots of a Nazi, an SS-man to be precise. The Nazi held an infant by its legs and was about to smash it against the wall which formed the background of the composition. It was not only the easily understood meaning Chaim had given to the scene which filled me with horror, but the perfectly executed, telling, hurting, tearing expressions of anguish in the woman's face; the expression of sadistic enjoyment in the features of the Nazi; and the expression of happiness in the face of the baby. I thought I could hear the mother's begging voice; the Nazi's barbaric shouting; and the baby's joyful laughter. It was a gruesome scene. I felt shaken.

For over an hour - and mostly with his eyes closed - Chaim sat in front of his masterpiece. He never uttered a word. Silently I sat at his side, looking with fascination at the sculpture, and - as if by osmosis - live through the scene which Chaim was reliving that moment.

Suddenly Chaim rose to his feet, sighed deeply - and with a few

strokes of a small wooden paddle transformed the sculptured composition into a heap of unformed clay.

"Chaim", I shouted, when I became aware of what he was doing. "No, Chaim ! You cannot do this ! You cannot destroy this beautiful piece of art".

"My dear", he said in a quiet voice, "I can and I do".

From that day onward Chaim appeared to have lost the last trace of reticence which had existed between us for so long. He returned to his studio whenever I interrupted him in his work - and asked me to watch while he was working on a sculpture. To be honest: I timed my visits at about a week's interval, in the supposition that he had in that interval produced one or two of his pieces. I suppose, that he in his turn kept his sculptures intact until I had occasion to see them.

The scene I have described above repeated itself regularly every time I visited his studio. We sat for a very long time facing the figures standing on his work bench. I could now - at once and without having to force myself - identify with what Chaim had wanted to express. Every time I could live with him through the scene he remembered and the pain he continued to feel. In most instances he had arranged the exquisite small figures he had molded in groups made up of suffering, crying, bleeding Jewish men and women and children - and laughing, screaming, hating Nazis facing their victims with their whips raised; or their guns pointed; or their pistols aimed; or their Alsatian dogs about to jump. Other compositions which filled me with horror were the emaciated naked men or women with empty eyes and dead faces. Or the carts filled with dead bodies drawn by prisoners with faces and postures appearing no less lifeless. Or the open crematorium into which a dead body was pushed. I watched not only the figurines but also Chaim's pained face; his closed eyes; his bitter mouth - and the tears rolling down his cheeks. And every time our hour or more of contemplation and meditation ended with Chaim smashing his creation back into a mess of soulless clay.

Thereafter we would sit for another stretch of time, and without talking much, opposite each other in his sittingroom. Or we would go out for a walk. More and more frequently I could induce Chaim to talk to me; to describe the scenes he had witnessed and which he remembered in his clay productions. I saw in his work the true meaning of catharsis by remembering; and of art as a language in recalling.

In the last few years of his life I never again heard him talk of

death as a welcome anesthetic; of death as an eraser of all memories. I have every reason to say, that my visits and our conversations acted as a balm; as a lightening conductor; as a therapy - as a drainage tube from the wounds of his memories. And my becoming his friend had possibly eased his resistance to accept, that some form of a purpose-filled but only apparently malign faith; that a determining fate - had guided and governed his existence; and had possibly exerted throughout his life this influence for a benevolent purpose.

In short, I hoped for an unlocking of that door, through which he would be led to the belief in his and his people's appointment.

One morning, about a month ago, Chaim's floor neighbour phoned: he had found Chaim lying unconscious outside his apartment door. He was still unconscious when I reached his place - and this saved me the effort it would otherwise have cost me to persuade him, that his admission to the hospital was imperative. I rushed him to the hospital. The emergency-room physician diagnosed a long-standing heart weakness which had brought on an arrhythmia which, in turn, had caused a blood clot to form and enter his brain. Chaim's left side was partially paralyzed.

He was hospitalized in the cardiac department. The doctors' prognosis was very guarded. I informed his other four friends. I did not inform his family in New York, for Chaim had on more than one occasion made me promise, that in case of a serious illness I was not to inform his two sons in the USA; and that, in case he should die, I should inform them of his death only after the funeral had taken place.

When a day later Chaim regained consciousness, he reminded me of my promise.

"I beg of you: do not cable or phone Irvine and James to inform them of my illness. I know I shall soon be free of this life and my memories. I am happy with this knowledge - and with the hope, that in case there is a God I shall be able to communicate my grievances directly to him. But promise me also: no eulogies or speeches at my funeral. In my will, which is deposited with Asher, I have bequeathed all my estate to the local orphanage".

The doctors' pessimism was justified. Chaim never recovered. Three days later he slipped into a coma. And to-day he died.

N I N E

At last our waiting outside the Administrative Office was over. We were given the death certificate. We were advised to contact the Ashkenazi Burial Society for the funeral arrangements. But, the official pointed out, whereas the Shabath had already begun, the Society's Office would re-open only the next evening after the Shabath had ended. The funeral could, therefore, not take place before Sunday.

We left the hospital. Throughout the period of waiting outside the Administration's office we had exchanged only a few occasional sentences. We went to our cars and left. Without any of us specifically making the proposal - and as if it was the only natural sequence - I told them I was driving ahead, and that we were going to congregate again in my apartment.

With a heavy heart I drove home. In silence we entered my apartment and sat down in my study. We were silent for quite a long time. Nobody felt the inclination nor the need to talk. Rinat was crying into her handkerchief. Carol too was crying with her forehead leaning on her folded hands. Asher's eyes were brimming with tears. Aver stood at the window, his face a rigid mask, making a visible effort to hide his emotions.

None of us felt hungry although we had missed our luncheon. Rinat and Carol offered to prepare a meal from what they would find in my refrigerator.

We agreed and when we sat down at the dining table we discovered that we were hungry after all; and that the food - notwithstanding our depressed mood - tasted good.

The meal relaxed us into talking about Chaim. Each one of us had his own recollection of what Chaim had once said about his concept of life and society. But nobody could relate anything about his past in the Concentration Camp - except for what Avner had told them - for Chaim had never spoken to them about his past. I did not feel empowered to tell the four friends of what Chaim had over the years confided in me.

T E N

I had first met Rinat and her husband Asher, Carol and her husband Avner in Chaim's house; and whenever thereafter I saw them in the early stage of our acquaintance, it was mostly also in the company of Chaim. Over the years the friendship, sympathy and care we five felt for that unusual man had turned me too into their friend. We met often since then; but it had been rare for us to meet by ourselves, that is to say without Chaim being with us. On that evening we met in my apartment, Chaim was not with us - at least not in person, not bodily.

We all had since long realized and accepted, that the relationship which bound the four friends to Chaim was different from the friendship which had grown up between Chaim and myself. To them he was a father figure. To him they could entrust their worries and hopes. To him they could turn for advice. In him they saw a man who had suffered on their behalf. He represented to them the ongoing Jewish history. He had given a true significance to what it means to live in a Jewish homeland. They felt called upon to soothe Chaim's pains; to calm the turmoil in his mind; to comfort his bruised soul. And although they knew well, that the effect of what they could do to him was limited; that his pain would never subside; that his memories would never vanish - they felt fully compensated by the appreciation he showed - in gestures or certain deeds, but never in words - for the love he knew they felt for him.

"You may think we are selfless in what we do for Chaim. I can assure you, that to a very great degree we benefit from this friendship too, if not more", Rinat told me one day, when I expressed my admiration for their selfless dedication to Chaim. Asher was present and he gestured that he agreed with every one of Rinat's sentences. "We have realized, that by knowing him we ourselves have become better human beings. We have also learned how to face, without getting hurt too much, a difficult and often hostile world. And finally, we have through Chaim's sufferings become truly aware how fortunate we have been in our lives. We have learned to appreciate the security which the existence of Israel, our Jewish state, grants us and indirectly to all

Jews who live abroad. And above all we feel blessed for having this opportunity, to compensate for our advantageous life by selflessly offering help and friendship to a wounded man; and to receive in return what we are sure is his sincere and selfless love".

Rinat is a plump, middle-aged middle-sized, good-humoured brunette. Not only her brown eyes behind the glasses; and not only also every part of her smooth-skinned rosy-cheeked face smile when she talks to her friends - but also her very body posture expresses goodwill and sympathy. Rinat's soft round face is ready to laugh whenever the opportunity arises; and her eyes are ready to shed tears whenever she is moved or hurt by things she sees, hears or feels. Her uncomplicated character has been formed; and her optimistic attitude to fellow humans developed - due to her having grown up surrounded by a loving family.

At the age of ten she had immigrated with her parents from Holland. She studied biology, became a high-school-teacher and is now the Head-mistress of her school. She is, as I mentioned already, distantly related to Chaim. This had been the cause of Rinat's meeting Chaim - but it was not the reason for their continued association. It was sympathy, friendship and a kind of filial love which had formed her tie with Chaim.

As a young student she had fallen in love with Asher Yizhaqi, a young lecturer in the Law Faculty, the scion of a sephardi family settled since many generation in Jerusalem. Asher has since long given up his academic career in favour of an appointment as a well-paid legal counselor in an insurance company. Non-descript, slightly built, rapidly balding, short-sighted Asher, with an apparently fixed smile around his lips, is a quiet man. He is a concerned, curious but somehow uncertain appearing man, who shares more often than not Rinat's opinions and decisions. His appearance belies the fact that he is an intelligent man whose interests outside his work sphere are concentrated mainly on politics. Asher and Rinat have two children. These two teenagers are very intelligent but rather opiniated and uninhibited. However, they have otherwise been well brought up by their parents.

I have already described Avner's development into an architect. I have already mentioned that Carol had studied Ancient Philosophy and History; and that both had finally settled in Jerusalem.

Carol is a mature, intelligent and reserved person. She is one of the tall, good-looking, natural-blond types one encounters not rarely among Jews. She looks younger than her actual age of "forty

plus". She lectures Ancient History and Greek Philosophy at the University. She has a few well received publications to her credit - but I must confess I have so far not have not looked for an occasion to read them myself. I do admire Carol, not only for her intelligence but also for the way she makes Avner fit into civilized human society.

Avner is today greatly handicaped by his arthritis. It forces him to walk with the help of a cane. His stiff joints make him often walk and move with great pain. I have reason to suppose, that Carol shares my impression of Avner overdoing his limping gait; and of exaggerating the restriction of his movements. Avner has since long left most of the work to his partners. However, the sharpness of his mind has not been affected by his physical ailments; nor by the plethora of pills he swallows. On the contrary: I will not hesitate to call him one of the most intelligent and sharply reasoning people I have ever met. Avner is a very organized, well-read man. But he is also a cynical, aggressive man who never misses an opportunity to indulge in arduous argumentation. He is wont to become rather objectionable whenever he can argue about religious matters. Both Carol and Avner regret that they have no children.

When I first met Rinat and Asher in Chaim's place, I entered with them into an hours lasting discussion about some religious legislation or other which had that day been passed by the Knesseth. I was more than surprised - I may say I was disturbed - by the total negation of Judaism as a religion which was revealed in their talk.

This discussion had, as far as I remember, been initiated by Asher - if not, it was certainly sustained and given a very hostile colouration by Avner - who along with his wife Carol, had that evening also come to visit Chaim; and who had eagerly - and aggressively - joined our discussion.

E L E V E N

I am one of those - in Israel not very common - individuals who avoids making speeches, and especially so when the time, the environment and the occasion are inappropriate. But on this Friday evening, the evening we had convened in my apartment after we had left Chaim's body in the hospital morgue, I decided it was an exceptional, an appropriate time for me to say a few appropriate words, because I did not want to see this coming-together of my friends turn into a wailing forum.

I placed before each a small tumber half-filled with brandy. I raised my glass.

"L'Chaim friends".

"L'Chaim", they repeated raising their glasses.

"My L'Chaim does not mean only a toast 'To Life' but also one to Chaim's memory. We have lost a good friend. May his soul find at last that peace which his life-long suffering has earned him. We should not have any doubt that Chaim wanted to die - but the thought should make us happy, that he did not take his own life as he had contemplated to do when he came to Israel. I think our friendship, your love and dedication, has made him enjoy the years he has lived in Jerusalem".

We emptied our glasses.

"Let me first of all clear away the unavoidable technical problems which have to be settled", I continued. "I shall contact the Chevra Kadisha, the official funeral society, tomorrow evening after Shabath has ended, and settle with them the arrangements for the funeral".

"Let me do this", offered Asher. "I am better qualified to deal with this matter".

"Thank you, Asher. I welcome your offer. As soon as I hear from you at what time the funeral will take place, I shall insert a short notice in one or two newspapers to inform his circle of acquaintances of his death and of the time of the funeral. Otherwise there is very little else for us to do at this stage".

"Have we not to notify by cable or phone his sons in the US of their father's death? And have we not to ask for the postponment of the funeral until they have arrived?" Carol was clearly upset that we had not thought of this duty.

"I have not been amiss, Carol", I assured her. "Chaim has more

than once requested me to inform his family in the US of his eventual death only after the funeral had taken place".

"He made the same request to Asher and me", Rinat confirmed.

"I shall phone - and also write - to his two sons as soon as we have laid Chaim to rest".

"Let me add that there will be no problem with his estate", Asher informed us. "He has made a valid will - it is deposited in my Office - in which he leaves all his property to the Minister of the Interior to be distributed exclusively among the orphanages of Jerusalem".

"But you have overlooked one matter which is a rather awkward problem which we have to face", Avner objected. "Has Chaim made any arrangements for the kind of funeral he wants ? Or to be precise: has he ever mentioned to you, as he has to me, that he does not want a religious funeral; that he does not want a ceremony with a rabbi chanting prayers over his grave ? You must have been aware that Chaim was an atheist. He would certainly not have agreed to anything of this kind. And as I am on this subject, allow me to mention, that I was surprised to hear you talk about his soul finding rest at last and so on. Had Chaim heard you, he would have laughed about such superstition..."

"I did ask Chaim. I can assure you he would not have laughed. Chaim and I did discuss these issues more than once. Chaim was not an atheist. Of this too I can assure you. A man who fights his God; a man who argues with his God; a man who blames his God - is not an atheist. Such a man is firmly anchored in his belief in God. In his faith. In his Jewish faith".

"Forgive me if I doubt this". Avner sounded aggressive as usual. "Chaim gave me the impression, that he had no religion; that he had no religious faith. He certainly was not affiliated to any synagogue-based community. He never visited a synagogue. He did not fast and so on. Had he been a believer, his religiosity would have manifested itself in some way or other".

"Has anybody of you ever discussed this aspect with Chaim ?, I asked the two men and women.

All conceded that they had never talked to Chaim about his attitude to his religion; to his Jewishness; to religious belief in general.

"But I had repeated occasion to talk to him about his unstilled anger; about his hurting bitterness - which could not make him give up his revolt against God", I told them.

"It appears to me", Avner addressed me directly, "that you are one of those who belong to the fraternity of religious men; to the believers in God; to the believers in man's soul".

"Indeed I do, Avner. But this is neither the time nor the occasion for us to discuss this issue. I will greatly welcome any future opportunity to do so".

"Even if you do not want to discuss the issue now", Avner insisted, "we cannot simply drop the matter while we are about to discuss Chaim's funeral arrangements. In my lifetime in Israel I have had to attend many funerals - and as the result I know what I am talking about. In the Sanhedriya, the Municipal Funeral Parlour, the bearded men of the Chevra Kadisha will murmur their prayers. One of them will say Kadish. Everything will be rushed, all will be in a hurry. There will be nothing you can call a solemn atmosphere. There will be none of that dignity which even I, an atheist, demand on such an occasion. The same will happen at the graveside, where somebody among the acquaintances may even feel the urge to make a speech".

"Chaim told me in clear words that he does not want any religious ceremony nor eulogy when he dies and is buried", I countered, "and I shall see to it that his wishes are honoured".

"He told Rinat and me the same", added Asher.

"There you see ! I was right", triumphed Avner.

"But still ! We cannot have him buried without some evidence at least of our sorrow; without at least some solemnity; without at least some dignity !", Rinat cried. "We cannot rush him through all the usual stages of a funeral as if he were an unknown vagabond; or as if he was a criminal !"

For a while nobody knew how to react to her outcry.

After a while I took the word again.

"I have an idea how we can solve this impasse. I regularly attend a synagogue here in Jerusalem. It is a reformed synagogue, liberal in every sense of the word. I wish you would one day attend a service, Avner. I am sure you will come out softened and less antagonistic. But we shall leave such an eventuality to a later discussion. I propose, I shall ask the rabbi of this synagogue, a learned professor of theology - he immigrated years ago from America - to take on what you may call the ceremonial-religious part of the funeral. I shall ask him to omit all unnecessary ritualistics and all speeches. I feel he will understand and agree".

"This is a very good idea. I am certain Chaim would have agreed to this arrangement", Carol said in a whisper.

"When can you be sure of the Rabbi's participation", asked Asher.

"I shall as usual attend my synagogue tomorrow morning, and shall

look for an opportunity to talk to the Rabbi after the service".

"Could you also tell your Rabbi", Carol took the word, "how disturbed we are about the issue of religion in general; how uncertain we ourselves are with respect to our Jewishness? And can you ask your Rabbi also, if he could find the time to talk to us after the funeral or whenever it is opportune to him? Can you request him to help us disentangle our complexes about religion in general; and the personal ones, which have arisen after Chaim's death in particular?"

"...of which I have become aware so much today", added Rinat.

"And whether he could teach us the essentials of religion in general"?, continued Carol. "We four have been brought up without any Jewish education. I may say, we have specifically been influenced to see in Judaism an antiquated institution made up mostly of superstitions. I cannot explain, why so far I have never felt the urge to correct this intellectual deficit. I am even willing to call it now a spiritual deficit. I cannot explain in words, why I feel like this today; why I am faced now with the need to examine the foundations on which my Weltanschauung has rested until now".

"I shall do as you ask me, Carol. I shall go even further and ask the Rabbi to sweep a wider horizon in his talk, as I myself am in great need of having my own religious belief unknotted. Or, let me say, to have my personal belief system checked, analyzed, criticized, vetted".

T W E L V E

The following morning, after the Shabath service in the synagogue had ended with a communal kiddush, I approached the Rabbi,

"Can I have a word with you, Rabbi ?"

"Yes, do. 'Ask and you will be answered' as the Scriptures say".

"I am afraid it will take longer than what I can ask and you can answer 'while standing on one leg', as Hillel said".

"Come along then".

We went to his room. He offered me a seat. And after taking off his robe; and after washing his hands in the adjoining bathroom - he sat down opposite me.

"What can I do for you ?"

I explained to him our request that he give Chaim's funeral some form of content and dignity.

"Has he ever attended our prayer services ?"

I explained why Chaim had never attended his or any other prayer service. I told him about Chaim; about his past; about his character; about his rage against God.

The Rabbi listened with concentrated attention. When I had finished my tale, the Rabbi nodded his head slowly and repeatedly.

"I shall feel honoured to accompany your poor friend on his last journey. I shall not make a speech nor eulogize him otherwise. I shall only say the Kaddish".

"There is one more request, Rabbi, which in fact arises of what I have just now enlarged upon. My four friends and I have formed a very compact group around Charles. It has been his personality, which has created in us that current of love and respect which has bound us to him. The basis on which my friends' views of life and death; of faith and philosophy - had rested so far, has become shaky. They cannot find a way to visualize the frame into which to fit their spiritual, their true relationship with the late Chaim. I am afraid they will be facing an alarming barrage of inner arguments; of upsetting uncertainties. They cannot count on a compensatory source; on the benefit of faith; or on the escape offered by a firmly anchored philosophy. They are totally without religion; partly so because they have grown up in an environment which did not care for our religion;

partly because they have intellectually revolted against whatever form of Jewishness - and all it stands for - which may have come their way. I myself - I must confess, though without a sense of guilt or shame - had for a substantial part of my life distantiated myself from all which approaches religion - until I found my way back. I found my way back with the help of a climbing gear I have manufactured myself; and which I found strong and safe enough to help me climb up again from the depth of my disbelief".

"You have succeeded in arousing my curiosity, my friend. I would like to hear more about it".

"I have a different proposal to make, Rabbi. My friends are at a loss. They feel insecure. Their former world does not satisfy them anymore. I feel that they are foundering. Could you talk to them? Could you answer whatever questions we may have? Could you guide us out of the labyrinth in which ignorance, misinformation and wrong interpretations has led them so far - and of which I myself have not entirely freed myself?"

"I shall gladly do all which is in my power to do. After all this is what a Rabbi exists for".

"Could we meet you here or elsewhere after the funeral?"

"As soon as I know the exact time of the funeral we can make the necessary arrangements when we can meet. In any case I prefer we meet here in my study".

"This will certainly suit all of us".

"To be truly effective in the sense you expect me to be, I shall have to know more about you and your friends. Tell me of their background, their interests, their intellectual horizon".

I described my four friends along the lines I have pursued to introduce them in a previous chapter. The Rabbi seemed to be interested in, and intrigued by, the human material he was going to face.

"It seems to me, from what you told me, that I shall have an easy time to make such people understand what I have to say".

"I must warn you, however, that one of them at least is an outspoken heretic".

The Rabbi smiled.

"To tell you the truth, I prefer to discuss religious matters with a heretic, as such an individual has reached his views on the basis of a thorough intellectual exploration. Now you will have to tell me, perhaps in somewhat greater detail, about yourself. I must confess, I know very little about you, although since a year or more you are regularly attending my prayer services".

"My life story is rather complex. Allow me to compact it into a few short sentences. Both my parents originate from small stetls of Poland. Both had a rigid orthodox-hassidic background. My brothers and I received a typical orthodox education - which had the effect that we turned areligious. In my later life I became interested in the religious beliefs of the East. I studied Hinduism and Buddhism - and this made me aware of the vacuum which I had allowed to exist and persist in my knowledge of Judaism. When my wife and I came to Israel, I dedicated much time to the study of Judaism. We looked for a place within organized Judaism where we could anchor. In the course of over ten years we tried a strictly orthodox environment; and after that a less strict one. We became members of one of the conservative synagogues. We changed to one of the Reconstructionist Movement. And finally we landed in a liberal-progressive-reformist one. Nowhere did we feel at home. None of the synagogues provided us with that inner strength; with that certainty and fulfillment which we had expected. In none of these environments have our religious beliefs been turned into a strong and true faith. In your synagogue we have begun to feel at home, because here we find the atmosphere which permits us to communicate with the Sublime we know is above and around - and within ourselves. The faith I had built within me - and which I was allowed to fortify and to concrete - has helped me overcome the newly forming vacuum which the death of my wife had created in me".

I stopped talking. Also the Rabbi remained silent.

"This is a short survey of my religious curriculum vitae, Rabbi", I concluded.

We agreed, that I inform him in the evening of the time set for the funeral.

Returned home I phoned Asher and Avner to tell them that the Rabbi had agreed to attend the funeral; that he had agreed to talk to us about whatever we chose to talk about; that he had agreed to our airing our spiritual problems in his presence.

T H I R T E E N

Late in the evening I learned from Asher that the funeral was going to take place the next day, Sunday, at 12 noon. We agreed to meet shortly before that hour at the Sanhedrya. I informed the Rabbi accordingly.

When I arrived a quarter of an hour before noon my four friends were already waiting. Also the Rabbi had already arrived. I introduced my friends to the tall, friendly, softly speaking, clean shaven man. I noticed with pleasure, that his simply worded expressions of sympathy and his dignified manners had gained the immediate respect and confidence of my friends. I noticed also with pleasure, that a considerable number of Chaim's neighbours, colleagues from the art school, and some other casual acquaintances had come to pay their last respects.

The body, placed on a bier, enveloped in a white sheet and covered by a talith, was carried in by the officials of the Chevra Kadisha - the Official Funeral Organization, and placed on the stone platform in the centre of the hall. A group of bearded rabbis of the Hevra Kadisha recited the appropriate prayers and psalms. At one stage of the appropriate prayers, one of the officiating rabbis approached our group and asked, whether anyone of us wanted to "eulogize the deceased". When I shook my head, he asked for one of us to say the Kaddish.

Our Rabbi stepped forward and recited the Kaddish.

This part of the ceremony completed "the friends of the deceased" were asked to carry the body to the hearse which was waiting outside the funeral hall. Our Rabbi, Avner, Asher and I took hold of the four ends of the bier. Four other men gripped the other handles. We carried the bier down the slope and into the motorized hearse. I was invited by the Head Rabbi of the Hevra Kadisha to sit with them inside the hearse.

The others followed in their cars.

We arrived at the cemetery at the outskirts of Jerusalem. I was thinking to myself, how much the environment and the weather harmonized with my mood. It was a somewhat chilly autumn day. The sky was overcast and only occasionally could the sun break through the layer of cumulus clouds. I looked over the sea of graves covered with slabs of brilliant white stone. I looked at the adjoining valley and the surrounding hills.

I looked at the well kept roads. I admired the rows of trees lining the roads. I appreciated that there were no flowering shrubs to interrupt the somberness of the cemetery. "Chaim would have appreciated his new surroundings", I mused. "Such a gray autumn is the appropriate atmosphere for a final farewell. And such a place, aesthetic in its simplicity, is the best environment and location for my burial", I am certain he would have told me.

We were directed to the grave which had been readied for Chaim in a new plot of the nearly completely filled cemetery. No sooner had we assembled around the open grave, than Chaim's body was carried in by the officials of the Hevra Kadisha - and immediately lowered into the grave, received by one of the gravediggers who stood inside the grave. At once the cemetery attendants started to fill the grave; and as this was considered a Mitzva, a religious obligation, all present were invited to share in the shoveling of the earth back into the grave - except for the women present. I noticed that one of the bearded rabbis had with a wave of his hand indicated to Carol and Rinat, that they should not take one of the shovels into their hands.

All the while the officiating rabbi of the Hevra Kadisha had been saying the appropriate prayers - and finally it was the turn of our Rabbi to say Kaddish again.

The Rabbi approached the foot-end of the grave.

"Farewell, friend Chaim", he said in a low voice, his hands raised as if in blessing. "Fare you well wherever you are. Here on earth your friends will always remember you".

He followed his words with a slowly recited Kaddish prayer.

The funeral was over. I was impressed, I must confess. At every stage the funeral had proceeded in a dignified manner. We expressed this in our words of appreciation to the officials of the Hevra Kadisha.

We friends and acquaintances, acquaintances and neighbours left the graveside.

Outside the cemetery gate we thanked our Rabbi for his contribution.

"It was my duty - and I must confess also an honour - to have helped Chaim laid to rest. I was told that you want to talk to me; to ask me questions; to clarify things which need to be clarified in your mind. I shall be only too pleased to be of help. Come to see me this evening after dinner. Would eight o'clock suit you?"

We accepted - and agreed that 8 o'clock suited us.

II.

MAN 'S FATE AND HIS FATE 'S FATE.

O N E

The Rabbi bid us a friendly welcome when we arrived in the evening. He led us into his study. After we had sat down in the comfortable chairs which had been arranged around a low round table, the Rabbi's wife joined us. She too welcomed us and offered her condolences. She enquired about our preferences regarding coffee or tea; and soon thereafter brought in a tray with cups and glasses and a plateful of pastries. She stayed on for a few minutes' conversation; and after that she left again.

RABBI - May I tell you again that I am pleased to see you here. May I also say, that I am honoured by your request for my help to fill in some lacunae which appear to exist here and there in your knowledge of what Judaism stands for; that I help you solve some of the problems which are bothering you; that I help you untangle whatever needs to be untangled in your comprehension of the traditions, ethics and meaning of Judaism. We do not have to hurry; I have all the time you may want. And if this evening comes to an end, and there is still something left to be discussed, we can meet again and again if necessary. There is only one condition I feel obliged to raise: that we are honest with each other; that we respect each other's opinions and beliefs; that we are not offended by whatever one of us says.

EG - I can speak in the name of all us and declare, that we accept and agree in full with what you have said. However, may I add a footnote of my own? May I request your permission to record on tape what we talk here this evening - and also on any following evening?

RABBI - I do not mind. And I suppose, your friends have no objection either. I propose we go straight into "medias res"; that is to say, we start straight away with what has brought you here. What is the first question you want to raise?

CAROL - We have met at the funeral of our friend Chaim today. Of course, this sad moment has awakened in all of us - perhaps in you too, Rabbi - the question what meaning life and death may have. But this is only a part of that great all-comprising question: why are we here on this earth? What happens to us after we die? Whether our life and our death do have a meaning? Whether there is a God in heaven, as the religions argue? Whether this God has created this world and directs our destiny?

EGG - May I say, that to answer all your questions, first of all the primordial one has to be answered, viz:- whether there is a God ?

CAROL - I agree with what has so far been said; but may I request you, Rabbi, to tell us - as a kind of introduction to this chapter - what has made you chose your profession ? We do not want to learn how one enters on a rabbinical career; what materia you have to study. I would like to know, what has induced you personally to become what is called a "shepherd of souls" - and of jewish souls in particular. And could you tell us more specifically, what made you think you are qualified to take up the profession of a Rabbi. Has there been something so dominant in your life - or to formulate this differently, in your development - which has induced you to make you take this specific direction in preference to anything else ? Or should I perhaps not use the word direction and say some inner urge instead ? Or some kind of psychological trauma ? Or some soul-shaking experience ? I hope you will not mind these personal questions so early in our acquaintance.

RABBI - I do not mind at all. I had not planned to be a rabbi. One day - I cannot say what had been the cause or reason - I was overcome by the notion, that the rabbinate was the natural choice for me to make. And I could only visualize for myself being a rabbi within the Reform Movement. I had come to this decision even though - some may say because - I had an orthodox upbringing in my youth. I had accepted as natural, right and undisputable that my parents and their sibilings followed strictly and without arguments the Tora- and Halacha-prescribed ways of life. That crucial moment in my life to which I have hinted, caused me to feel intrigued by the place God occupied in my family surroundings. However, these my newly adopted viewpoints - they were more curious than critical - did not made me embrace theology. Only when I had entered university and had begun to study philosophy, was I finally and decisively attracted by theology. In my youth my outlook on the divine had been inspired by the strict God of the Bible. When I grew up I was more impressed by the God of the philosophers. And, in addition, I became also attracted by the God of the mystics. There is also another point worth mentioning: I realized at some stage, that the strong impetus which had made me turn to theology had become manifest when I became incensed on learning, that the atheists - in an abuse of the freedom which the newly-emerging unfettered liberalism had granted them; and without their possessing the necessary knowledge to form a balanced judgement - were parading their pseudo-religion of a non-God. Add to this, that I was also worried by the pseudo-God which the torch-bearers of Enlightenment had propagated. I was in a turmoil. I did not know with whom and with

what to identify. Only when I began to study for the rabbinate did I feel I had entered calm waters. And I felt consoled by the knowledge, that I had found a friend in God - that God is my friend.

AVNER - Was, and still is, this your friend the Jewish God ?

Rabbi - He is the true Jewish God. He is the same Jewish God our ancestors knew in the Desert. He is the same Jewish God whom they later worshiped in the Temple of Jerusalem - although at that developmental stage of Judaism God had to be given human features, human qualities, human needs.

RINAT - Why so ? What has changed him at that stage ?

RABBI - Our intellectual development of today permits us to view God in his transcendence. This would not have been possible in the earlier times. Can you imagine, that a primitive people; a primitive slave people; a primitive Bedouin people - could have been persuaded to trust a non-corporeal God ? To fear a transcendent God ? To believe in an Infinite God ? To understand a sophisticated God ? These simple artisan and farming people had to be presented with the image of a God they could understand and visualize, fear and trust. They needed a God with whom they could identify. They had to be told of a God whom they could fear.

EQO - And the image which could be acceptable to them had somehow also to conform with the gods they knew before; and which the peoples in their neighbourhood called their gods.

AVNER - The sense of your words indicate to me, that we proud Jews of today are more sophisticated than those primitive Bedouin Israelites. What is it which makes you so sure that a God exists ?

RABBI - I could provide you with a very large number of reasons, why there is a God. But let it suffice at this moment that I cite you the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel - whose name, hopefully, is known to you: "Awe enables us to perceive in the world intimations of the Divine. The awe we sense or ought to sense when standing in the presence of a human being, is a moment for intuition of the likeness of God which is concealed in the human likeness".

ASHER - May we enlarge on what you have said so far, and request you to tell us what you see in - and what you think of - religion in general and of the Bible in particular ?

RABBI - Let us first speak about religion in general. Religion most of all - though not necessarily so, you may argue - is associated with a firm belief in God. There are three monotheistic religions, as you know - Judaism, Christianity and Islam. They have the same God. But they do not recognize each other. They belittle each other. They

fight each other. Rightly or wrongly you will find many a pseudo-philosopher who ventures to say, that they fight each other bitterly and without compassion because they have the same God in common.

AVNER - How can in such a case these religions' God be true ?

RABBI - You should not blame God for the failure of the religious leaders to find other ways by which to make the teaching of their religions effective. You may be assured, that it is not the differences in their theologies which are a cause for conflict. It is the striving for preponderance. It is the quest for that power which causes this annihilating competition and adversity. In other words: as soon as a religion has acquired the necessary power, it will fight the others not for ideological reasons but for dominance, for predominance. And it will not take long for the religion in power to forget, that its God has demanded of it to be just; to be honest; to be compassionate - with all mankind irrespective of everything whatsoever which divides them politically and socially and ideologically.

CAROL - Would you agree that all through history - and no less also today - religion has lost its justification and place and significance when it married politics ?

RABBI - I fully agree with you. Much has been sinned in the name of religion. And let me say in loud and clear words, how incomprehensible it is to me, that out of the plethora of religions present and past the three monotheistic ones are the greatest sinners.

EQ - Among these Christianity and Islam are undoubtedly the greatest sinners. Judaism has definitely a better record.

AVNER - Are you sure ? Is this not so, because Judaism has not the power anymore ?

RABBI - There were a few periods in history, when the Jewish nation had the power; but I am unaware that any stagem - then or later on - the Jews ever abused their power or influence beyond the ethical standards then prevailing.

RABBI - It is quite late now. May I suggest we break up our discussion and continue it in the coming week ? And if the coming Saturday evening - or any other evening we can agree upon - will not suffice, I shall gladly be at your service as often as you might wish.

T W O

RINAT - Let us this evening hear some more about religion, please. How would you define religion in simple words ?

RABBI - Religion makes us know and comprehend that, which reason cannot make known; and which science cannot prove.

RINAT - How did it start ? How came religion to enter the mind of the people ? And how did it come about, that religion could fulfill the needs of the people ?

RABBI - Historians think, that what stands for religion had first been perceived about 15 000 years ago.

EG - Rudolph Otto thinks, that the sense of something unusual; of that which he considers is a sense of the Holy; of the Numinous - preceded the creation of religion. In other words: the first primitive form of religion tried to explain to the primitives of that epoch, how mysterious and incomprehensible was that which was then and still is the holy. They needed an understanding of - and an explanation for - what appeared mysterious to them in the world which frightened them.

CAROL - And they entrusted this task to the priests and shamans.

RABBI - There were always men or women who acted as intermediaries between man and nature; who acted as interpreters of nature's frightening phenomena into understandable images; who acted as translators of the language of the incomprehensible into comprehensible words. In their inability to understand the true essence of God in his transcendence; of God in his incomparable incomprehensiveness - the people turned to men who could teach them and guide them. Prophets arose and priests came forward, to create an image of God which was to themselves a reality; and which they felt the urge, the call and the competency to present to the people.

CAROL - But they did not succeed - the God of whom they learned remained a terrifying God.

AVNER - He had to be thus for only in this way could the priests maintain their grip on the people.

EG - In a sense this is true. The original religion which the people had been offered, was a plain, simple, ethical religion. But over the centuries again and again new religious leaders pushed their way into the foreground. They often radically changed the original

primary religion by adding new perceptions and rites; by giving it new interpretations and symbolisms.

CAROL - You will be surprised to learn that Isaac Newton the scientist-philosopher, had already put forward this idea. He wrote that Noah had formulated a primordial kind of religion which had been free of superstition. Noah's religious concept was simply and purely based on a rational worship of God. The only commandments the people had to follow, were love of God and love for one's neighbour. Later generations corrupted this pure religion and added to it miracles and myths. In consequence God sent a series of prophets to bring the true religion back.

RINAT - I never knew that Newton - whom I remember only as the great physicist - had created such a complex religious theory.

EG - This is also new to me. And very interesting indeed. Neither I have ever before heard of Newton's interest in such matters.

RABBI - It is not difficult to follow the from time to time occurring changes in religious conceptions. This is not a phenomenon of recent times only. We know, for instance, that in the 7th century BCE such changes occurred all over the then known world - in Israel, in Greece, in Egypt, in Iran - and perhaps also in other parts of the world. This often led to many of the gods lose their leading roles.

EG - And the priesthood - whether they caused these changes or only benefitted from them, is a matter of discussion - became a powerful institution. It is accepted today by the experts in Bible studies - I hope I am not wrong in what I am saying, Rabbi? - that the 4th and 5th Book of the Pentateuch have been added by priestly authorities only after the Babylonian exile; that is to say, about a thousand years after the Sinai Revelation. These two volumes were not part of the original books supposedly written by Moses.

RABBI - Whether this is so or not, you should not think that this is in any way of any fundamental significance. These two books mainly systematized the temple rituals, it is true; but they reflect the spirit of Judaism no less than those traditionally believed to have been written by Moses. The true essence - and the original ethics of Judaism - have in no way been changed by the priests who composed these two books of the Torah.

EG - I think it is a specific of - and characteristic for - the changes a religion is liable to undergo in the course of the centuries - I may say that this often takes place in waves - that while the presentation is changed and the form adjusted, the basic values are mostly, if not always, maintained. With respect to Judaism we must

concede to those in authority who brought about the changes, that they thought they could - by whatever reformatory activities they introduced - clarify the basics of Judaism. They were certain, they were upgrading the primitive images and practices into modern conceptions. They were motivated by their perceived need to make the transcendence of God better understood by modern-minded Jewry.

CAROL - This was also the case with Hinduism: in the 7th century the gods lost their pre-eminent role. The Upanishads came to be written. The Self was granted a supreme rank. The religious leadership thought it necessary to add sacrifices to the prescribed ritual.

EG -and the Brahmin priests acquired great power, because they alone knew how to perform the sacrifices.

AVNER - Who learned from whom? The Jews from the Hindus or the Hindus from the Jews?

RABBI - Somehow or other there may have been a common knowledge or a reciprocal influence. But what does it matter? Whenever judging the developmental stages of Judaism; whenever judging and observing the personalities of the Bible; whenever studying and evaluating the events described in the Scriptures - we must divest ourselves of our modern perceptions; of our scientific ways of reasoning; of our knowledge of history. In short: we have to rid ourselves of our preconceived and limiting ideas.

ASHER - Does this also apply to the Torah as the "Law"?

RABBI - First of all: the Torah is not the "Law". This is a mistaken translation which dates from the time the Septuagint was produced. The greek translators used "Law" for "Torah". The translation of the word "Torah" is "Preaching". This is clearly understood in the aramaic use of the word for "Torah": the word "Oraita" is used - which means "Teaching".

CAROL - Also in the Avesta, the ancient iranian scripture, religion is called teaching.

ASHER - Torah is indeed teaching by symbolism, threats and mythology.

RABBI - You could not be more mistaken. You will not find the kind of mythology in the Torah which is common in the scriptures of all the other religions. This is due to the simple fact, that no kind of idols make their appearance in the Torah. Do you know there is not even a hebrew word for "goddess"?

AVNER - But the ancient rules and commands of the Bible, including the exact prescription how the animals are to be sacrificed, continue to have their value to this day.

ASHER - And there are masses of believers in a renewal of the animal

sacrifices when the Third Temple is erected.

RABBI - There are no "masses" of such believers. They are a minute minority. Even orthodox rabbis accept that such animal sacrifices are not possible in our times; nor in any future times. It is more for reasons of tradition or piety that in their prayers they recite the ritual of the sacrifices.

CAROL - I am certain, the Orthodox have never heard of this kind of explanation. They recite the ritual of the temple sacrifices so diligently, because they think these may become again necessary when the Messiah comes and rebuilds the Third Temple.

RABBI - Believe me ! These rituals once upon a time used for animal sacrifices have today only a historic value. And you can be sure, that the animal sacrifices will not be reintroduced, should the Third Temple really be rebuilt.

ASHER - There is even a Yeshiva which trains Cohanim for such a purpose.

EG - You cannot argue in this way because a small group of fanatics does not want to accept the demands of modern times. Whoever recites still the temple rituals does so for reasons of tradition and piety. You may even say, for reasons of mental inertia. For instance: in the Rabbi's synagogue these rituals are omitted from the prayers. But in last week's Haftara I heard in that very same synagogue the words of Ezekiel recited: "But the priests, the Levites, shall come to minister me. They shall stand before me to offer me the fat and the blood, says the Lord God".

CAROL - I remember now that also in the antique an aversion against the temple sacrifices was known. Philo of Alexandria - at the time the Temple still stood, mind you - tried to find a symbolic interpretation for the animal sacrifices in the Temple.

RABBI - Let us recognize that Judaism has never been a rigid religion.....

AVNER -except in the minds and hearts of the orthodox

CAROL -who have the political power to force us to comply with their views; with their image of God; and with what they think God wants of us.

RABBI - It is not so. Ultra-Orthodox - and also modern-orthodox Jews - "religiously" study and recite the ancient sacrificial rites, because their image of God and their concept of Judaism has not changed in the course of the centuries. But these currents should in our times not be seen as representing Judaism. Philo has not been the only one to be repulsed by these sacrifices. Similar objections have been raised

throughout our long history. Only in this century of ours have two very important and vital movements been created - the liberal Reform Movement and that of the Reconstructionists.

RINAT - What are the latter ? I never heard of them.

RABBI - The Reconstructionist Movement was created by Mordechai Kaplan who died only recently at the age of nearly a hundred. He was of the opinion, that God is not a supernatural personal being, but a universal power which strives for righteousness in the world. God is the power, he says, which guarantees salvation not by mystic or other potentialities, but by strengthening and improving the human personality and furthering its evolution.

EG - I think this is a rather simplicistic statement. You cannot "understand" God. It is only possible to understand God when you perceive him as being hidden by his incomprehensible mystery.

RABBI - I agree. This is expressed in the experience Moses once had: "You cannot see my face", God told him. But a constructive dissent; and the search for a better approach on the pathways offered by religion - are by no means new trends. Over 2000 years ago the Essenes of Qumran's fame dissociated themselves from the Temple hierarchy and ideology which, in their judgement, had become corrupted. They refused to acknowledge the continued worthiness of animal sacrifices. They constructed for themselves a spiritual temple. They saw in ritual cleansing the value of spiritual cleanliness; and the way to God's demanded sanctity.

CAROL- By what appears to me their greatly restricted theological perspectives, they pursued a somewhat primitive religious way of life. But no historian has ever doubted their sincerity and their dedication.

ASHER - I wish you could say the same of our orthodox community's political echelon which, due to its actual - and apparently also in future never to be ceasing - involvement in our bazar-like politics, has lost whatever inhibitions religion may have still imposed on its members.

Avner - This, to my mind, has been a very profitable evening. But before we disperse, I would like to hear you answer my question whether or not religion has become incongruous in our modern society.

RABBI - Religion is still a powerful directive of ethical conduct in our society - and this includes our Government. Religion still sets the moral tone. It still acts as the arbiter of morality. Our actual world here and the world at large would not be tolerable, were all the societies and all the states in the world secularized; and would they be without some kind of a religious representation. Look at Russia ! It tries to build a society, and to run a state based on pseudo-morals

and self-delusions. It is a fact that, whenever religion loses its influence, moral restraints became less effective; that inner strife will prevail; that politics will become dishonest; that intolerance will rise its ugly head. And finally, in such a case there will not be a true purpose in all which goes on and is made to happen.

T H R E E

AVNER - Last week I asked you, whether religion is today still relevant. Allow me, my dear Rabbi, to repeat my question in a somewhat more clear-cut and circumscribed form: please tell us, whether religion in these our modern times - and especially in our actual Israel - is in your honest opinion still relevant? Is it still in a true sense a religion? Or is it nothing more than a national movement? Or a vital ideology at best?

RABBI - Since 3½ millennia Judaism was a religion in every sense - and it has remained to this day a religion in its proper sense. At no stage in our long history has there been a time, when Judaism's religious specifics have ever lost their significance for the Jewish people. And today this is no less so than ever. Zionism has only confirmed this fact, unless, of course, it is wrongly made use of - or it is falsely by - our zealots. And unless it is maliciously interpreted by our enemies. Let me again point out that you cannot apply the usual scales and measurements to the Jewish People. All will be understandable and acceptable to you, if you understand and accept that the Jewish People and its history are far beyond the commonly applied rules of history.

EG - Tell this to our political leaders.

RABBI - I see we have opened the door to a very interesting, and no less also intriguing theme. But before we continue, you and I will need to know what attitude each of you occupies with regard to his or her religion in general; and what they feel about Judaism in particular. It is important, that each of you is clear in his or her mind about what you believe is the meaning of our existence. And, in relation to what you have to say, it will become clear to yourselves at least, how you see your place in this world. I have already described my path to the rabbinate. From my description you can confidentially conclude, that for myself I can answer only in the affirmative the questions I have placed before you.

AVNER - I can formulate my answer in perhaps still more clear-cut words. There is no God. I pity those who need a God on whom to lean. And still more those, who need religion as a pair of blinkers to cut out the rude realities of life.

CAROL - I have only a vague knowledge of the Jewish religion.

My parents were prototypes of assimilated Jews. At one stage I felt duty-bound to read the Bible - and was not impressed, amused or attracted. I knew more about Christianity from my friends, some of whom were regular churchgoers. At times I even thought of joining their Church. But when I began to study philosophy and history, all my interest in the Church as a possible haven for me, vanished completely. This interest had most likely only been the vagabondage of a spiritually homeless girl in need of a spiritual attachment; or - if you will judge me kindly - possibly in search of an intellectual balance. Today I feel very Jewish; but I hardly ever think that my relationship to Judaism should be based on its religious aspect.

ASHER - I have a strictly orthodox-sephardic background of a kind and a of strictness - I may also say: consequently of a superficiality - which made me strive to get away from it all. And to get away as soon as possible. And as far as possible. I confess, I never felt the need to look deeper, in order to find out whether there are other currents in - or aspects of - Judaism which might suit the set-up of my mind; or, better said, which might possibly be more to my taste. I did not care for alternative environments. I did not even visualize the possibility, that there could be an environment which might have evoked my interest. There was nothing which could have induced me to take a step in this direction. I must, however, confess that even when any of my relatives or one of my best friends have passed on, I never felt as much directly and intimately involved as in the case of Chaim's death. And I must also confess, that I have begun to wonder what purpose our life may have.

RINAT - I do not know what to think and what to say. I do not pretend to be a genius; but neither can I be called a fool. I got good grades in High School and in the University. I feel entitled to say, that I am good in my profession. But religion? God? I never thought about these things. In my duties as school principal I have never had to make a decision in this respect. My parents are socialists and do not care about religion, synagogues, Jewish holidays - and certainly not about a kosher household. This is the environment in which I grew up. I never felt the need to ask myself the questions you mentioned.

RABBI - This is quite interesting. You five represent the four types of Jews which the Rabbis of the Talmud so precisely describe; and which are so cleverly depicted in the Pesach Hagada.

RINAT - Could you be more specific and tell us who is who, and who is what in this classification?

RABBI - I leave it to you to sort this out. Let me say, however,

that I am sincerely sorry to see that most of you have missed the opportunity to get to know Judaism's extremely valuable content. Judaism has very much to offer. Believe me ! It is not my national and religious chauvinism which makes me say, that in its quality and in its intrinsic worth Judaism surpasses whatever any other religion I know of has to offer. Of course, you should not judge Judaism by the wordings and the analogues, by the configurations and the images which are expressed in the antiquated language of the Scriptures and prayer books. Nor should you feel alienated by what reflects the primitive conceptions of the past. You should look at the kernel. You should search for the true values.

EG - May I, with your permission, continue in the direction which you have pointed out, by stating that I believe - nay that I know - that there is a God, a Creator, a Supreme Being - however the name you may chose.

CAROL - Is this so ? Could you make it again and unequivocally clear to us, please, that you believe in a God, in a Creator, in a Supreme Being ?

EG - I am honestly surprised that you are surprised. My answer is fully affirmative. Yes, I have a complete, a sincere belief in a Supreme Being who has created this Universe. Who has created all which you find therein. Who has created as well all which makes it function.

CAROL - What, may I ask, brought you to this conviction ?

EG - There should not be any doubt in the mind of a seeing, sensing, thinking, individual that this planet of ours, this Universe in general, cannot have been a chance creation.

AVNER - The antiquated idea of a Creator of this world of ours - which the Bible must have taken over from the primitives of the pre-biblical age - is totally indigestible to my mind.

RABBI - You are mistaken. The concept of God as the Creator of this Universe is only pre-biblical in the sense that - though it may have been extant in the subconscious human mind long before - it had been introduced as official jewish doctrine only at the time the Torah was compiled about 2500 years ago. I cannot avoid the impression, that it was at all times a more or less commonly accepted matter of faith. What I have said is by no means negated by the fact, that the Church introduced this aspect of God only in the year 341 on the occasion of the Council of Nicaea.

EG - Thank you. I did not know this. In completion of my personal statement I want to add, that in my mind an individual with intellectual and sensitive qualifications cannot harbour the doubt, that

his life has a purpose and a sense. Once he has accepted this premise, it must lead him to the definite conclusion: that all mankind has been created for a purpose and a sense. Only if we apply the perception of such a purpose and sense globally, will it be possible for us to understand this purpose and sense.

ASHER - Allow me to confess, that I thought I know you well. But so far - that is until this moment - I had no idea that you are a 'homo religiosus'.

CAROL - And allow me to confess, that this is the first time I have befriended a religious person with your degree of education and intelligence. I cannot remember a religious person with whom I would be able to feel an intellectual affinity as I do with you, although our outlook on every aspect of religion; and our attitude to the metaphysical - seem to differ so greatly. And may I for good measure add, that this is the first time I occupy a platform with a rabbi. Sure ! Jerusalem abounds with religious people of every shade, but I have always felt a deep aversion against all and every religiously dedicated intellectual. I have even avoided every personal contact with any of them. Until now my reluctance had been so strong, that it prevented me from entering into a discussion with them. I know well enough - you do not have to point it out - that my attitude is as wrong as are all my excuses. I know that they reveal a psychopathic trait in me. And I know also, what has caused this complex - but this is so and I cannot change - nor do I care to change. It would in any case be of no interest to you to hear me say more about this. But it would interest me greatly to hear you explain your personal concept of, and attitude to, religion; and what has caused your turning - if not conversion - to religion.

AVNER - Let me enlarge on Carol's request. Can you give us details of the specific philosophical and religious picture you have formed for yourself ?

RINAT - May I go still further even - or deeper or more backward - and request you to tell us which intellectual, spiritual, and possibly also emotional paths you have walked to reach this state, or better said this status, of a religious man ? It has become already clear - to me at least - that you have occupied yourself seriously and constructively with the problems we have raised here.

EQ - I well understand what you all want to convey. I have no objection to give in to your request. I shall unreservedly try to satisfy your curiosity.

Like you, Asher, I had a strictly orthodox upbringing which, once I was outside my family circle, made me avoid everything which pointed

to religious ordinances or ritual practices. I lost all interest in all practically applied religion. But in my ever growing estrangement from Judaism I never thought of denying my Jewishness. I never lamented my being a Jew. On the contrary ! I was a proud Jew. I never missed an opportunity to declare myself as such in the antisemitic environments in which it had been my fate to live most of my life. I was from the beginning of my adolescence an enthusiastic Zionist - of the kind who contemplated to come to Israel "sometimes for sure".

In short: I was a conscious and convinced Jew. But I never sat back and made myself define my attitude to Judaism. I never clarified to myself, what place I occupied as a Jew, not only in the society of which my wife and I were part, but also of the world in which we lived.

There came, however, the day - I honestly cannot point to a specific causative factor why I did so - when I sat back and asked myself: you are a Jew. You feel proud of being a Jew. But what makes you assert your being a Jew in general, and a proud one in addition ? How and in which way do you visualize your being Jewish ? What does the Judaism you perceive mean to you ? How would you define your Judaism ? What do you expect Judaism to give you ? And, above all: what have you so far given to, and done for, the Jewish people ? How does your being a Jew fit into your philosophy of life ?

I studied with ever growing interest the religions of India - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. I was intrigued by their philosophies and theologies which endeavour to explain the purpose of man's life; to explain the purpose of man's life on earth; to explain the meaning of man's death; to explain what lies on the other side of death. I asked myself again and again, whether I can agree with the explanations they offer; whether I can accept the directions they give to man about how he has to conduct his life. And I found it impossible to accept for myself most of what they teach. It was then that I began to ask myself what my own religion has to offer; what Judaism means to me - and I realized, that my ignorance was so overwhelming as not to provide the answer I craved. I decided, I would at the first opportunity make every effort to learn about my Jewish heritage.

It became imperative - nay I would say an obsession - that I find the answer. I felt the urge to find out whether Judaism's scriptures and teachers provide an adequate answer. I decided to dedicate my free time to the study of the ever growing series of problems of which I became aware. I realized that, first of all, I had to know what Judaism teaches about the destiny which awaits me after my death; what it tells me about what is left of me after death; what it says may possibly survive my

death. I searched to know, whether in Judaism anything resembling the karman principle of the East is known. I searched to know, whether Judaism, like Hinduism, accepts the doctrine of reincarnation. In short: my curiosity grew and grew. I wanted to know not only what Judaism, but also what other religions have to say about the human soul. About the soul's immortality. About the soul's transmigration and so on.

It was at that period in my life when I discovered with surprise, that I am a religious man exactly in accordance with the meaning of this word.

RABBI - You have indeed allowed us to follow you through your process of maturing - if I may call thus your return to a firm belief and a true faith. We have heard what your friends have to say to my question about their attitude to religion in general and Judaism in particular.

From what I heard from each of you this evening, it is evident that all of you have still a long way to go before you have gained a sufficient picture of what you need to know. It is at this stage totally irrelevant, whether you will also accept and believe in what you will get to know. But it is imperative, that you as Jews should have a full knowledge of the meaning; of the values; of the ethics of Judaism. I will go even further and say, that an intelligent and educated Jew should be well versed in the rites and rituals of Jewish religious practice, even if he or she does not follow them. It is no less important - and to me it is evidence of intellectual honesty - that he or she should have a sufficient knowledge of the traditions, even if he or she does not find them acceptable. It is the duty of a Jew - even if he or she does not want personally want to be a participant - to know what is going on in a synagogue; and what is the meaning of the weekday prayers. A Jew should be cognizant of the meaning and the significance - and well versed in the observance - of the Jewish holidays, even if he or she is non-observant. But I can under no circumstance condone, that an honest person - sure of himself; proud of himself - forms a judgement which is not based on solid knowledge. It is incomprehensible to me, that an intelligent person forms a judgment which is based on ignorance. On a judgment which is mostly - if not always - in such cases formed under the impact of a sub-conscious rejection. I have often witnessed, not only abroad but also here, that Jews could not reply to the simplest questions which Gentiles had asked them about Judaism's teaching; about its ethics; and about the meaning of synagogal goings-on. I met the other day an observant lady whose two sons, a year apart in age, are serving in the army. Each in a different unit. This was for them their

first contact with secular jewish youth. They were shocked about the degree of ignorance in jewish matters their comrades revealed. Among the 45 men in their units only a handful observed Yom Kippur. Although most of their parents fasted, they had never received a minimum of religious education at home - and certainly none in their secular schools.

EG - No wonder then, that so many of our young people want to leave the country for good, once they have completed their military service. For how can you remain attached to a country and a nation of whose history and spiritual values you are ignorant.

RABBI - I dare to give expression to my hope, that you will become aware, that you have at one time or the other - to some degree at least - already made the acquaintance of the God whom you have ignored so far. I hope the time will come, when you will tell yourself that your attitude had been a mistake; that it had been to your disadvantage not to have pursued even a faint interest in the jewish religion. I can assure you, that, once this moment comes and you know more about Judaism; that once you know what Judaism has to offer; that once you know what Judaism wants you to be - you will confess to yourselves your mistake. I am sure, you will be the richer once you know of God. And I am still more sure, that you will be much happier once you know God. It is not difficult to find God. It not difficult even to befriend God.

RINAT - All this sounds unbelievable to me. For the first time in my life I hear words like the one's you have just now spoken. I have never heard, that one should think about a possible ethical content; about a deeper sense - in and of the Jewish religion. I heard for the first time today, that there is something to be looked for - and from what I sense in you - to be proud of.

F O U R

AVNER - I hope you all will not mind, if - within the frame of our last week's conversation - I in turn want to make a confession: even though I have pondered the question throughout this week, I am still unable to imagine what may have happened to a man who is suddenly overcome by the realization that he is - after all; or suddenly; or has always been - a religious Jew. Can you, Ego, tell us - if possible in a somewhat detailed way - why you call yourself a religious man ?

EG - In my definition a religious person is the one who, after an often life-long period of indifference, has fought through his passive indifference or his active disbelief; through his doubts and his and others' arguments - to reach a firmly anchored faith. This is not enough, you may tell me. How else can I recognize a religious Jew ?, you will ask me. Allright ! I am going to enlarge on what I said. A religious Jew will tell you, that he has gained an inner peace. He will tell you, that since having become a man of solid inner faith, he enjoys an inner balance. And he will tell you, that he has become aware of having turned into a quiet and compassionate person.

RINAT - Does a religious man eo ipso - by force of his conviction - live a life worthy of the God he believes in and searches for ?

EG - You have found the right words. This is indeed the essence of my definition.

RABBI - Tell us more about the approach you took to reach this mental and spiritual achievement.

EG - I did not have to search and to struggle. One day I found myself there. One day I discovered with surprise, that I am a "religious man" in accordance with the definition I have just offered. I became suddenly aware of my own significance within a purposefully created world. Within a world created with a purpose for an existence with a special significance. I knew suddenly, that there is something infinite; that there is something essential which is. This sudden, this penetrating knowledge - I have no right to call it a revelation - gave me at last the explanation for which I had been searching, viz:- not so much how, but more and more why the world and mankind have come into existence. I know most of all what the scientists past and present have offered as an explanation - but they did not appear to me sufficiently convincing.

So far I had no choice but to accept as true the knowledge which these scientists have offered, because I had no other, no even approximately satisfying explanation available for what I knew had existed in the past, and which I saw is in the present; for what has been a fact in the past, and into what the now has developed. Should I have thought or reacted differently to what I now perceived, I would have had to suppose that we are chance products of a chain of stupid coincidences. I have too much of a good opinion of myself; I have too much pride in the destiny of our people; I am too much in awe of the natural and historic wonders which have always filled me with emotion and admiration - to think otherwise. And now I can feel like chuckling, when I think of the stupidities man has committed in the conviction of his righteousness; which man has written about in his over-blown self-esteem; which man has dressed up as science in the past; and which man is claiming as world-shaking discoveries in the present.

What had to be my logical conclusion? How does all this relate to me? What role is mine in this make-up? What duties does my existence impose on me? These questions I put to myself. But I dared not answer myself for a long time. I could, however, give myself the answers the moment I could also accept as absolutely certain the logic conclusion, that the "why and whereto" is the awareness of my duties; is the recognition of the contribution expected from me in the fulfillment of the task which is imposed on man who occupies the highest rank in Creation. This task I saw - please do not mind if I sound repetitious - under the impact of the wonders we can daily witness if only we open our eyes; which we can discover in the realization of the enormity of all that was and is; of that which fills me with elation when I prove myself worthy of having been entrusted with such a task; and which is reflected in whatever gain I make in inner strength and moral power in my maturation on the way to fulfill this task. This power, I told myself, ultimately arises out of the recognition, that I am squarely placed within the ongoing process of humankind's development. And it is also the result of what I see, simply expressed, is my personal duty to induce mankind by my own example. It is in whatever contribution I can make to man's duty to help his fellowmen with all means at his disposal - to fight all the overpowering evil which we encounter everywhere.

Is what I have outlined; is this which I have realized - really a clear-cut program with an easily identified goal?, I asked myself. Does evil exist in itself, by itself? It is not so difficult to discover and to recognize evil. It can be simple and easy to recognize evil. But is it also easy and simple to face the evil I indentify? Does this

mean, that in case evil is easily identified, it can also be easily isolated and attacked ? I found the answer and the approach to all this by coming to agree with the philosophers, who deny that evil is something abstract; that evil can only come into the foreground when goodness is absent; that evil can only prevail when and where goodness recedes. These reflections have made me reach the conclusion, that we should with all our means cultivate goodness; that we have to make every effort to strengthen goodness - so that there is no empty space left, no vacuum created, into which evil can penetrate. This - was my final conclusion - is, or at least should be, the task of man in this world. This I fully concede, is a huge and far-reaching task. But once man does recognize the all-exclusive importance of such a task, it should make him thankful for having been entrusted with such an aim. The final realization of the significance of such a duty should sporn man to an ever greater initiative. Once mankind is blessed with this cognition - I can assure you - the entrance gates to the realm of the Divine will be opened.

Where does theory end and practice begin ?, you are bound to ask. To this I can answer, that from the moment I had come to this realization, I endeavoured to fully identify not only in theory but also in practice with what I have just now exposed to you. My task was made easier, because I had since some time already known, that for taking such a program upon myself; that for putting this message into effect - I do not need the organized communication system of the temples and the synagogues, with their rabbis and chasans, who try to sell me a subscription to the pre-stamped form letters they issue. This system may be suitable and comfortable for, appreciated and accepted by, those who flock through the portals of the temples, synagogues, mosques and churches. I have tried, let me assure you. I have tried hard to be one of those who - often sincerely and honestly, and within the gift of their intelligence and the limits of their education - try to communicate, in such an environment and through such channels, their feelings, whether these are of duty or of anxiety or of gratitude. But I have not found myself on the same wave-length with any of them. I can forgive the masses crowding the places of worship who, after they leave their "places of worship", are regularly overcome by an amnesia which erases all the ethical principles, commands and vows they have in their prayers taken upon themselves to obey, respect and follow. I can forgive them, because they can claim they do not know what they do. But I have not been able to overcome my ever growing aversion against those who have chosen the career of providers of spiritual leadership;

those who have been appointed to serve as spiritual guides and leaders. With very few exception - of which you, Rabbi, are an inspiring and consoling representative - these men and women are nothing but booth-owners in the market place of religion. Excepting our Rabbi - and possibly one or two others - I have not discovered among the spiritual leaders here in Israel anyone whom I could respect and trust; and of whom I could believe that he is conscious of the full range of duties he has taken upon himself. Very few are the men and women who can show the people entrusted to them the way to a true understanding of what Judaism wants to transmit. They are not the guides, who can point out the obstacles man's own urges and instincts put on the path to the achievement of at least some degree of goodness. There are only very few among them, who can help those who approach them for help to perfect that which is still incomplete in the Self within man.

And so, while I call myself a man who has a deep conviction of man's definite and ultimate relationship to the Infinite; and while I try to find the way to acquire some of the eternal truth - I am very well aware of the difficulties I am facing in my endeavours. And I am also aware, that I have never ceased to be in need of a guide and adviser. But I have not found one such so far. And as I am too old and too rigidified to sit at the feet of a guru who might be able to teach me, I have to go my own way. I am glad I can say, that my efforts have not been fruitless. I am glad I can register progress, even though I use a cane and have to walk slowly. But I do not need any intermediaries who sermonize and pray - and procrastinate - in the synagogues.

I apologize for the lengthy reply to your questions - and I hope it will facilitate your gaining an understanding of whatever contributions I may make to our discussion. And I apologize again, Rabbi, should I have in words or meaning offended you. I assure you again of my great respect - otherwise I would not have as frankly described my thoughts and feelings. And otherwise I would not have believed you to be the right man to guide us in these our conversations and discussions.

RABBI - I sincerely appreciate what you said about me and what you told us about yourself. And I appreciate no less also the openness with which you exposed your innermost thoughts. I have no doubt, that in the spiritual structure you have built for yourself you will find the satisfaction you seek. And I sincerely wish you all the happiness you are looking for in the Weltanschauung you have created for yourselves.

AVNER - I cannot imagine myself to live with you in your castle. Nor am I capable to become a member in the brotherhood you visualize.

RABBI - You are wrong, Avner. It is given to everyone of us to

break the crust which prevents us from looking into ourselves. We cannot always understand properly what wise men, rabbis, philosophers and scientists tell us. The reason is, that we are lazy or reluctant to probe any deeper. This leaves us as doubters, as atheists - with the result that we remain unhappy people. If you feel and are handicaped because you cannot understand what is also otherwise and by others not understood, allow your mind, your heart, your goodwill to fill in the gap with the belief in wonders; with the belief in a 'deus ex machina' if necessary.

RINAT - In other words resign in the belief, that God's will be done.

AVNER - I envy the ease with which you people accept the wonders with which the Bible and other Scriptures are filled.

RABBI - I agree, that those who read the Bible literally can be disappointed. I concede that they can at times even be repulsed. But you cannot and should not interpret what you read as objective events. You may call on science to help you to prove or disprove the truth of the biblical reports - and the truth of God's existence even. But you will never be satisfied with the outcome of such an approach. God cannot be physically or mathematically proved; and neither can miracles be scientifically explained.

AVNER - Do you really believe, Rabbi, that God appeared to, spoke to Moses at Sinai ?

RABBI - Unbelievable as it sounds it has to be true, because on the fact of this encounter the jewish nation and the jewish religion have been established. On what took place during that encounter on Mount Sinai our religion has been established in its basically valid form. Even the most ingrained doubter will concede, that our nationhood and our religion are facts.

EG - The Rabbi wanted to say - as far as I understood him - that facts cannot survive if they were based on untruths or myths.

CAROL - It is here where faith comes in, I suppose.

RABBI - Yes, faith sweeps away all the uncertainties, doubts and contradictions which obstruct the access to unrestricted belief.

F I V E

AVNER - I have to add a sentence to what I said last time we met: to me the Jewish religion is a mystery religion.

RABBI - You mean our religion is to you a mystery. It is not a Mystery Religion. Do not think I blame you. I can well understand at least some of your adverse feelings. It is a fact that modern man abhors everything which is a mystery to him. He runs away from whatever he cannot measure and analyse. And still ! You cannot say the Jewish religion presents a mystery. You may say, you sense everything around you is mysterious. You may even say, that everything in you is mysterious. Ultimately you would be better off, were you to describe as incomprehensible and sublime all that which appears to you mysterious and overpowering. And having finally reached this stage of intellectual and spiritual maturing, you will be blessed by a deeper understanding. You will accept then what appeared to you sublime as **the** Sublime; and what had appeared to you incomprehensible as **the** Incomprehensible. How, you may ask can one learn to feel the Sublime ? How can one sense the Incomprehensible ? You can learn this by learning to see all what is wonderful in nature - and to see in these wonders in nature veritable miracles. Learn to appreciate what is around you. Open your eyes and see.

EGO - "Come and listen, all of you who fear God, while I tell you what he has done to me", says the Psalmist.

RINAT - I will readily listen to you. Tell us what he has done to you. I have been intrigued by what you have already told us of your philosophy of life. But something is still missing in the description you gave us; namely how you got started on your way. May we hear from you a more specific explanation of what made you turn - or return, if you want to call it thus - into a person who has become conscious of his being a religious Jew ? Something must have made you do so. Something must have started the ball rolling. What was it that caused your sudden awakening to the need to run a check on your Jewishness ? You know me too well to think I am trying to be silly or facetious. I ask, because from what you have experienced I may - hopefully - learn what I myself have missed so far.

EGO - There is no specific event, no specific moment nor any other

causative factor to which I can point. Over quite a long time an awareness grew up in me. I can best describe it as some kind of an amorphous sensation that there is something beyond myself; which is beyond my self; which is beyond my existence; which is beyond my world. It will be too cumbersome to explain in detail what went on within me. I will only say that there was a realization - something which I may have later called an 'inner force' - which made me review my past life; which urged me to search for times and facts which might be indicative of when, and in how far, I had been influenced, guided or motivated by what I began to sense as beyond my own doing. I looked within myself and around myself. I learned to shake off conventional conceptions. I learned to weigh the accepted theories I had so far never dared to doubt. I learned to think independently. I learned to form my own conclusions. I looked back on my past life. I relived the many difficulties and dangers I had overcome. I realized suddenly that I had many a time been extremely lucky. I realized suddenly that I had escaped many threats to my life - and I could not avoid thinking, that what I had called 'a lucky escape' or 'a fortunate decision' were not of my own doing; were not to be counted as my own merit. More and more I came to realize, that neither my occasionally vaunted cleverness nor my often criticized insolence could have made me come through the many difficulties. I had to concede, that neither any fateful coincidences nor my proverbial fortune could have made me escape the frequent dangers I had to face in my life. Looking back and trying to apply the strictest possible criteria, I believe I had to avoid or overcome - in comparison with so many other people I have met and questioned - a far greater than average share of dangers.

AVNER - This is interesting ! I might be tempted to apply your measuring tape to myself. But I won't. However, I would very much appreciate it as a personal favour, if you tell us what you said just now in somewhat less generalized terms.

EGO - Let it suffice if I say, I had realized with some kind of awe that I had lived a favoured life so far; that in my lifetime I had been successful far beyond the degree I had reason to expect; that I have overcome the most difficult odds; that I had on more than one occasion side-stepped threats to my very life; that in very decisive moments I had - quasi spontaneously and without any logical reason - made decisions which were to give my life a new direction; that I avoided the kind of decisions which in retrospect, and also otherwise, would certainly have caused me great harm. And I have learned that I have not the right to say that I did the right thing 'as if by instinct'.

AVNER - Could you be more explicit ? Especially with reference to your remark that you had escaped from dangers which threatened your life ? I will concede that, in view of what you said just now, I have changed my mind; and that in view of my own experiences I would like you to provide me with a scale of comparison.

EGO - You will have to accept my own evaluation in this respect. Were I do cite specific events you would in any case, and rightfully so, call my evaluation subjective and not substantiated. And, I am afraid, a discussion along these lines would distract us from the main theme of our conversation.

AVNER - In this case could I not also - and possibly with no less justification - claim to have had what poets call a 'charmed life' ?

EGO - You can certainly make such a claim. And you should with all emphasis make this claim. You should tell this to yourself whenever you believe yourself mistreated by fate. And you ought to try and find faith in the certainty, that there must be a purpose, a sense in the fact that and why you have escaped from so many dangers.

AVNER - I am afraid I cannot buy this.

RINAT - I understand what you want to say.

CAROL - Is one really justified in drawing the kind of conclusions and guidelines you are presenting ? Have we all not had now and then similar experiences in our lives ? I mean to say, can each of us not tell of occasions when we felt that we have escaped a danger or a threat; or when we thought we had made a decision which against all odds and unexpectedly has proved to be the right one ?

RABBI - Of course, everybody can point to such experiences. Or should I correct myself and say, that many of us can in retrospect recall such moments and incidents ? I agree with what we have been told. Many are those who, on reviewing certain episodes or events in retrospect, have been overwhelmed by the certainty, that what had happened to them is most unusual, is out of the usual. And the ones, who have been "lucky" in this way have every right to conclude, that something from above"; that something supernatural - had intervened. I will go further and say, that those who become aware of having had to face such unusual events and problematic situations which ultimately had found a favourable solution, are truly and really the favoured ones among mankind, when they are either suddenly or gradually overcome by the often overwhelming sensation, that they have been favoured - or at least that they might have been favoured - with a greater insight. There may be even a stage in life, when those who had never before thought that their escape from a danger, or some lucky decision, might indicate that they had been at

that moment under divine protection, have suddenly felt impelled to conclude, that their escape could only have been due to a direct divine intervention. And now, having said this, may I suggest that we let this question rest for the time being? We may now and then in the course of our conversations find ourselves again near the borders of the metaphysical, when we shall have to face this or a similar issue. I propose we accompany for the time being our friend Ego along the path his thoughts and reasoning have taken. For we may learn, as has been mentioned, how to relate all he says to ourselves, and hopefully, we may find ourselves asking ourselves the right questions.

EG - Thank you, Rabbi. I shall be short and precise. Suddenly I was filled with the certainty that my life had somehow been directed. Looking back I allowed myself to believe, that my life had in some way or form been protected. I felt that something indefinite had at times pushed my hands; directed my feet; formed my words; forced my decisions. It was as if this realization had opened my eyes and I perceived a world I had not known before - one I never knew might exist.

Rabbi - This reminds me of a talmudic midrash: when the infant Moses was saved from drowning in the Nile by the egyptian princess and was taken by her to the royal palace, the court magicians predicted that the child would one day be a danger to the Pharaoh. To prove their pessimistic forecast, they placed two vessels in front the infant Moses; the one was filled with glittering jewels, the other with burning coals. Little Moses tried, of course, to get hold of the sparkling jewels, but an angel of God pushed his hand to the other bowl and the young fellow grabbed a piece of the the burning coal instead.

EG - This Midrash fits what I wanted to express. I had the sudden petrifying sensation that my eyes had been opened and were perceiving an aspect of the world I had not known before; I had not imagined could exist; I was afraid to face. I found myself transported into a kind of personal relationship with this world which I had never thought of as possible. With this awareness came a flood of ideas and thoughts, of images and notions - often approaching firm and absolute knowledge. With awe I had to control the thought, that I had been granted a higher perception beyond the one I had so far had of myself and my world, turn into a conviction. One of the naturally and logically conclusions of what I perceived now had to be, that all I see around me could not have come into being purely by chance; that this world could not have developed and grown without a direction or a guidance; that life's evolution could not be exclusively the product of Darwinian selective processes. There had to be a plan. There had to be a plan from the moment life began

to develop on our planet. There had to have been a plan, a purpose, already at the stage when the creation of such a world as ours was planned. And finally and inexorably I had to conclude, that there had to be a Creator who had planned, created and now directs the universe in general and our planet earth in particular.

AVNER - In other words: you have become the religious man you are.

EG - Yes, you may describe the development thus. However, I want you to understand quite clearly, that I did not make a conscious effort to be one such. I want to make you also understand, that I never imagined I had made any new, any earth-shaking discoveries. I knew quite well I had not re-invented religion. But I can say, that by purely logical reasoning - contrary to what others accept by blind faith or by way of myths, legends and outside imposed doctrines - I had come to the definite conclusion that this world of ours; that this planet earth of ours; that whatever exists on this planet; that humankind as it exists today - owe their being to a directed creation. They are not, and could not have been, the outcome of coincidental happenings. They could not be the product of chance events. At least this must have been the case in the beginning when all this came into existence. May I point out furthermore, that I had come to this conclusion independent of whatever may be the fashionable scientific theories of the day; that I had not been influenced by any of the basic teachings of any of the religious systems past and present. In short: I formed my concept by logical reasoning. I had reasoned that a powerful agency must have created this world and all it contains. By logic I concluded that a Superior Will and an Omnipotent Intention must have at least started the clock running. I concluded from all these conclusions what was only logical to conclude: that in some way or other this powerful agency must continue to "keep the world going". To say it differently: the outcome of my conclusions, of my sensing and my reflections was, that there is a Supreme Instance who has willed this world; who has created all there is on our earth; who surveys what is going on. From this logical conclusion I advanced further to the awe-inspiring certainty, that there must have been a Creator. I knew then that there is a God.

AVNER - In short: you accept as truth what the Bible says about the creation of this our world ?

ASHER - Even though the biblical tradition is scientifically, historically and philosophically incorrect and illogical ?

CAROL - A scientist is not bothered by the idea of Creation. To him the cosmos - in the sense understood by the Greeks - explains the world's status as 'Nature'.

AVNER - In other words: when viewing the world, scientists do not use in their calculus the hypothesis of a transcendental God.

EG - I honestly cannot imagine how one can think to explore and to understand the Universe with the help of formulas and tables, of telescopes and satellites. Whenever the scientists believe they have reached the ultimate confines of the Universe, they inevitably discover that new confines are further ahead.

RABBI - The scientists have formed formulae and laws - but these fit only their own at that moment "modern" hypothesis; and of that possibly only one or the other of its aspects. I may appear to you backward with my views; but to me the advice given to Job sounds right. He was asked to "meditate on God's wonders. Can you tell how God controls them...?"

AVNER - I cannot see how the birth of the universe can be explained by miracles, by beliefs and by faiths. I am convinced by the theory that the creation of the world had been an accidental happening.

RABBI - The world exists. This is a fact. Every fact must have had a cause and in the case of this world the cause is Creation.

EG - Our world cannot have come into existence except by a Creator. You need proof ? Look at the marvels everywhere.....

RINAT - I sensed something like this in my biological work.....and you know ! Let me confess that one day I had this sensation very strongly when I peeled an orange.

CAROL - I can well understand this. Kant must have had such an impact in mind when he said: "Two things fill the mind with ever new admiration and increasing awe...the starry heavens above us and the moral laws within us".

RABBI - Listen to what Franz Rosenzweig had to say: Creation shows us very distinctly how much we depend on the Creator. God the Creator becomes real to us when he reveals himself as such. Were God not the Creator all we were, are and will become in the scheme of our religion's views would be of no value.

AVNER - Why should a God have created such a miserable world ?

EG - Many reasons are given. Many myths are told. The explanation one hears most often repeated, is that man is the purpose of Creation; that God wanted man as his companion.

CAROL - Islam has a somewhat similar answer. A hadith, a traditional legend, tells: "Allah said to Mohammad: 'I was a hidden treasure. I wanted to be known. I created the world so that I become known'"

RABBI - Yes, this kind of explanation is commonly cited. But Maimonides denied this kind of explanation and insisted, that the universe

came into being out of nothing at God's will - and that more than this we do not know and cannot ever know.

ASHER - I find the actually prevailing theory of a "Big Bang" as the starting point of the universe very satisfactory.

AVNER - Scientists try - and with success, I read in the literature - to repeat the "Big Bang" en miniature by smashing atoms against each other with enormous velocity in miles-long tunnels. This should persuade you that there was no need to invent a Creator.

EG_ - Is this so ? But who invented the atom with its neutrons, protons and whatever else ? And who made these primary elements smash into each other ? In other words: who is the Primus Movens ?

CAROL - Talking of creation: there is another thing which has puzzled me. The monotheistic religions teach that the world was created 'ex nihilo'. How could such a thing come about ? How could something which is concrete be created from nothing ?

RABBI - Ex nihilo ? The Bible says that the world was created out of chaos. Chaos is something real.

CAROL - This the Church does apparently not buy.

EG_ - You are right. In the "Nicean Creed", the doctrine adopted in 341 in Nicaea, the Church decreed that the world was created 'ex nihilo', out of nothing. And for completion's sake it was made a dogma, that the Creator and Redeemer are one; that the true God is begotten from the true God and has not been made; that he came down from heaven and was made a man.

RABBI - The proclamation of this dogma has not succeeded in ending the centuries' old - and still continuing - discussions about the nature of Jesus.

RINAT - It is a pity that Plato and Aristotle were not at hand to give their opinion about this point of Christology.

CAROL - Plato had at least something to say about the creation of the world. Out of emanations the world was created, he says.

RINAT - Did Aristotle agree with him ?

CAROL - Aristotle argued, that whereas the cosmos emanates eternally from God, it has no beginning nor end. He did not say anything further about how the world was created. He asked only how it functions.

RABBI - The concept of "emanations" was unacceptable to Maimonides. Gnosis - along with the Church Fathers - says that an originally imperfect world was separated from God by a great abyss. Out of this God created the world.

EG_ - But, says Gnosis, God can withdraw at any moment. And the Church Fathers warn that man in his helplessness cannot gain salvation

by his own efforts - only by God's grace.

RABBI - Maimonides argues that 'ex nihilo' may be philosophically unacceptable - but it is acceptable in the way it is described in the Bible.

AVNER - I read somewhere that somebody or other has expolated, that God has created other worlds before ours; that each time he was not satified with his handiwork and destroyed them again.

RABBI - There is an allusion of this kind in the Talmud.

CAROL - Also Maya and Aztec myths tell that this world is the last extant in a series of creations all of which had been destroyed by cataclysms. Also Greek mythology contains such myths.

EG - In conclusion it seems that the puzzle of creation does not weigh heavily on a religious person. That is to say, theism has at least an explanation while atheists can only reply that "it happened by itself with a Big Bang". The same is the case with all events which cannot be scientifically explained.

CAROL - You are right. One of the main topics for which in ancient times the founders of religion, as well as the religious philosophers, had to find an answer was the question - or what you called the puzzle - how the world came into being. The clever solution the earliest religions had found, came later to be absorbed - somewhat changed and adapted in form, but in principle always recognizable as based on the ancient mythos - also by the "modern monotheistic religions" Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

EG - The fact is that at every stage of development mankind sensed that a divine instance must have created the universe; only the mythos in which it was dressed changed from time to time, place to place, culture to culture.

RABBI - Like everything in religious doctrine the reported facts and truths, the revelations and epiphanies are presented in metaphors and symbols for the better understanding of the unsophisticated public.

AVNER - This may have been adequate for the people of 3500 years ago, but today.....

RABBI - This applies also to the people of today. But this should not prevent you from interpreting all you are offered by religions that it fits your own philosophy - provided you accept a priori that the facts are being presented in a hidden and covered form.

AVNER - And with this outlook on facts you accept that the world has been created about 5700 years ago and?

RABBI - Dates are unimportant. They are naive but necessary symbolisms which strengthen the faith in the Creator. The Kabbalists

have a point: creation cannot be fixed in time. It is a supra-temporal process. It is an ongoing process and not an one-time act. By the way: the concept of God as the Creator is of "relatively recent" origin. It does not date from Genesis. It had most likely been introduced during the compilation of the Torah some 2500 years ago. The Christians are "still more modern": they introduced - as has been mentioned some time ago - the aspect of God as Creator first on the Council of Nicaea.

CAROL - The Sufis prefer the theory of the Greek philosophers that "divine emanations" had been responsible for the Creation.

RABBI - Also the Kabbalists accepted this concept; they used it as a kid of metaphor.

ASHER - In other words: the world was planned. And it follows that our personal life and the existence of all else is planned. And it follows too that everything is predestined until the End of Times.

RABBI - Not necessarily.

AVNER - But it means that God has more brain than we all together.

EG_ - If you do not give up your anthropological view of God you will never get the right understanding of the entire issue we are discussing. Adopt the a priori concept of the Divine as Absolute, as Infinite, as Incomprehensible, as Transcendent - and fit whatever you imagine or paint of God onto this well defined canvas.

CAROL - There is a basic cause for much of the misunderstanding. Theistic philosophers have tried to explain God's attributes and essence by negatives - and this has only confused people who are philosophically untrained.

RABBI - God as Infinite Absolute cannot have human-like attributes which would be understood by finite man. Religion is - surprising as it may sound - essentially rational. Religion knows how to explain revelations better than rationalists do to the philosophically not trained masses.

S I X

CAROL - May I turn to you for advice, Rabbi ? You will, of course, naturally and eo ipso agree that there is a God above us. But do you also agree with what we heard last time we met, that God - the "Instance" he was called in the relevant discussion - never ceases to watch and observe, to guide and direct what goes on in this world of ours ? If this indeed so, would not also for instance all we have been talking about here in your study have been watched - and possibly also guided ? And if this indeed the case, would this conclusion have to lead to the further conclusion that all is predestined ?

RABBI - What you said represents indeed the undeniable truth for every believer whatever the denomination of his faith may be. However, here in this circle I may confide in you, that in this regard I have come to form my own, my personal views. I believe, that although there must be such a "Superior Instance"; that although there is without any doubt such a "Superior Instance" - that is to say a God - who watches and observes what he has once created and planned, he does not direct nor routinely interfere with what goes on. Except, most likely, in very rare and certain specific instances. I do not want to go back to what was said here last week about the individuals blessed with the memory of an occasional divine intervention. But I am asked if, how, when and why God does intervene ? I do not know. I am sure there is a purpose in our existence. I am sure there must have been one such from the onset. I am sure this world was created for a purpose. I am sure the coming into being of the entire planet earth was to set into motion a planned developmental process. But I am equally sure that not our every single step is directed; that not our every action is predestined.

RINAT - Does Judaism believe in Predestination ?

RABBI - Judaism does not. Other religions, e.g. Islam, do. Also Christianity to some degree. Judaism's guiding principle is that you and I are free to do what we want - but also that we are responsible for what we chose to do. This is based on the biblical passage in Deuteronomy: "I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil....chose life". And also in another places in the Scriptures God is quoted as saying, that he created good and evil for man to identify with **on his own choice**. In plain words: Judaism teaches that man can

direct and form his own life and destiny. Man has the free will to do what he wants. He has this power of free will to do good. But he has also the power, the free will and the faculty, to do evil. This does not indicate that all we do is predestined.

EGO - May I point out, that in Islam man's free will may to a certain degree ease whatever hardship is predestined for him. I was impressed by the saying in the Qu'ran that "...verily God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves".

RINAT - Why are you impressed ?

EGO - Because it points to a control instance in man - under man's control.

CAROL - You are right. Whereas this saying does not agree with some other qu'ranic sayings, the philosopher Al-Ashari gave it an twist worthy of the best of our talmudists: He said that it is Allah who creates the deeds, but he allows man to acquire credits or discredits for them.

RABBI - The Mutzalis - like the Shias an important separatist group in Islam - maintained that man has a free will. They defended man's entitlement to make use of his free will with the argument, that God is intrinsically just and could, therefore, not harm anybody nor do anything which is unreasonable or unjust. They were appropriately criticized by the orthodox Moslems for what they saw as doubting God's omnipotence which directs man's every step. But in general one can say, that in Islam's established traditional view all is predestined.

EGO - This differs quite markedly from Hinduism's more sympathetic teaching, that Brahman is beyond comprehension - and also beyond good and evil.

RABBI - But, on the other hand, it cannot be avoided, that the personal God of the monotheistic religions is with greater ease supposed to manipulate good and evil in the mangement of human destiny. This is not surprising, as he is also supposed to govern the world and the destiny of mankind, of nations and of nature. This is the basis for the belief of the believers that all is predestined.

RINAT - Has this not already been established in the ground-rule, that the existence, the program, the task of Israel, of the Jewish people are supposed to have been predestined since its formation into a nation at Sinai ?

RABBI - In no respect has anything - not even within the frame of Israel's appointment at Sinai - been predestined in Israel's future or in the Jewish people's fate. Israel was appointed to a specific duty, viz:- that of carrying God's word among the peoples; of being a light

unto the nations. There is no predestination attached to this appointment nor in the attached promise. I mean to say, there is no indication of a predestination even in the assurance Israel has been given along with the often repeated promises, that it will enjoy divine protection as long as it keeps to the straight path.....

AVNER - ... which it has not done.

RABBI - which it has not done. And each time it has deviated from the right path it has been severely, even cruelly punished.

AVNER - With the best of will you cannot say that in the last century, or in the many centuries past, the Jewish people have been bundles of virtue and paragons of saintiness. But in what appears to me to be a positive evaluation of their negative behaviour - that is of their persistent failing in their duty - they have been given back their original homeland, this very State of Israel in which we live today.

RABBI - No, my friend; it is not quite so. I fully agree with you, that since the Jewish Commonwealth was destroyed some 1900 years ago - and according to what history tells us, not even in the millennium before that - we Jews have not behaved as had been expected from us, namely comporting ourselves as a god-fearing, virtuous, brotherly people. And it is my conviction, that for this our failing we have been punished again and again. This is how I personally interpret our millennia long history of sufferings and persecutions. The last and severest possible such punishment inflicted on our nation has been the recent calamity to which a poetically-minded man has given the name "Holocaust". Here, in this development I see a confirmation of the Superior Instance, of the great power we have heard mentioned, which intervenes when things come to a head. In my interpretation of our fate this latest and severest punishment of the Jewish people is mainly meant to serve as a warning. We Jews - the warning goes - have been brutally punished for our past and present failings. But we have been offered another opportunity now to change our ways. We have been given back our country so that we have no more the excuse that we have no home of our own; that we are at the mercy of other nations; that we are driven from country to country. In other words: it now depends on us, and on ourselves alone, whether we are worthy of surviving or not. In other words: it is in our hands to chose life or evil, good or bad. In other words: we have the free will to chose what we do; to influence our future; to direct our actions.

RINAT - This imposes an awful responsibility on us, I fear.

ASHER - If this is indeed so, I am very pessimistic.

CAROL - I too am inclined to a pessimistic prognosis. If indeed

this is a last warning; if indeed we are allowed to exist under the condition that henceforth we fulfill our special destiny - and we are now in a better than ever position to "be a light unto the nations" - we have, since we survived the Holocaust, definitely and miserably failed in our duty. There is not a day when the newsmedia do not report cases of Israeli Jews here or abroad who have committed murder or rape; who have been arrested for dealing in drugs; who have been discovered to have committed some white-collar crime.

ASHER - And do not overlook the frightening, and steadily growing, number of intermarriages, especially in the States.

EG - Please do not take me as a cynic if I say that the growing rate of intermarriages - especially what is going on in the States - may well be a selective process in the sense of old Darwin. With these words I want to refer to the Darwinian dictum that those unfit and unsuitable to carry on Judaism's heritage are eliminating themselves from our nation.

RABBI - A rather risky conclusion !

CAROL - One which hardly conforms to the facts as I know them.

AVNER - If your conclusion is right, it would imply a frightening outcome. For you more or less want to make us believe, that the ultra-orthodox Jews, the Haredim are the true, the valuable elite of the Jewish people. And what is worse still, you promise us that this group will ultimately survive.

RABBI - I must confess, that with my somewhat different outlook on the values and principles of Judaism - and arriving from a different direction - I have thought along the same lines and have had to conclude that, in case this should be true; that in case such an outcome should be inevitable; and in case the selective process should leave the ultra-orthodox community in a prominent position - also such an end-result would be welcome. I say this as a Reform Rabbi, mind you ! Don't forget that it had been the orthodox elements in Judaism which have throughout the many centuries of persecutions kept our people alive. You may call them stubborn. You may judge them stuck in antiquated ideas. But it is a fact that they have always formed the nucleus which has carried Judaism through every threat and danger. Whenever living conditions for the Jews improved in the Diaspora - say in friendly countries after the Enlightenment period had set in - newly sprouting liberal movements grew out of this nucleus. It is a consolation for me that, should once more tragedy strike our people, these rigid orthodox Jews with their calcified halachic rules will turn into an hibernating Jewish nation, until better times come. If better times will ever come again ! If

this world is not ripe for an ultimate cataclysm.

EGG - Not only that the Haredim, the strictly orthodox Jews, continue to dress the way the German burghers dressed in the Middle Age which indicates their enduring trend to conservatism. This is far more evident in their strict obedience to the rules and laws of Halacha. And let me underline what I said before, and with which the Rabbi agrees: because the Halacha which the Haredim practise is fundamentally a well-incapsulated Judaism, we can expect that the ancient rabbinical Judaism will survive through them until a new chance is offered for a new liberal and relaxed Judaism will be revived and regenerated.

ASHER - Is the halachic kind of Judaism really worth surviving and preserving? Why do you think, Rabbi, that your form of Judaism, your Reform Judaism, has not an equal chance?

CAROL - My I go even further and ask, why you never use the label "Prophetic Judaism" which I have often heard mentioned instead of Reform Judaism? I ask because the prophetic tradition has survived all pitfalls and dangers so far.

RABBI - Many Reform Jews - it is true - will tell you that they follow the Judaism of the Prophets. Nothing could be more inadequate. The name "Prophetic Judaism" has greatly been mis-used. The assimilatory Jews and the non-nationalist Jews have usurped this name. They disregard even the minimum of observance which we cultivate. Their religious perception is so diluted, that it resembles more that of the Protestants than of the Jews. Even that of the most liberal Jews. Their's is the last stage before they lean over the baptesimal basin.

AVNER - Why then do they call themselves "Prophetic Jews?"

RABBI - Because they - and the Humanitarian Jews too - have the illusion, that the Prophets had only preached plain ethics without any ritual aspect; and without any obligation to the other essentials of Judaism. They single out the beautifully phrased words of the Prophets and not the true message the Prophets wanted to convey.

RINAT - For instance?

RABBI - For instance they love to recite Isaja's and Mica's prophecy "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks". Or Ezekiel's warning "...be righteous....harass no one.. share your food with the hungry...do not lend money against interest". Or Amos' advice "...seek good and do no evil...hate evil and love good.. let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a strong stream". Or Malachi's words "Have we not all one father? Did not one God create us?"

AVNER - These are indeed poetically very beautiful phrases; and

ethically very valuable words. But what is wrong with the Jews who think these are the true and basic values of Judaism? I myself could subscribe to most of these statements too.

RABBI - Because, as I mentioned, these "Prophetic Jews" have little care for what is most important in the preaching of the Prophets. For instance the nationalism they preached. You will not hear them recite Isaja's words "...you Israel whom I have chosen...I take delight in Jerusalem..." Or Jeremiah's prophesy"...God who brings back Israel....to the soil that God gave their forefathers". Or Ezekiel's promise that God will "gather up the Children of Israel from everywhere and restore them to their soil". This aspect of the Prophet's teaching and preaching the "Prophetic Jews" prefer to ignore. All this they overlook so that they do not have to accept the justification and the reality of Israel.

EG - At best they will come here to preach that Jesus is the last of the Prophets and the true Messiah.

RABBI - My friends! I am sorry we have landed into this pessimistic atmosphere. And I regret that our speculations have deviated into this bleak direction. Let us get off this theme, please.

RINAT - I agree. Let us talk about Halacha instead, please. Do you observe the laws of Halacha, Rabbi?

RABBI - The first reason why I turned into the liberal direction of Judaism was Halacha. I could not follow blindly what the rabbis of old had ordained. Especially so, as their rules had been formed to fit the people of their generations. These rules and prescriptions were undoubtedly justified and right for the times in which these Rabbis lived. From the moment I could pursue my studies independently, I felt I had to see a sense, a meaning in what I do and in what I believe.

EG - This same happened to me. I too could not make myself follow the traditions transmitted by my parents; and already as a student I broke every law in the Halacha register.

RABBI - Let us, however, be very clear about the value of tradition. There is a definite virtue, a logic and a sense in the ethical principles of Judaism which are reflected in the Halacha. And you cannot avoid becoming aware of the great sense of fulfillment a person will perceive on following the traditions which our fathers have taken over from their forefathers. And you must never forget, that these halachic rules - whether you practise them or not, is immaterial - are based on; and are expressions of proved and well reasoned ground-rules without which a moral life cannot exist.

ASHER - But are not most - if not all - halachic rules uncritical subscriptions to what the rabbis of the Talmud interpreted as the best

way to make the primitive Jews of their time follow what these rabbis thought was the best way to keep them from violating these rules ?

EG - Do not conclude from what I said before, that I think all and everything in and of the halacha is justified. Halacha is a codified set of strict rules according to which the Jew is supposed to live. Each commandment is exactly formulated and framed - and rigidified - in the old conceptions and antiquated perceptions which were most likely valid some 1500-2000 years ago. Even what may appear as new and radically different interpretations - if there are any at all - are only a widening of the same old rules, by which modern facts of life are forced into the antiquated frame of old.

CAROL - I fear, that the Judaism of Halacha, which the ruling Rabbinate of the State of Israel wants to impose today on the entire country, is liable to destroy not only the communal cohesion of the Jews but possibly also the true sense and real value of Judaism.

RABBI - I am not as pessimistic as you. Never overlook that the halachic tradition is derived from the Torah. The Torah in turn is a mystery based on the revelations at Sinai and on the impact of the epiphany. Fundamentally it has to be said, that the Rabbis of the Talmud and of the Midrash did not change the traditional commands issued through the Torah. But the real issue which should not be overlooked is the fact, that these originally straight-forward commands - they were mostly nothing but ethical mitzvot - were again and again hammered into new shapes by every new generation of rabbis. They were also enlarged and reinterpreted by the medieval philosophers, by the kabbalists, by the Hassidim, by the torch-carriers of Enlightenment - and finally by the reality of Israel. At everyone of these stages there were zealots among the spiritual leaders, who endeavoured to keep intact - and if they thought it was needed they reinforced them still more - the fences around the laws originally promulgated according to the Scriptures. At every stage of post-biblical history the rabbis-in-command adapted and rephrased these very same halachic laws - but never changed them; never adapted or reformed them in accordance with the progress society had made. The final outcome was, that the halacha was congealed into a permanently refrigerated survival which continues into our times.

CAROL - And to think that millions of Jews think the Halacha has been transmitted from heaven !

RABBI - Not all do so today - nor did so at all times. There is a midrash that during a heated debate among the rabbis about a halachic problem "a voice came from heaven and declared that the halacha is not in heaven".

ASHER - But neither could "heaven" ever have accepted, that the social injunctions of the shabath rest should have the Jews forego all the pleasures which bring relaxation and pleasure.

RABBI - I have another midrash for you: the Shabath, a wise Rabbi once said, is given to you and not you to the Shabath.

EG - You are well versed in the Midrashim, it appears.

RABBI - It is a very valuable way of giving a sense to the true meaning of many of the rules, laws and events mentioned in the Talmud. For by expressing these in form of a metaphor - for this is a midrash after all - a revelation cannot be tampered with. Should this happen, it might become impossible for the talmudic saying to be understood in its intended sense by even talmudically inexperienced people. In addition, a rule or a law or tradition - and with it the intended message - will with the help of a midrash be made to fit into the actual time and will not only reflect the cultural period of the time in which that midrash was composed.

AVNER - It seems to me, Rabbi, that underneath your criticism of Halacha you hide a great deal of respect for this arteriosclerotic legal system.

RABBI - In a certain sense this is true; for it fits suitably into the social, moral and civil duties of a large section of our nation.

CAROL - Can you really generalize in such a way? Look only at the halachic goings-on of the last weeks or so. We had the Pesach feast a short time ago. Look at the ritual cleaning of the house; the burning of the last crumbs of bread at a certain, rabbinically fixed hour before the festival week begins. Look at the rules regarding the baking and eating of the Mazoth.

RABBI - I look and think that the Pesach ceremonials and rituals are a pleasant tradition. And it was clever to make the necessary annual cleaning of the house a religious obligation, don't you think?

ASHER - Also the fake Roman banquet with the four obligatory glasses of wine and the stylized talks and singing.....

RABBI - You exaggerate. Many a cherished tradition in the civilized world has originated in a similar way.

ASHER - To which cherished tradition, deriving from the past, does the funny Aphikoman business of the Seder refer?

RABBI - It too is an ancient tradition which, I fully agree, has no meaning today. It is especially to be regretted, that it has been turned into a kind of blackmail business. But sit back and think and try to realize, that it is an indication of the true wisdom and of the great psychological insight of our ancient rabbis. You are right. Some

2000 years or more the Seder was indeed a culinary feast in the form of a banquet - of the kind in which the Romans indulged. After all, roman culture and customs were for long predominant in the Middle East. And this included banquets with a large consumption of wine. Four cups of wine were often too much for the youngsters of those days, who were wont to end the evening by descending on the town and - as the saying went in my youth - "painted the town red". What you termed "the Aphikoman business" prevented the youngsters from drinking more wine that evening - and from becoming drunk and rowdy.

EG - Very clever indeed.

RABBI - I agree, however, that the continued application of most of the halachic traditions and rules have no justification today. Let me only mention the baseless rule of the Shmitta Year, the "Year of Sacred Rest for the Land", when the agricultural lands could not be ploughed; when fields and gardens should "rest"; when the fruits of the trees remain unharvested. This was justified in ancient times when fertilizers were unknown, and when - due to smallness of the country - the elsewhere practised routine of one of three fields remaining alternately unploughed, could not be applied. Unfortunately, in today's Israel - while following the biblical injunction of the "Shmitta" - all possible subterfuges are applied: agricultural produce is certified as originating from outside Israel. Or the land is "sold" to non-Jews. Or the produce from lands in Israel which belong to Arabs is permitted. Or the argument that jewish lands under occupation in the "territories" are really not jewish lands.

CAROL - Is not the annual pre-Pesach "sale" ritual, wherein the Finance Minister empowers the Rabbinate to sell the country's 'chamez', - the wheat and other stuff in factories or shops worth billions - to an Arab for the duration of the holidays for a pittance, nothing but a mockery? Is it not an attempt by the religious Jews to cheat on their God?

ASHER - The items you have cited are small matters. In reality they are only inconveniences. But there are plentyful instances where in the name of halachic tradition true damage is done to the affected persons. Take the 'Agunoth', the 'abandoned wife who is prevented from getting a divorce; who has to remain unmarried because either the husband has disappeared and cannot be traced; or if he has not disappeared, refuses to grant his wife the divorce she demands. Even force, even a sojourn in jail, are without effect in most instances. Only a large bribe will in most of these instances make the blackmailing husband willing to divorce his wife. Should the Aguna dare to marry again without

waiting for the get from her estranged husband, her children and their children will for the next ten generations be exposed to the most awful fate. They will become the most miserable living beings in Jewish eyes: they and their descendants will be "Mazerim", bastards without rights and honour.

CAROL - While the children that husband produces in an adulterous liaison have no such handicap.

ASHER - Hiding behind Halacha; unsupervised by the demands of democracy; and uncontrolled by the laws of the State - the all-powerful Rabbinat determines whether a woman has a second chance to get married; or whether she is condemned to a life of solitude or misery.

RINAT - Why is such a situation tolerated? Why does the Government not interfere?

RABBI - The Government does not interfere because it is powerless in these matters. The orthodox Jews - let us call them the tradition-minded Jews - are politically very powerful in our country. Officially you will be given the explanation, that this lamentable situation has to be tolerated, because the orthodox Rabbinat bases its right to make such decisions on the laws which Moses received at Sinai. Mind you! Not the laws described in the Torah are meant but also - and in a certain sense mainly - those which God is supposed to have taught Moses orally. They are a set of laws which had not been written down like the Tora.

ASHER - Moses could possibly have learned all the unwritten laws of the Tora during the forty years he spent on the top of the Sinai Mountain.

RABBI - I agree. He certainly could not have had such a phenomenal memory. Also for this discrepancy the Rabbis have an explanation: we should think, we are advised, that Moses had only learned the principles, the sense, the essence of the divine laws promulgated in such a way there on the Sinai; and that in the forty years of his administration Moses translated them into practical rules and suitable laws.

AVNER - And on such fantasy basis the prophets and the talmudic sages took upon themselves the right to go on with their expanding and enlarging the sense of the laws!? This sounds to me unbelievable.

RINAT - Even if I wanted to acquire some "Yiddishkeit", all these laws and pre- and proscriptions would make this impossible.

EG - This should not necessarily be so. The Halacha contains and transmits - as has already mentioned here - the definite essence of the ethical principles in Judaism. It is for you to apply only these principles. It is left to you to adhere only to the rules which conform to your own ethic principles. How? You must listen to yourself, to

the whisper of your conscience. If you learn to do so, you will discover what is to your mind and in your philosophy still of value in these old laws. You will cherish what appears to you of moral value. You will apply to yourself what will make you feel fulfilled.

RABBI - You must learn to ckeck on, even to criticize, every misstep you make. You must learn to see in whatever you see, do and perceive an underlying purpose for your existence.

AVNER - All we have heard in the last hour is a specifically Jewish program. I think this indicates an ultimate program too. Do you really believe that Israel has been especially elected to be the moral measuring rod for the world ?

RABBI - Yes, I believe it has been selected to serve as the lithmus paper of all times.

CAROL - This, may I point out, is not an exclusive Jewish concept - and conceit. Also in modern times the Christians are less outspoken in this sense, they have in the past often claimed to be God's elected. The Crusaders, for instance, called themselves the 'new chosen people'.

EG - And the Moslems think so today. They believe they have been granted the right to conquer the whole world for Islam.

ASHER - But less us have no illusions. We Jews of today have no reason to think so. If your premises are correct I have to conclude, that in view of our ethical slate being anything but clean, our nation's prognosis cannot be very promising.

RABBI - I share your opinion. There is reason to fear that we are about to fail. Today we have not the excuse anymore, that we are forced to live and act in a reprehensible manner because we are not free and are a suppressed diaspora people.

AVNER - And do not overlook, that in all this we act on our own free will and accord.

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A man's fate

1993/4

Hermann M. SELZER Coll.

pt. 2 (chapters 7-18)
p. 96-197

AR 25045

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pp. 96-197

S E V E N

RINAT - May I ask, in continuation of our debate, how Christianity does face the question of predestination and that of man's fate ?

RABBI - Everything in man's life and fate is predestined, the Church says. This doctrine has been clearly circumscribed and defined in the teachings of St. Augustine. According to him, predestination dominates the human fate. But this does not apply to everybody. Only the future of elect ones among mankind is predestined. God's willingness to save the elected ones among his people, is an indication of divine grace. This theological guideline the Church has since continued to preach.

RINAT - What about the non-catholic denominations ?

RABBI - The Lutherans have taken over and preserved this doctrine.

CAROL - In Calvinism the concept of predestination is presented in an even more impressive and a more interesting form than in any of the other currents of Lutherism. This may have been one of the reasons, why it had been the Calvinists' social, political and economic concepts - as well as their theological doctrines - which could create the Puritan Movement in England. However, I have to make it clear, that for the Calvinists there is no "free will".

RINAT - Can somebody at last explain to me in clear words what "free will" implies ? I am at a loss to see where and how I fit in.

CAROL - I sympathize with you. I recall what the philosopher Hilary Putman once remarked: "I would gladly believe in 'Free Will' if only I knew what it means".

RABBI - It is not as difficult to understand as you make it sound. Fundamentally "free will" means, that we are ourselves responsible for what we do.

AVNER - Nietzsche has to my mind a more plausible definition: "Men are called free", he observed, "so that they might be judged and punished - so that they might be guilty".

RABBI - We do not have to share Nietzsche's pessimistic view. Kant's famous Cathegorical Imperative "...to act so that the making of our will may at all times serve as the principle of a general law" is to me more acceptable.

CAROL - The concept of man's free will comes mainly into play when it is a question of man's doing good or doing evil.

RINAT - Can a person be taught to be good, to avoid evil ?

CAROL - Goodness is teachable, says Plato.

RABBI - Plato reminds us also that "...the unjust man is not unjust on his own free will; for no man on his own free will chose to possess the greatest of evils".

EGO - Let us face the truth - and also the implied responsibility - that the free will to act is entirely ours. None of our actions are predestined. We are not only made to believe they are our own initiative. We are masters and initiators of all our actions and decisions. We have the free will - and we are endowed with the capacity - to react against the evil we carry inside us. And, by the way, this faculty of mankind to react according to its own free will and on its own initiative, is clearly reflected in the axiom that our world would otherwise not have been function properly as it has done so far. This I see as a primary truth; for the entire karman principle rests on this fact.

CAROL - And do you realize, that this is also a basic principle on which psychoanalysis rests ?

RABBI - What you both said just now fits also well into my personal conviction, that the way our free will acts and reacts is determined by our inbuilt moral gyroscope, whose function and directive - influenced by our environment and tested by our experiences - keep us on an even keel. It is this control instance which grants us the free will to decide and to act as we do.

AVNER - This leads me to reason, that this same "free will" of the mighty dictators; of the powerful armies; of the victorious generals - is also reflected in all the evil they are allowed to commit without having to fear a retaliation. The range within which your so-called "moral gyroscope" is effective - if at all it is put into action - is very limited. These men and their war machines can hurt us. They can and do humiliate us. In the end their miscalculations and their stupidity will bring them down - and not any moral forces.

EGO - But do not forget that they are powerless against the forces of nature - and that moral gyroscope of which we have been talking is such a natural force.

RABBI - I have to correct you both. In a wider sense our free will may extend even beyond what you have described as the limits of human power. I submit that man's free will extends even onto the universe. Man has the power to exert his will - on his own initiative and as the result of his intellectual and technical acquisitions - on this our world which has been created by the Creator. Yes, the Creator has created our universe - one of whose components is our planet. He has set our

planet into motion. Once this has been achieved, our world and all which lives in it is allowed the freedom - within the frame of its own laws of physiology and biology, of mechanics and physics - to develop further. To go on developing. To expand its faculties, its direction and its mechanism. Or to stay on its actual course and to keep its secrets. All this happened, and will continue to happen, into eternity; always regulated by the eternal laws of physics, biology and mechanics. But henceforth - that is to say since the creational process has been completed - all this will go on; will develop; will change or not - without any interference from the side of the Creator. It is left to the free will; to the initiative; and to the capabilities of us humans - that is to say in this case of our expert scientists - to act and work within the limits of the established cosmic rules. And within these limits and rules all else is left to mankind. In one respect and in one direction we have unlimited freedom to exert our free will: we ourselves can and should - by the exercise of our free will - develop our trends to do good, and suppress our tendencies to do evil.

EGO - What you said just now makes you appear more of a Deist than I would have expected from a Rabbi.

RABBI - Not quite. You are wrong to see in what I said specific deistic concepts. In Judaism God is both immanent and transcendent. In contrast Deism says that God is only transcendent - and not also or only immanent as the pantheists maintain. In what I have said of the mechanism which governs our world, God is certainly immanent as well as transcendent.

EGO - The deist agrees in principle, that God had created the world, but that once his work had been completed he does not rule or govern it anymore.

CAROL - Also the Epicureans thought along similar lines; that is to say, that the gods do not concern themselves with mankind.

RABBI - I want to make you to get thoroughly acquainted with the far more explicit views of the deists. These may have been known in some form or other already in the past, but they were clearly formulated mainly at the time of the Enlightenment. The deist says, that once the world has come into existence and has started to function, God washed his hands of his creation. He has henceforth not anymore been interested in what goes on in the world and on this planet. I can impossibly be a deist, as you seem to think, because in my personal belief God does continue to take an interest in this world and all it contains. Furthermore, I firmly believe that God intervenes again and again whenever Nature and the animated world, in particular mankind, develop in, or

take on, a wrong or otherwise unacceptable direction. In this way I explain also what we have heard described here as what may be called "an interference" of a divine power in the life of man. But I certainly do not want to imply that this divine power intervenes in the life of every man woman or child. Or does so every time. Nor should everything that happens or has happened to an individual be eo ipso explained in this way. As I have already proposed, let us not deviate too far in this direction - we might possibly have at a future date an opportunity to take up this issue again.

CAROL - I agree, Rabbi. Let us start on a different tract. You mentioned in your explanations, that there is a distinct purpose behind the Creation Event in general, and the creation of mankind in particular. What is in your opinion this purpose? What may the purpose be behind the development of today's mankind from a primitive something walking on all four into the highly developed one who walks in space?

RABBI - You are not the first, nor will you be the last, to raise this question. Our philosophers and theologians have searched for an answer but have not come up with a satisfactory one. In my personal view, whoever has planned this world - and somehow or other directs our life and the process of our development - has certainly an aim and purpose in mind. I call this instance with justification "God", even though I spoke of this "whoever" having a "mind" - that is to say I depicted God in a to me unacceptable anthropomorphic image. There are others who call it Nature. This they because they avoid the responsibility of forming a clear perspective by means of a clear definition. I have no doubt that the ultimate aim and purpose of Creation has been the growing up of a supreme specimen of man. And it stands to reason, that this development does not aim at mankind's technical perfection - or even at its anatomical- physiological one - but at a mankind reaching the highest possible ethical and spiritual level.

RINAT - Why? To what end?

RABBI - I do not know. But in my respect for the Supreme Power which has created this world and man; and in my admiration for the perfection of what man has created; and in my extreme optimism regarding what mankind is still going to achieve in its future development - I have not the slightest doubt that there is a purpose and an aim in all this.

AVNER - Is your hypothesis not jeopardized by your inability to give an adequate and unequivocal answer? Are you not unhappy, or at least frustrated, by the ignorance you share with us all?

RABBI - On the contrary! I am glad we do not have the full answer;

that we do not know what the purpose and aim might be; that we have not uncovered the ultimate secret. For had we the full knowledge of God's plans, you may be sure that our failure to meet the demands arising therefrom; that our striving to qualify for the expected progress; that our despair for having failed - might make us sink into despondency. It would with certainty paralyze our will to strive for success. It would with certainty separate mankind in those who continue their efforts to achieve a higher level of perfection, and those who give up in despair.

EG - I will go even further and say that, had we even only an approximate knowledge of the ultimate truth, there would not be anything left for us to strive for. The mystery of God, of Creation, of the Universe would have gone.

RABBI - I agree. By remaining ignorant we can continue to search and to investigate. By remaining ignorant of the ultimate purpose of our existence, we can outline the frame within which we can follow the moral duties we know are imposed upon us. Within our own programmed aim we can decide, with our own free will, whether or not we should cease marshaling our energies. Within this liberty granted to us can we conclude and decide whether or not to nourish our hopes and aspirations.

CAROL -and nothing prevents us from creating one religion after the other !

RABBI - You are right. And create one religion after the other. For what else was religion originally but the fearful, ignorance-based reaction to the threats which the fearful, misunderstood happenings in nature had on man's inner balance ? What else had religion's aim originally and primarily been but the search to give some kind of an explanation for the mysteries of nature ? What else had religion originally been but the quest for an answer to the question what might be the reason for our existence ?

EG - And religion had, and continues to have, also the task to console the bereaved; to soothe the hurt and ease the pain which mankind has from the beginning had to suffer ? Religion had the primary purpose to alleviate mankind's despair by promising him a sorrow-free future somewhere in the beyond.

CAROL - The unfortunate development all and every religion has undergone - had possibly to undergo - was due to the imaginary duty, which the founders of each one of the religions present and past had felt imposed upon himself, to adjust the soothing and the consoling, the explaining and the promising to the intellectual standard of the masses; to the degree of education of the people. By the way, it seems to me that for both of these, the intellect and the education of their

people, those who corrected, enlarged, re-interpreted the transmitted religion, had only very little respect. They decorated in addition the overhauled belief system and its religious structure they produced, with symbols and rituals, with miracles and myths.

EG - And therefore, when man started out to form for himself a religion, he could not avoid to depict God in human form.

CAROL - And this may have been the cause, the time and the reason for the first artists to be born.

ASHER - What does religion have to say to the men and women whose intellect and whose education lift them above the at best average standard of the masses ?

RABBI - It points to that which they have ample occasion to observe all around them - especially in their own environment - and advises them: form your own frame for the basic truth religion has to offer; and call it your philosophy of life, if you like. The intellectually blessed may try to modify the basics of the religion into which they were born. But as a rule this is not advisable, as in most instances they will thereby destroy the very platform on which they intend to build. Or they may join one or the other sect or movement of which there is never a shortage. Or they may create for themselves with the knowledge they have gained; with the conclusions they have reached; and with the aspirations they nourish - a structure which they think is totally new or made up of their own independent concepts. Or they may become atheists. Or they may escape into agnosticism.

ASHER - Is there a reason to differentiate between an agnostic and an atheist ?

RINAT - There is quite a difference between these two. The agnostic states that he is unable to know whether there is a God.

CAROL - The concept of agnosticism is not old. In the last century it was formed by A.Huxley. The gnosis of the Church which pretends to know what man cannot know is wrong, he said. It is impossible for man to find out.

RABBI - The agnostic, in contrast to the theist and atheist, finds that the question of God's existence is beyond man's capacity to answer.

AVNER - How did Huxley know that he did not know ?

CAROL - He knew a lot about God but felt he did not know God.

EG - These are the lame excuses of an agnostic. In truth he ignores the facts and evades the arguments which stare into his face.

RINAT - In such case the attitude of the agnostic should make him more offensive to God than that of the atheist.

E I G H T

RINAT - (addressing Ego) Am I right to suppose, that you too have chosen your own way; that you too have constructed for yourself a belief system on which to anchor your philosophy of life ?

EG_ - In this our circle I feel free to confess, that this is indeed the case. Try to see me standing on the tower of belief I have built with the help of my philosophy of life. Visualize me admiring the vista opened to me. Visualize me looking out for answers which are still escaping me. Visualize me searching for what once upon a time had been called the "philosopher's stone" with which I might be given the power to erase all the never ceasing doubts; and by which I could make appear to myself less audacious the self-directed conclusions whose enormity I fear to accept; but whose promises I wish to be true.

RABBI - I suppose this has been the reason why you have invited us to share with you these conclusions; to have us act as the catalysts by which your conceptions can crystalize into a proper shape; to have us be the crucible in which the pure elements are separated from the slag and dross. However, as I have already pointed out at an earlier occasion, we shall be far better endowed to do so, if you take us along the path you have walked, run, fought to reach the belief tower you mentioned; the faith castle you have constructed for yourself.

EG_ - I do not mind doing so, for I agree that this is the easiest way for you to understand what I want to convey. But I do not intend to draw for you every step I had to take in the process of achieving of what I flatter myself is my mental and spiritual maturation. I am not a deep furrowing philosopher. Nor a trained theologian. Neither can I boast of being a talented teacher. Let it suffice, therefore, for me to say, that I thought I was entitled to the conclusion that the main elements in my ratiocination; the starting point of my reasoning; the comprehension leading me onto my tower - were my efforts to search for an understanding of what animates us; of what turns us into spiritual beings; of what life means and represent; of what is the maximal basic knowledge we can elucidate about our being. I am speaking of what is usually called our soul. There must be something which differentiates us from other animated elements and inanimated matter in nature. For, based on my belief in a Divine Creator, I have no doubt that a soul, an

an unusual something - separate and distinct from the body - resides in us, directs us, controls us during our lifetime. I made a long and detailed study of what the various philosophers and the many theologians have to tell us about our soul. I researched what the various forms of gnosticism and the many types of mysticism think to know about our soul. Bear with me while I expound my views

I learned from the study of the so-called "primitive" people, that their problems - and the way they solved them - were and are in principle not different from our own problems, and from the way we try to solve them today. Suffice it to say, that through all of mankind's never ending quests for an explanation of the mysteries of life and death, runs since ever the same urge for that same knowledge with which also our civilization and our generation seek to find consolation, safety and hope. And at every stage it had been the founders of religions; the philosophers of religion; the revelators of religion - who have felt called upon to quieten mankind's anxiety; who have come forward to satisfy mankind's needs; who have constructed for mankind a spiritual umbrella.

N I N E

ASHER - We have heard it said here, that all and everything which exists has been created according to a plan; and that all and everything we see and are has been created and continues to exist for a definite purpose. Is this an absolute statement which does not permit any doubt ?

EGO - If this question is addressed to me, my answer is a definite "Yes". Yes, it is ! As I have said before, it is my firm belief that we have been created for a purpose. At which other conclusion could a thinking individual arrive ? There has to be a purpose. Otherwise there would not be a sense in our existence. Neither would there be a sense in all we perceive.

CAROL - What have you, Rabbi, to say to such an absolutist statement ?

RABBI - I cannot but agree with what you have heard. I recall our recent discussion about his subject. It appears to me, that we have not yet sufficiently aired this subject. It is evident, that there are still some doubts or uncertainties left. I do not mind that we take up the subject again - even at the cost of hearing the same or similar arguments repeated. I shall answer Carol's question with a similar argument with which you have heard it answered before: all which exists has to have a sense even though we are insufficiently equipped to see the sense. Looking back on the earliest stages of mankind; and awed by man's continued acquisition over the millennia of such enormous knowledge; and considering the apparent limitless nuclear and electronic techniques which our scientists have acquired in the last decades - I am still more than ever convinced that there is a purpose in our having been created; in our being at all; in the fact of our existing. I too have for a long time been pondering the meaning of man's life. I too have become convinced that this world of ours and all therein cannot have a sense if there is not also a purpose. And I have since long become convinced, that this world - at least our planet earth - has been created; and that mankind has been allowed to develop at such breath-taking speed - for one main purpose only: that we humans develop into a society of ethic beings.

EGO - May I add that this breath-taking speed in mankind's acquisition of new knowledge of which you speak, has been more than ever accelerated in recent years.

RINAT - And that at no time has there been more strife, wars, revolutions, famines in every part of the world.

EGO - And more and more infectious diseases turn out to be immune against antibiotics.

AVNER - What, do you want to imply with your words ? What do you think may all this signify ?

EGO - I do not know - but I cannot help thinking, that also all this development must somehow have a deeper meaning. I have no doubt that my words will not affect those who simply deny anything which they can see and touch; to those who explain these impressive and often frightening changes as nothing more than the outcome of a self-propagating and a self-perpetuating technical and scientific progress. However, those who have even a limited faith in a divinely willed creation must be brought to think, that also this - to all appearances unlimited - progress in the new electronic and nuclear sciences; that the increasing hostility among nations armed with the most dangerous weaponry; that the alarming growth of criminality, especially among the young people; that the modern medicinal therapy's rapidly increasing loss of effectiveness and so on - must have a meaning within the divine scheme of things.

CAROL - This sounds very mysterious to me.

AVNER - Yet, what you have expounded can only be acceptable to those who believe in miracles, mysteries and wonders.

RABBI - But you will have to accept, that every faith, belief and excursion beyond the naked realities needs more than a pinch of the mystic.

AVNER - Do you really think so ? Do you mean to say, that it is one of the purposes and aims of a religion to function also as the parent organization of mysteries ? Undoubtedly - and possibly at that time unavoidably - the founders of religions required for their creations a large dose of magic in addition to an injection of a fantasy-rich mythology, in order to make up the skeleton over which a religion is moulded. Do you think the continuation of these magics and myths are still necessary ?

RABBI - Every religion, as if by definition, has common borders with the mysterious and the numinous; with the metaphysical and the holy. This is so, because every religion has been created with the evident aim to bring relief to the insecure, fearful, uncertain

people of its time. However, every truly perceived religion is also built up with such a latitude, that - without losing thereby the fundamentals of its theology - it can undergo changes in accordance with the changing times. It can adjust itself, whenever necessary, to the advances in scientific knowledge; to the ongoing progress in technology; to the changes which in every century take place in man's intellectual perception. This has the effect, that a religion can continue to express and present the never ceasing spiritual needs of generation after generation in the technicolour which makes it fit the cultural level of the time.

AVNER - I hate to contradict you - and this not only because I have no special knowledge in this field. But from what I have seen here in this country, the only adjustment the ultra-orthodox Jews have made to modern times is the issue of the Talmud on computer discs.

RINAT - May I enlarge on this with the question, Rabbi, whether you can name a religion which is blessed with so much insight as you have outlined ?

RABBI - I only said, that every religion has such an inbuilt potential - but, I fully agree and have to confess - that to my knowledge none of the religions appears to make much use of this possibility.

ASHER - Does this not render a religion antiquated - and thus in view of its need to appear truthworthy - also to a great extent useless and therefore superfluous ?

RABBI - I agree that the rigidification of the religions - our own included - has deprived the religions of the necessary flexibility. Neither can I deny, that the lack of adjustment and advancement has estranged a large part of mankind.

EG -and has forced a large part of dissatisfied mankind to seek in revolutionary movements; in civil disobedience; in social upheaval - the inner adjustment which, were today's religions properly aligned with the actual demands, might have provided.

AVNER - I am afraid you all have a very optimistic - and no less also a very lenient - view of the effects religion has on our society. You seem to have formed such an outlook, because you are standing not on solid ground but on a religious platform; because you look at all issues from a purely religious angle; and because you judge everything from a religious point of view.

RABBI - How could it be otherwise ? Does an atheist who denies the possibility that God exists; who rejects whatever "smells of

religion"; and who judges whatever approaches the metaphysical - stand on an anything but his own ideological platform ? Does perhaps the agnostic, who is more careful and tells me that God's existence cannot either be proved or disproved ? You demand scientific proof for the existence of God the Creator; of God the Sublime Spirit; of God the Omnipotent - but God cannot be proved scientifically. He can only be known and accepted by faith. We theists have this faith. To us God is the transcendental God who has created the Universe.

CAROL - Can I not be a Jew, a proud and self-assured Jew by culture ? Can I not be as good a Jew as the deeply religious Jew without the need to subscribe to the Jewish faith ? Can one not doubt what is officiously taught in the Jewish religion - and still be a valid Jew ?

RABBI - I am ready to honour your attitude as long as your doubt is the outcome of a prolonged study; of deep thought; and of a thorough analysis. For doubt has not of necessity to be an indulgence in negativism. Nor has it to reflect a trend to nihilism. It can also be the starting point on the philosophical approach to the truth.

CAROL - In the Cartesian sense of "Cogito ergo sum" ?

RABBI - More even in that of Augustine's "Si fallor, sum".

RINAT - I see myself surrounded by philosophers who, to my regret, refer in a familiar way to other philosophers long since gone. If you want to offer us some more of what these dead philosophers have to say about God, please do so in words a simple non-philosopher can understand.

CAROL - In the Bible, as well as in the Scriptures of other religions, the concept of God has been clearly defined - but never discussed. A discussion by jewish philosophers became possible only at the time the Middle Ages ended and when the Renaissance made its appearance. As a rule the jewish philosophers - the new ones in their often large number of books, essays and lectures - revealed a great depth of biblical knowledge. This enabled them to become leaders and instructors of the jewish people. However, for christian philosophers and theologians such a freedom of expression became only a possibility when the Enlightenment broke through the barriers which the Church had erected. But the same cannot be said of moslem philosophers. So far they have not been given the liberty to follow suit.

ASHER - What was the stand of the talmudic rabbis ?

RABBI - Our talmudic sages have regularly discussed among themselves the image they had of God. They did so mainly in form of parables or by implications - and usually as an anthropomorphic image. Our medieval theologian-philosophers have, however, evaded this issue. They have rejected all forms of anthropomorphism and have declared, that God, his origin and the origin of the world are beyond human comprehension. Maimonides made this very clear in his statement that "God is incorporeal; to believe otherwise is heresy".

CAROL - This should not make you form the idea, however, that the age preceding that of Maimonides had been an intellectually barren one. It is impressive to observe the veritable explosion in philosophical and theological speculation which occurred around the 9th to the 11th centuries. This development has rightly been attributed to the knowledge of greek culture and wisdom which the western philosophers and theologians of that epoch had been able to absorb. For it was only then - and for the first time - that the writings of the greek philosophers had become known through translations into arabic and latin by moslem and jewish experts. The result was, that a very prolific collaboration ensued between jewish and arabic philosophers. It was only much later - at the time of the Renaissance, as has already been mentioned - that Christian philosophers and theologians joined this elite.

RINAT - Let us hear what some of these old philophers had to say about God.

CAROL - Our medieval philosophers tried to express their view of God in what sounds to me a rather negative form of evaluation. They did not state what and how God is, but what and how he is not. For instance: they did not say that God is wise or great; or that he exists. They said instead that God is more wise than anybody or anything else. They said that God is more great than anything in existence. They said that God does more than exist.

ASHER - To my regret all this does not allow me to better understand what these philosophers wanted to bring home.

EG - You are right. Let me say all this in simpler terms. In their peculiar way our medieval philosophers wanted to state, that God's wisdom and greatness are immesurable; that his presence and existence are beyond man's comprehension; that it is beyond our ability to describe even God's attributes only in adequate words.

RABBI - As you have heard, the jewish philosophers of the Middle

Ages tried to form an impression of God which - in contrast to the one conveyed in our Scriptures and in the Talmud - is entirely without anthropomorphic features. Sa'adya ben Joseph, who lived in the 10th century, thought that it is possible for man to obtain the right knowledge of God with the help of his reason. He raised the question, how one could ever imagine a material world to have had its origin from a spiritual God. The impossibility of such an event indicated to him, that the cosmos is not eternal; that it must instead have had a beginning at one point in history. And, he concluded that, considering our well-organized and perfectly functioning world, we have to come to the conclusion that God must be Wisdom, Life and Power.

CAROL - Avicenna, who lived at about the same as Sa'adya - that is around the start of this millennium - maintained, that whoever is endowed with the right intelligence can discover God on his own and all by himself, because the right concept of God is acquired by reason and not through an image of God which is created by superstition and which is presented as an anthropomorphism.

RABBI - He also wrote that whereas the universe is eternal, there must be - in the aristotelian sense - an "Uncaused Being", an "Unmoved Mover". That is to say, that somebody must have started the chain of causes and effects - and this can only have been God. God, he concluded, must therefore be perfect. Even for this primary reason God has, therefore, to be worshipped by us.

EG - I am sorry I have not dedicated much time to this group of philosophers. I shall do so now. I had been more attracted by the philosopher-poets of that epoch. One such beloved poet-philosopher-figure of that age was Ibn Gavirol who echoed the greek-originated idea that Creation took place by emanations coming from God. In particular by emanations which God had willed.

CAROL - Another interesting figure of that same age was the moslem poet-philosopher-mystic al-Ghazzali. He lived in the 11th century. He wrote, that after long searching and doubting; and with the help of the study of Sufism - he had gained an intuitive sense of God. However, he never was a fully convinced Sufi. He thought that the God, whom the Sufis saw in their states of ecstasy, was a fantasy and not a reality. His conclusion was, that a true sense of the Divine can only be perceived through a religious experience and not by mysticism.

RABBI - Another important philosopher-theologian of that age,

a contemporary of al-Ghazzali, was Bhaya ibn Pakuda. Has anybody of you heard of him? No? It is regrettable that he is less known than the other philosophers of that age. He taught, that the world could not have come about by accident. For the orderliness and perfection of the the world demand, that it had been purposefully planned and created by a Creator. Only prophets and philosophers know how to worship God, he maintained. The prophets achieve this by intuition; and the philosophers by reasoning. Everybody else worships God in his own image. Reason can tell us, that God exists - but it tells us nothing further about God, was Bhaya's conclusion.

EG_ - I like what he taught and thought.

RABBI - A much better known figure of the 12th century was Yehuda Halevi. He is no less appreciated as a poet and esteemed as a philosopher, than Ibn Gavirol. His important opus "The Khuzari" is read still today. His philosophical statements were, that God is a personal experience; that the Jews have a unique position among the nations; that God is the completion of a man's and a woman's potentialities; that the God each one of us encounters is uniquely our own.

RINAT - I like this too. I shall study the "Khuzari".

EG_ - He also categorically stated, that God cannot be proved rationally. Faith in God which is based on logic, has no religious value. He did not - possibly could not - offer an explanation how a perfect impersonal God could have created this material imperfect world.

CAROL - I read once an interesting explanation of the soul's relation to the human being, which is attributed to Yehuda Halevi: "The soul waits for the entry into the fetus until the latter's vital powers are sufficiently completed, so that it is enabled to perceive the higher values of things".

RABBI - And finally, before we conclude this diversion into medieval philosophy, I am going to mention Thomas Aquinas, the leading christian philosopher of the 13th century. He was very much under the impact of the greek philosophers who - as you have learned - had become available in translations by then. I have here one of his quotations which are of interest to us: "Hence in the last resort all that man knows of God is to know that he does not know him, since he knows not that God surpasses all that we can understand of him".

CAROL - "God is he who he is", he said.

AVNER - My respectful obedience to these old philosophers. They had the courage to thoroughly change what the Bible had to say about God. It is not so much my grudge - I must in all honesty concede - as my surprise, that not only so much value is placed on the Bible, but that it is in addition also granted divine attributes. As you will know better than I, in the Codex of Hamurabi these very same ethical principles which are admired in the Bible have already prevailed in ancient Babylon. To my mind the suspicion is justified, that the writer of the Bible may have taken these over from there. Or am I wrong in my conjecture? Please take note that I am cautious and said "may" instead of "must".

RABBI - Why should there not have been an influence of the Babylonian ethical codes on the ancient Israelite people? It is a well known and generally accepted fact, that neighbouring cultures always influence each other. This was the case in ancient times as it is today. You will find in Judaism also reflections of hellenistic and iranian and other cultural influences. But this in no way reduces the greatness of the Bible which reflects, next to the influences I have mentioned, also the high degree of morality and justice, of honesty and decency so specific for Judaism - and which you are sure not to find in other religions. Let the following suffice as one of the many examples I could cite: the Bible commands that the slaves have to be treated as members of the family; that the impounded or mortgaged property has to be returned after seven years etc. This is specific for Judaism and not found in Hamurabi's legislation.

EGG - And let me add, that while Hamurabi demanded that one has to honour one's father, in the Ten Commandments it is ordered that one has to honour one's father and one's mother. This must have been in the eyes of the people of those ancient times a tremendous difference of conception.

RABBI - I feel pained when I meet people, who will not accept with open-minded tolerance that which is after all acceptable to intelligent and cultured people everywhere. So much of our inner disquiet is due to the excessive and unjustified doubts we harbour; and much of our unhappiness is due to the unanswered questions which do not cease to bother us. In a world which has to be based on truth and reality - but where absolute knowledge is not given to us - it is religion which answers life's metaphysical questions; which provides comfort and assurance to mankind.

AVNER - I have no religion, as you will have discovered.

RABBI - Better say you have no specific faith; for everybody harbours some kind of religiosity within himself.

AVNER - Why can I have no faith but have to have religion ?

RABBI - Because you cannot deny a faith. Were you blessed with a faith, you would have found some way or other to express your faith in some form or other.

AVNER - Please define what you understand as faith.

RABBI - Faith is the state of mind and spirit of a religiously minded person which he tries to express in his prayers. Faith means obedience to God's moral demands. As I said just now: faith is expressed in prayers; and these, in turn, are supported by symbolism and ritualism. Faith, finally, is the common denominator which unites people of equal belief; with similar standards of morality; and with the same trust in the Sublime - into socially loosely formed but ritualistically strictly directed communities of worshippers.

AVNER - For faith prayer is apparently a sine qua non ?

EGO - Prayer is a sine qua non. Prayer is that opportunity given to us, by which we have to verbalize all we think, fear and hope. Prayer is the means by which we communicate with the divine. Prayer is a way to clarify our thoughts, to show us the path to repentance. "It is the midway to atonment", says a Midrash. Once you can pray, all the rigidity of your mind and spirit will melt away.

RABBI - Prayer presupposes man's awareness that he is about to approach God. This approach has to be one of humility. For with and in our prayer we acknowledge our dependency on God. Prayer demands - and also means - that we are opening our heart; that we had laid aside our pride; that we are honest in our addressing God.

RINAT - I can well imagine that this is easy for a mystic. But for an average mortal, I think, this is very difficult

RABBI - Not only the mystic but also the sincere devotee can do this. Both have the great advantage - you may call it fortune - that they can turn their prayer into a dialogue.

EG_ - In this dialogue they address the God who resides within themselves.

ASHER - Would you not, if you see God in yourself, ultimately pray to yourself ?

EGO - Indeed, I do. Within myself my Self addresses the Great Self - which is otherwise usually not approachable - in the hope

that he may be approachable in this way. And even if I do not succeed; even if this is not the right approach - by addressing my Self within myself I at least become aware of myself; of my deficiencies; of my aspirations; of my hope. I therewith mobilize my energies to place morality, self-awareness, goodness into the central, the right position owed to them.

RINAT - And what about faith in this respect ?

CAROL - "Faith is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands", is the simple definition Kant has provided.

EG - Do these words of Kant not provide the right answer to the questions which have been raised just now ?

RABBI - May I enlarge on what we have just now heard in such clear terms about the value of prayers by adding, that all which faces us; that all we encounter; that all we suffer or enjoy; that all we gain or lose - can through the medium of prayer make us conscious of the basic and ultimate purpose of our existence. Mankind's tragedy is that only few of us see this, realize this.

AVNER - What, for instance, do I not see or realize ?

EG - That all which we have to face in our lives - the good and the bad, the pleasures and the pains, the failures and the successes - are tests with which we are confronted.

AVNER - If this is so, I can only conclude from my experiences, that more or less every man and woman anywhere; that every nation in the entire world; and every religion past and in existence - have failed the most elementary tests. But why are we to be blamed for having failed ? We are only the passive participants in these tests ! Would any reasonable person blame a laboratory animal, if the test in which it is used fails or gives wrong results ?

EG - It is not only the actions of the active evil-doers which are weighed. It is not only the outcome of whatever action which may be counted as a test to be judged. What counts also - and it counts a great deal - is how and to what degree whoever is involved makes use of the opportunities which are offered to him in the evolvment of such a process. In other words: what represents to a great extent a true test is not what we do or not do; whether consciously or unconsciously, positively or negatively we affect our neighbour or our environment. That which - in addition, mind you - counts greatly in the evaluation of the test; that which is also counted for or against us - is how we ourselves react to our fortunes or our luck; to our failures or to our escapes; to our

suffering or to our pains.

RINAT - You mean to say, that we are tested by the way we as individuals handle a pleasant event or an unpleasant situation ? And in particular, how we react and behave as individuals in our relationship to other individuals ?

RABBI - I am willing to agree. But this a heavy demand on our energies and our willpower. Only few can succeed, I think. The unceasing endeavour to act in accordance with such a purpose of our life must take up every hour and all the energy. I suppose that the ones who do succeed will qualify for sainthood. But, may I ask you, would we here - and with us most all of mankind - not have to be dismissed as failures, as failed products, were this the exclusive purpose of why we are alive in this world ? From what I learned of you in the course of our conversation I do not doubt, that you strive to live according to such a program. I sincerely hope and pray you will conquer all the difficulties you will inevitably and undoubtedly encounter. But such a program cannot and does not fit all of us us mortals. I am ready to confide in you, that during all the years I am engaged in my rabbinic profession I have not met even one person who is actively or practically engaged in such a way of life.

RINAT - Who would qualify for sainthood ?

RABBI - Right ! How then do you justify my existence ? How do you see my life ? How do you judge Avner's life ? How do you view life on earth in general ?

CAROL - In still other words: we want to hear from you, how you see the purpose of our own existence; how you see the ultimate destiny of mankind; and how you see the final fate of life on this planet - in view of the fact, that the vast majority of mankind have so far failed and continues to fail to live in accordance with the strict program you have outlined to us ?

EG - I well understood the doubt, the mistrust even, I sense expressed in your questions. But, I am afraid, I cannot help you. I am compelled to tell you, that I do not know more than what I have told you so far. Sorry ! I used the wrong word. I do not know - I only believe I know. I am sustained by an inner assurance that I am right. I feel within me, that this is the truth. But I cannot speak of an absolute knowledge - at least not in this gremium.

RINAT - But what you have depicted cannot be the exclusive

purpose of our life. How can this have been the real intention behind all Creation ? Why has life continued to exist throughout all these billions of years, considering that so far the divine experiment you presuppose has in every generation absolutely and clearly ended in failure ?

EG_ - I have to repeat, that I do not know the precise answer to your questions. But I can offer you the hypothesis, that our actual world is not the first on this planet. Or better still, that the human race is not the first one which had been developed - let me better say has been allowed, has been made to develop - over untold millions of years. How do we know that in the course of this planet's billions of years old history we are the only living entity which has been slowly brought up to the prevailing high intellectual, biological, scientific and technical standard ? How can you say that our human race has been the first and last and only one ever given every opportunity to grow into that ethical standard and perfection which I mentioned as the only logical purpose why we living beings have been created ?

ASHER - Do you imply that there have been other races, other kinds of beings which have failed ? If so, what happened to those who have failed ?

EGO - They have disappeared.

AVNER - Can you prove this with archaeological finds ?

EG_ - I too had to overcome such an objection. I could do so by persuading myself, that those past worlds had to be in every aspect different from our actual one. Even in case the beings of these past worlds had possessed a highly developed standard of some kind of a civilization similar to ours - and they are sure to have had one such - it should no surprise us, that whatever they had left in structures, arts and literature has totally disappeared. Do not forget that I speak of cultures, of civilizations, of living races which had existed possibly hundreds of millions of years ago.

RINAT - Only the underground oil deposits may witness their past existence.

CAROL - The folklore of many a people in ancient times, and that of not few of those of today - in particular of those which we love to classify as primitive - speaks of worlds which have once existed on our earth and have disappeared without a trace.

RABBI - Also our own Bible hints at past worlds of such a kind, or at least of races which once existed and have gone. For instance

we are told of giants, or angels descended from heaven who mixed with the earthly creatures - and which were wiped out by the Flood.

AVNER - These types may have been only invaders from another continent here on earth. Such an idealization or legendization is not impossible to imagine. Do not forget, that when the first Spanish conquerors appeared in the Americas in the 1490s, they were thought by the natives to have arrived from the stars. Had these brutal invaders not proved how much they are earthly creatures, the saga of godlike beings having come down from heaven would to this day confuse historians and theologians alike.

CAROL - I wish that certain elements of our society would also disappear, those who have led to the prevailing state of affairs where ancient rules of conduct are allowed to go on dominating the Jewish life of today. Thus the old Jewish traditions, that is the antiquated halachic rules, have remained valid to this day.

RABBI - Modernizing trends have at all times been known in our history, but they could not penetrate the walls of orthodoxy. Even today we have not gained acceptance of our reformist program. However many changes have entered modern thinking Judaism.

EG - For instance it is possible today - at last to some degree - to give women their rightful position in society, even to somehow accept homosexuality and so on.

RINAT - It is unlikely, I fear, that Israel will become a pluralistic society in our lifetime. The political power of the orthodox Jews will continue to influence whatever government is going to be elected in the near future.

RABBI - This is indeed an unwelcome situation. But it should not colour our outlook on life. It should not make us despondent. It is wrong, pitifully wrong, that you and so many of us react so negatively to the exigencies of life. This is only made possible because we see our lives as a futile span of existence. This is wrong. Our life is not at all futile. Our relationship with others, with our neighbours should never be futile. Such a pessimistic outlook destroys not only the joy which life has to offer. It makes also a mockery of whatever purpose life may have - whatever that purpose may be. But there cannot be any doubt, that there is such a purpose and that it is an important purpose. That it is an ethically significant purpose. And that it is a for mankind rewarding purpose.

AVNER - Let us not turn romantic. We exist. This is a fact.

And it is a fact, that we are conscious of our existence. It is this which is important. And this should be enough of a fact.

CAROL - This cannot be enough.

RABBI - I would formulate it similarly: the fact that we exist and have to face all the many difficulties in life is not enough. The purpose of life and of what forms man's destiny is not his struggle with his neighbours; nor is it his endless efforts to dominate nature and to overcome its dangers. It is man's inner struggle against evil and his efforts to overcome the negative side of his nature which is important.

RINAT - Mention has been made that it is faith which is a necessary ingredient for one's understanding and realization of the values of religion.

RABBI - You are right. Faith is necessary. Without faith man is lost. For faith expresses an absolute trust in God's existence; an absolute belief in God's interest in mankind's wellbeing; an absolute trust in his care, And above all an absolute trust in God's love for the world, for its people and for the single individual.

EG - Faith means having that inner feeling for what the Rabbi said. It means to be awed by this knowledge without being frightened or cowed.

RABBI - Faith, mind you, is not a provable knowledge. It is the blind acceptance which does not look for proof. Neither is it a creed, nor a belief in any belief system. It is the intellectual acceptance, expression and presentation of a creed. It is the trusting acceptance without a need for proof of a reality which does not demand any proof.

EG - Luther said that faith is the way to salvation.

CAROL - The Bhaktis of Hinduism express their faith as devotional love for God Vishnu.

EG - And the Sufis of Islam their's as a mysterious love for Allah.

RABBI - "Unless you have faith you will not understand", says Jesaya.

T E N

RINAT - Let us hear some more about God.

ASHER - Yes ! Let us talk some more about God. But let us keep in mind that we are not all philosophers nor theologians, but curious people who want to acquire the knowledge to which we have a right. This will give us the opportunity to acquire a properly focused comprehension of the issues we are exploring here. This may help all of us also, to form an equilibrated view of those of the world's problems which lie beyond the technical aspects of our lives.

RABBI - I will agree that we talk "some more" about God - under the condition that you will be careful not to offend, criticize or ridicule any of the faiths on which we may touch. Nor that anybody of us will belittle the belief and the opinion others among us here may hold. Let us show due respect for other people's religious convictions, even if we do not agree with them or are not moved by them. In other words: before we set out on our program let us agree to treat as holy that which is holy to others even if it is not so to ourselves.

EGO - I support what you say, Rabbi. There are millions and millions of people who find fulfillment in their religious beliefs. We here are civilized people; and this obliges us to respect other people and their beliefs. Above all, we have to make ourselves never forget the fundamental fact, that our God may not be not like the God of others; and that the God of others is not like our God. This fact gives us by no means the right to judge or criticise that which is thought divine by others. Let us remember what we have already learned here in our circle: that every religion has set itself the task to establish the truth with the means and through the approach it thinks best.

RABBI - Our talk about God should start first of all with the attempt to gain a full knowledge of how God is perceived. We shall start with Judaism's perception of God. When introducing the Jewish God I have to point out that he is a priori a transcendent God; that he addresses man; that he reverberates in man; that he is found everywhere in the Universe; that he is anywhere, everywhere and

in everything.

CAROL - Is this the true definition of the Jewish monotheistic God? Are your words "God is everywhere" not the expression usually applied to a pantheistic God?

RABBI - No, it is not! I said God is anywhere, everywhere and in everything; but I did not say that God is represented in everything. My words mean that God can at times become immanent anywhere and in everything.

EGG - I feel also addressed by Carol's question. I personally have certainly not a pantheistic view of God. Neither have I a mystic view of God. I too have a transcendental view of God. Simply expressed it means, that God is within me. And it means that God addresses me directly and personally.

RINAT - Before we continue, I would be grateful if somebody would explain to me the meaning of "transcendental".

CAROL - In Kant's philosophy it means an a priori knowledge of an unknown and unknowable - but at the same time also real - object.

RINAT - Now I understand what the Rabbi wanted to convey.

ASHER - You have been saying that God is everywhere. I remember from my schooldays the story of some famous rebbe who once made the same categorical statement; and was asked by one of his pupils where specifically God was at that specific moment. Whereupon the rebbe pointed to a piece of bread lying on the table with the words "God is here".

RABBI - He certainly did not mean God himself was at that moment inside the bread but God's glory, his Shekhina.

RINAT - Does this mean that one sees God everywhere? I have to confess I do not.

RABBI - There are women or men who are so sensitized by faith that they see God everywhere. And they are even more blessed: they can every time and everywhere feel God resound within themselves.

RINAT - I wish I was one of these fortunate people.

EGG - In such a case you would have to be careful not to fall victim of a pantheistic view. Pantheistic images, as far as I know, get short shrift in Judaism. But at the same time - it seems to me at least - there is also some ambivalence with regard to God's presence in nature. In one of the daily prayers it is stated that "the whole earth is full of God's glory".

RABBI - This statement, which derives from the Prophet Habakuk, is not unique. You will easily discover more citations of this

kind in the Bible. However, you are wrong to suppose that this and other similar passages point to a pantheistic view. Here the "Glory of God" is meant and not God himself. It is the radiation of God which is known also as the "Shekhina". I remember to have already on a previous occasion explained to you, that the God of the Bible is transcendent and only occasionally immanent; while in pantheism the godhead is perceived as being immanent and not transcendent. This - I do not mind pointing out again - excludes any possibility to have a pantheistic view of God.

EG - In Hinduism, as we find outlined in the Upanishads, the gods are to be found everywhere in nature - and still one cannot call Hinduism a pantheism.

CAROL - Spinoza, Judaism's enfant terrible, too maintained that God was everywhere in nature. But, he said, God did not create nature - God is nature.

CAROL - Spinoza is usually labelled an atheist, although he himself strongly objected to being called an atheist.

ASHER - Alright ! Let us accept that he was not an atheist, although once upon a time I had been taught that he was indeed one. But does this also mean he would not have been a pantheist ?

RABBI - There is a certain and significant difference. He was a pantheist alright. But he was not a polytheist. That is to say: he believed in One God and not in many gods - as the pantheists commonly do.

RINAT - What about this One God ? Was he perceived everywhere in nature ?

RABBI - Everywhere, because to Spinoza Nature was God.

CAROL - Does the Kabbalists' image of God, as represented by the Ten Sephiroth, not smell of pantheism ?

RABBI - Not at all. The Sephiroth are not images of God, but his emanations - or better said his qualities.

ASHER - It has the impression that pantheism had for the ancient Israelites been the preferred religious system. I feel entitled to this inference by the sermons of the Prophets. In their sermons they never ceased to warn their flocks against the idolatry they practised.

RABBI - You are justified to conclude from the words of the Prophets that their contemporary Jews were attracted by the gods of the neighbouring nations. But this must have been the failing of only a limited number of Israelites. For most of Israel there was only the One God.

CAROL - It had not necessarily to be foreign gods imported from neighbouring countries. It may well have been their own former gods which the Jews remembered. For the One God of Israel must originally have been one of many they worshipped. That is to say, the One God had displaced the other gods who in the pre-mosaic years had found acceptance among the israelite tribes.

RABBI - This may well have been the case. Also under the strong leadership of Moses did relapses occur. Later on - may I remind you of the many foreign gods which King Solomon accommodated - many a foreign God must have found acceptance among the Jews. It appears, that it is the merit of the Prophets - who were active mostly between the 3th and the 5th century BCE - that all the foreign gods finally ceased to be acceptable.

ASHER - In the prayers recited by religious Jews to this day - for instance in the one mentioning "...who is like you among the gods" - there is ample evidence that initially, or once upon a time, the Israelites considered their God one of many gods - though it was conceded that he was superior to them; that he was the greatest.

RABBI - This may have been so in the past, as we have already agreed; but with the creation of the Jewish nation only the One God existed for the Jews. The Shma' Yisrael prayer makes it clear, that for the Jews God is unique; that there are no other gods.

AVNER - What does the Shma prayer 'God is One' mean? Are the gods numbered? Is the Jewish God the Number One?

RABBI - In the Shma' statement expression is given of the basic monotheistic belief. It means, that God is unique, incomparable. And that he is the only one. Also in this respect Maimonides has plainly and clearly stated this fact: "I believe in perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be his name, is a Unity; that there is no other Unity; that there is no other unity like his Unity; that he alone is our God who was, is and will be".

RINAT - Tell me more about God, please.

RABBI - Every religious person has to some degree to form his own view of God. Please realize, that I did not see "his own version of God" ! Let us now start with Judaism's "official" perception of God - and let me point out that in every period in Judaism God was differently perceived. The God who addressed the Patriarchs; the God with whom Moses argued; the God praised by David; the kind God of the Pharisees; the God Maimonides perceived; the God in Buber's dialogue; the God with whom Ben Gurion tried to bargain; the over-powering God of the Haredim; the God to whom the Hassidim

look up as their companion and friend; the God simplified by the Reformists; and the God refused admission to the kibuzzim - greatly differs from each other.

EG - This feature is not unique for Judaism. The God of Jesus differs from that of Paulus; and the God of Paulus from the God of the Apostle John; and his God from that of the Church Fathers; and their's from that of Luther; and Luther's from that of the modern Popes.

ASHER - Was the God of the Bible not originally a jealously guarded tribal god who turned into the ethical God of the prophets when he became the God of all the peoples of the world?

RABBI - Let us go on and see what the Bible has to say about God. You are right: he was a well guarded and protected jealous God. But he was also a self-assured God. "I am the Lord unrivalled. There is no other God besides me", he says. "Besides me there is no God. I form the light and create the darkness. I make the peace and create the evil. I am the Lord who did all these things"

CAROL -- Do not mind if again I point out, that the Israelites had this view of their God because was always perceived as having human shape, sensations and characteristics.

RABBI - Let us say that more or less all religions preceding the New Age had an anthropomorphic as well as a pantheistic perception of their god or gods.

CAROL - I want to point out again, that this does not apply to Hinduism's Brahman who was never pantheistically perceived. Neither was the Buddha Gautama. The latter was a no time ever considered to be a god-like being.

EG - But it must be mentioned that the average, primitive Hindus and Buddhists were provided by their theologic leaders with a number of replacement-divinities. Or the people created such for and by themselves. And secondly you must realize, that it was difficult in antique times to make the uneducated masses understand the principles of monotheism. It was easier for them to imagine - or to make them accept - a multitude of gods. This applies also to the ancient Israelites, I think. It is most likely that Moses had for the first time introduced monotheism as an accepted fact in Judaism. From my reading I have to conclude, that this fact has not been sufficiently appreciated. Nor has the fact been properly valued, that Judaism could very successfully make the concept of a single God into the basis on which a rough, uneducated generation of desert people could erect its nationhood.

EG - I must say, however, that from the Bible itself we can learn very little about the essence of God himself. At the most we read here and there some primitive projections of human traits on the Godhead.

EG - This happened - as has been already pointed out - to make God easier understood, better appreciated and clearer realized. Apart from this we are only told of the way he relates to man.

CAROL - Of the christian Trinity's characteristics we know somewhat more.

RABBI - We must a priori realize, that the monotheistic views of God contrast sharply with those of the gods of India, of Greece, of Egypt and of most all the primitive peoples. The internecine fights of their gods; the sexual activities and prowess of their gods; the disregard of their gods for the even most basic rules of morality - could impossibly be imagined in the God of the Bible. Yes, it is true ! The God of the Bible is a jealous God. He said so himself. But I read this to mean, that he is jealous for the wellbeing of mankind.

AVNER - Did he really imply this ? If so, he wins. If not, I see this as one of the interesting, but at times also pitiful instances, where the theologians and philosophers of religion try to find explanations - mainly as an excuse or for a defense - for the anthropomorphic figure of the irascible God of the Bible.

RABBI - Your argument is not justified. The God we perceive nowadays has also in the past been the same. God has been the same at every stage of history. God is in essence unchangeable. Only the way he is presented changes. He is perceived differently only in the way religious ideology changes with the changed times. He seems changed only with the changes in the viewpoint of the observer. Whether you are presented the Jewish God with all possible human characteristics or as the Transcendent Being, he is always the same God. Allow me to point out again and again, that God in his essence is unchangeable; that only the image in which he is presented changes with the times and from the point of view of the observer. Every generation of philosophers; every cultural movement; every change in the spiritual atmosphere created a different image of God. Every time this happened, it was thought necessary to find a different formulation in which to make God appear - either a different colour scheme in which to paint God; or a different formula with which to take care of the Creation; or a different discovery with which to explain revelation. Look with such eyes at history ! In Jewish

and christian tradition God was a personal God who does everything man does. And he is depicted as having the same weakness as man has.

CAROL - When in the middle of the last pre-christian millennium circumstances somehow changed; when a kind of spiritual revolution occurred; when prophets made their appearance. They made all the other gods to false gods, and declared that only jewish God was the true and only God.

RABBI - And along with the Prophets also a new leadership rose to the surface - and the Bible was renewed and rewritten. New chapters expressing a different trend in theology - and possibly a new political direction - were added to the Bible. And the image of God was adjusted accordingly. But only the presentation changed. God in his essence remained unchanged.

RINAT - Why ? I cannot understand ! Has not the Bible at Sinai been given to Moses in its entirety; and in the exact shape as we know it today ?

RABBI - Modern theological research inclines to the theory, that most parts of the Bible are of a later origin; that these were composed by a - at that time dominant and powerful - priestly class. It is now accepted outside orthodox circles, that the Pentateuch was completed only in the middle of the millennium before our era. That is to say, that significant parts of the Bible, mainly those which extoll the religious duties, have been added after the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE.

CAROL - And it is most likely, that it had been those chapters which give the priestly class a dominant role in Israel.

EGG - May I formulate what the Rabbi said in different words and say, that only the original ethical laws had been revealed at Sinai ? That is to say, that only these parts of the Tora have a divine origin - while their interpretation had at various ages and stages been left to an ongoing religious renewal ?

CAROL - I can accept your explanation, that a continued change occurred only in the form and expressions in which the original ethic law had been presented. For it is an accepted fact, that primitive people can only have an experience of; can only have an understanding for; and can only be in harmony with - a personal, an anthropomorphically figured God. This makes it necessary - in relation to the cultural development of a people - to introduce a series of various interpretations, configurations and explanations.

RABBI - How does this apply to Hinduism and Buddhism which

appear not to have changed over the millennia ?

CAROL - It does and does not. As I mentioned already, Hinduism and Buddhism do not worship Brahman as a Godhead. Instead, their theologians have created a form of personal relationship with one or the other of the divine manifestations in the devotional approach the devotees can offer to one of his avatars. That is to say, that the devotions offered to one of the gods who incarnated in human form and had descended on earth, are substitutes for a direct approach to the deity itself. This, for one reason or the other, led to a number of reform movements - and in particular to the Bhakti Movement.

EG - Speaking of avatars: in Christianity we have in Jesus the personification of God. However, there is the difference that later on Jesus himself acquired transcendence too.

CAROL - Can we not assume - notwithstanding all the arguments which you have brought forth this evening - that the Jewish God too has changed ? That he too has undergone some developments in the course of time ? That he has grown from an irascible tribal god into the ethic God of the Prophets ? And that in a further stage of development he has turned into the God the philosophers have depicted ?

RABBI - No, my friend. He is the same God as he was when the Children of Israel knew him and as we know him today. His image may appear different to you, because he was at various stages of human development perceived - and was communicated with - in accordance with the "taste" of the times. Imagine the kind of forefathers we had ! Do you think they would have had respect for a friendly, a pleasant-minded God ? They would surely not have obeyed a sophisticated God ! They needed a God whom they had to fear !

EG - But, if we consider the castigating words and the blood-curling tone which the Prophets used, we have to conclude that the Children of Israel had not changed very much from the primitive desert people they had been.

CAROL - I would not be surprised to note, that a Prophet - should one arise in our midst today - would most likely be forced to use similar words and that same tone in order to be effective.

RINAT - That the Jews could survive all the disadvantages they had to face, is surprising. That, notwithstanding all the punishment they have sustained and all the hostility they had to face, they continue to exist, is indeed a wonder. I have to confess that I

begin to accept as a fact, that this can only be explained as a miracle. This makes me also accept that only God could have performed this wonder and this miracle. But, I must also confess, that whereas it is so difficult for me to understand God and his working - how much more difficult it must be for me to know God as I would like to know him.

RABBI - We cannot hardly understand what goes on in the nature around us. And we do not know any better what goes on within ourselves. How then can we understand what is after all beyond our understanding? You must form your own system of belief even though you may construct it on what history teaches; what tradition transmits; what the Tora and the Sages teach. But, as an intelligent person you must learn to fly on your own. You should and cannot expect to be nursed all your life by those presenting themselves as wet nurses. There are superior minds among those capable to do so - but not all of them are reliable and trustwoprthy. In their laziness to dedicate time to the study of their own personality; or in their reluctance to probe any deeper than what they have learned about themselves - even well educated and very intelligent people may think they have a grip on what wise men, philosophers, rabbis and teachers have put together for our comprehension. But we are poorly served by these rabbis, teachers and other educators of their kind. By what they have mapped out for us to learn; by what they plant - we cannot learn what is necessary for us to know. They will only harvest doubt, atheism, unhappiness, emptiness. The only way to make you understand what cannot be understood, is to plant - and to allow to grow in your mind and heart a belief in wonders and miracles.

EQ - This is indeed the best alternative. You should endeavour to realize God as existing within your mind or in your heart. Learn to associate with God and his ethical demands wherever you are and whatever you do. And when you do so, project God as being within you.

RABBI - In the way St. Patrick once prayed: "God be in my head and in my understanding".

EG - There is a saying in Islam's Hadith, the collection of legends around Muhammad: "Reflect on God's creation and not on his nature unless you want to be destroyed".

RABBI - God cannot be imagined by symbols, not by intellect and not by logic. Only by creative imagination can we achieve what reason is unable to provide.

CAROL - This is very way the mystics take.

RABBI - This is true. They know that God cannot be understood. That God can only be sensed. It starts with what God once said to Moses: "You cannot see my face". God can only be perceived within the divine mystery. The moment we think we have come near to this knowledge, we know also that we have approached God's mystery.

CAROL - What kind of Jewish God is supposed to hide behind this God of mystery ?

RABBI - Although Scriptures do not reveal anything about the origin and background of the true essence of the Jewish God - they reveal much of him through his pronouncements. He is above all the One God. His true name we do not know. He is holy. He is the God of life. He created the world. He is just and merciful. He is strong and mighty. He neither sleeps nor slumbers. He is the God who creates our souls. He is long-suffering. He is also a jealous God.

EG - I do not interpret Judaism's God as a fatherly, though distant and unreachable figure on whose aid and protection we can unabashedly rely at any time. Neither do I perceive him as a God from whom we can expect direction and guidance for every one of our steps. To me he is the God within ourselves. He is our ethical guide who teaches us respect for ourselves; who eases and directs our relationship with all our fellow creatures. It is the knowledge of this moral guidance which makes us aware, in all our dealings with other human beings - whatever their race, creed or social standing - that they too are God's creatures; that God resides also in their heart; and that whatever hurts or offends them hurts and offends God too. It does not make any difference, whether our fellowmen have a different image of God; whether they adhere to another system of belief. Please believe me: to live according to this rule of life is more helpful and elevating than prayer even.

CAROL - For an average Jew it must be difficult to follow such a philosophical and mystic interpretation of God. To those who do not object to God's anthropomorphic depiction, life and religion and prayer must be easier perceived.

RABBI - Judaism's God is a highly personal one. Yes, a rather figuratively perceived one. This is true. But don't you agree with me, that for the non-philosophic jewish world this is an advantage ?

AVNER - If you see an advantage for the non-philosophical jewish world in what you said, Rabbi, it would also have to accept - and

by doing so submit to - the threats of the Bible and the Prophets. Do you personally accept - and submit to - their prophesy that your own misdeeds will be punished on your children and children's children ?

RABBI - The Prophets rightly not so much corrected as properly interpreted the biblical warning, that reward and punishment will be met with "until the third or fourth generation" to mean, that every Jew is responsible for his own deeds; that the individual and not the family nor the nation will be punished. The nation will be judged according to its ethical and social level; according to the reign of justice is keeps alive; according to the level of merrits it reaches.

CAROL - You can say the same more or less also of the Christian world.

RABBI - But, by virtue of the limits the Church's dogmas have imposed on her flock, their God and the execution of the justice he has entrusted to his papal representative on earth, are beyond any personal interpretation whatsoever.

E L E V E N

CAROL - Somebody here in our circle has stated - I cannot recall who and when - that God cannot be perceived by us as a reality, as an objective fact. We have also been told, that we can only perceive God as a spiritual experience; as a certainty; as a knowledge within ourselves. Do you know that Hindus, Buddhists, and also Plato say the same though they are not monotheists ?

EG_ - This is true. They imply that God can only be known through personal experience.

RABBI - I shall cite Rudolph Otto who says: You will have to realize that our view of God does not correspond to the effable reality of which he is a mere symbol. We have not the range of perception with which to conceive an exact description of God.

CAROL - Is this the Rudolph Otto who wrote so much about "Holiness" ?

RABBI - It is the same. He started from his perception that the original causative factor in the birth of the religion were the awe and fear which filled the first humans. This created the sense of the holy which led to the creation of the religion and not the ethics.

EG_ - Does Judaism agree with this ?

RABBI - It does not. But we have to thank Otto for elaborating the "Holy", this fundamental element in religion. Holiness - kadosh - had in Judaism originally a different meaning than today. Also the english translation does not fit entirely. Originally "kadosh" had the same meaning as "taboo". It applies to God in the sense, that God is set apart; that he is different from all else; that he is not bound by space or form.

EG_ - Also the Jewish people are kadosh = holy in the very same sense of otherness.

AVNER - And the holy jewish God is also very jealous and angry whenever other gods are worshipped.

RINAT - Would it not have been so much easier, if God had allowed us to have a clear picture of what he is; of his image and of his transcendence ? Are we not entitled to such a graceful grant from a God who has mankind's wellbeing at heart ?

EG - I am not so sure. For should we know everything about God; and should we realize how perfect and complete he is - we humble human beings would become humiliated, discouraged and handicaped by the realization of God's perfection. I think I said something like this on another occasion.

RABBI - Would we not have to imply, in case we have a definite knowledge of God's essence - even if our claim that we have understood its full meaning is unjustified - that God is somehow finite. And if God is finite, has he not also to be imperfect ? Let us agree with the ancient moslem philosopher al-Ghazzali, that God is beyond man's intellectual powers of comprehension; that we can know God only from the way he is reflected in this world; that we can only become aware of God from his work and performances - and that otherwise we cannot say anything definite about God's essence.

AVNER - But the Jewish God is proclaimed King ! Whether over all the other gods; or over the entire world; or only over Israel - I have not yet found out. Does one not know more or less every detail of a king's being, doing and acting ?

RABBI - God is indeed the king of the world - but his divinity is far above his royalty.

AVNER - It means, in other words, that the entity which you call God cannot be comprehended with the help of one's intellect and reason ?

RABBI - This is indeed so in Jewish perception. Every religion, every culture, every philosophy and every theology creates its own image of God, of his essence and of his meaning. In none of these will intellect or reason reveal God's essence. Among the three monotheistisms Allah, the moslem God is easiest understood because he is most anthropomorphic. The jewish God is easier to accept because he is near to man. But the christian God can only be accepted by faith and dogma.

RINAT - We have heard of the many ways by which man can relate to God. Tell us, please, what this relationship of God to man represents.

RABBI - The Bible describes in clear terms this relationship between God and man. One can say that the Bible reveals - and throughout confirms - that God had once met with man; that God cares deeply for mankind; that God can be approached - and reached - by every man, woman and child.

CAROL - This is not something special or unusual. The principle

of every religion, as far as I know, is to show that God or the gods come into contact with man. In the monotheistic religions God is in addition called sublime and credited with having created the world. On the other hand the God called the Absolute by the philosophers, is a distant God. He has no contact with the world. He can impossibly have created the world.

EG - ...which made the interpolation of a Demiurge necessary.

CAROL - According to the Bible man is the image of God. In greek philosophy God is the cosmos and man is the microcosmos.

EG - The God of the Bible is in search of man and not of a microcosmos. And God invites man to search him too and not for some kind of cosmos.

RABBI - The jewish perception of God is not an isolated one. Also Berkely, the wise theologian-philosopher, preached that God cares for man. "Esse est percipi", he said; translated it states that to be means to be perceived by God.

AVNER - May I, befor we close this chapter, mention a point which has puzzled me since some time. I have recently read an article in an archaeological magazine about discoveries in nearby Iraq which point to a widespread sun-cult supposedly to have prospered there some 2-3000 years ago. Since it is an established fact that, once such a cult or culture prevails in a country, also neighbouring countries - whether contingent or not - will be affected by it. These countries will as a rule absorb the same cult - or at least an approximate form of the cult - into their own religion. Has this been the case in Israel ? If so how and in which form has a suncult be knoewn in Israel ? And if not why not ?

EG - May I answer you ? I have been puzzled by the same problem, and I think I have found a satisfactory explanation.

I agree that a reciprocal absorption of cultural elements between neighbouring civilizations is more or less the rule. We know also, that a sun-cult has existed in antique times in all the then existing civilized countries. I may say, it was the leading religious cult form in most countries. This must also have been the case in the primitive israeli tribes. I will only remind you of the Zodiac with its twelve 'houses' through all of which the sun passes in the course of 25 800 years. It stays in each house some 2 100 years, I think. Since history has been recorded some 8000 or so years ago, we can follow the effect the sojourn of the sun through each 'house' had on the history of the peoples of which recorded history exists. We hear of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Abel,

of Castor and Pollux, of Romulus and Remus and so on when the sun passed through the 'House of the Gemelli', the Twins. When the sun entered the house of Taurus, the bull became the central object of veneration. This is reflected in the culture of Greece, mainly in Minos; in the many archaeological left-overs in Egypt, in Iran, in Babylon, in Mohenjadaro in the Indus basin, and so on; and in the role the bovine played in the rites of the Temple of Jerusalem. And in the episode of the Golden Calf. Then the sun entered the House of the Ram. The sheep acquired importance. It became the main sacrificial animal in the Temple. Abraham slaughtered a ram instead of his son Isaac etc.

CAROL - And the lamb became the symbol of Christianity.

EG - Not precisely so. Around the time Jesus appeared on the world scene, the sun had entered the Pisces, that is the House of the Fish. You may not know, that in fact in early Christendom the Fish had been the emblem of the Church. Only a few centuries later had it to cede place to the lamb.

AVNER - This is very interesting. This means that the Children of Israel kept up with the zodiacal trends and changed whenever another trend became fashionable. This means, that the sun-cult was well known to, and certainly also practiced by, the Israelites. Why is this not evident in the history of Israel ?

EG - You are perfectly right. In ancient times, radiating into biblical times - sun worship was the predominant cult. It was so in all the the countries surrounding the mediterranean basin. And certainly also among the Jews. In Greece, in Egypt, in Iran, in Rome etc. the sun was worshipped in the figure of the sungod. Rome's Mithras and Egypt's Osiris, Greece's Apollo and Babylon's Baal witness the predominance of this cult.

ASHER - But nothing in Judaism witnesses the existence of this same cult among the Israelites. How is this possible in view of the certainty you mentioned, that a cultural reciprocal osmosis had occurred ?

EG - I am certain that the sun worship was very much a fact of life in ancient Israel. Not only because the Prophets so arduously preached against it, but also - and I may say mainly so - because we can still find traces of it in the Pentateuch. You will remember that the erection of cult places on mountain tops were anathema because that is a predilected place for sun worship. We are told that Enoch was carried alive into heaven, "fierce horses pulling his radiant carriage"; that he had lived 356 days, I mean

years on this earth. And I take the liberty to interpret Joseph's multi-coloured coat to mean a metaphor of the morning aurora. The Temple of Jerusalem was built in such a way that, at the time of the solistice, the rays of the morning sun passed through the entrance to the Holy of Holies and fell on the altar.

CAROL - Why are there only hints or traces left in the Bible and no explicit facts ? I may also add, that the sun played a great role in the ideology and the rites of the Essenes of Qumran. I cannot say they followed a sun-worship-ritual; but they definitely showed an unusual respect for the sun. For example, they did "their business" - as far as they could manage - early in the morning before the sun had risen; and when they had to squat down after the sun had appeared on the horizon, they did so facing the sun in order not to show their backside to the sun.

ASHER - I am very surprised to learn that the sun had such an importance for our forefathers. I had the impression that it was the veneration of the moon which is a left-over of some past heathen cult.

EG - After long searching and much pondering I have found only one explanation which would fit the facts: the sun had played a very great role in the Israelites' cult life and culture. It was revived and multiplied by the returnees from the Babylon exile. This has greatly disturbed the priests, the prophets, the wise men of the early pre-christian centuries. We have already heard that a great religious awakening, a kind of religious revolution, occurred between the 8th and 6th century BCE. I suppose it was at that time that the priests, the prophets, the leaders of Israel eradicated everything which smelled of sun worship from the Tora as well as from daily life. When they steered the Jews into a plain, simple and clearly defined exclusive monotheism. And when, as I have mentioned, there occurred a revival on the return of the exiles from Babylon, the priests made use of their power to put a stop to this cult.

RINAT - They must have been clever people.

ASHER - They were certainly inspired leaders - and more even clever psychologists.

EG - Undoubtedly so. This was not the only the time they went into action. Some time ago I have talked about the wise rabbis' introduction of the Aphikoman as the last item on the Pesach menu. I can explained the Purim Festival along the same lines. Purim in no way fits into jewish culture or mentality. This unjewish

festival must have been introduced at a time when - under hellenistic influence - our Israelites, old and young, enjoyed the then fashionable bacchianalia, the annual festival in honour of Apollo or Bacchus. One of the main attractions of this annual spring event was the indulgence in drinking, dancing - and the abandonment of all the civilized rules of conduct which are effective throughout the year. Israel's wise leaders of that time must have reasoned: well, we have no power to prevent our Jews from copying their heathen neighbours. Should we even make an attempt to do so, we will fail and badly lose face and influence. Let us go along with these new fashions and currents and turn the bacchanalia into a Jewish festival. There may have been a story, or a report, or a legend making the round - if not they must have invented it - of a queen warning the king of an impending rebellion etc. The wise men dressed the festival up as a memento to a Jewish queen who had saved the Jewish people. They made Astarte, the goddess at that time in fashion, into Esther and the neighbouring god Murdoch into Mordechai - and decreed, that what they had so far cursed as heathenly, god-offending customs should henceforth be a blessed and god-pleasing ritual.

RABBI - Your "reconstruction" of the ethiology of our Purim may also explain why the name of God is never mentioned in the Esther Scroll ?

EG - Quite definitely so ! And this is not the only instance, as you know. Take the case of the Song of Songs. It is definitely not a "song worthy, or even suitable for a synagogal service", as some wise person has said. I can only characterize it as a bawdy song which could only have had a place in the wine taverns of ancient Palestine. It must have been the fashion in those ancient times to recite the song at the most inopportune occasions. Some clever fellows among the priests must have decided - with their tongues in their cheeks - to turn it into a metaphorical ballad. And by attributing it to the "Wise King Solomon" - one more unearned and unmerited medal on that king's chest - it became acceptable in polite society and incorporated into the biblical canon.

RABBI - Thank you, my friend. This was indeed an interesting commentary on the development of Jewish religious culture. You have given me much material to think about.

EG - I am glad to hear this. May I hope that you will discover other and similar material to comment upon ?

ASHER - I agree with you that we have got more or less sufficient

proof and persuasive examples of the cleverness - or I would go along if you say proof of the inspired insight of our ancient rabbis and priests. I hope, however, that we shall not consider this chapter closed; and that we shall continue our weekly discussion evenings as I have so many questions still to ask about God.

RINAT - I too.

AVNER - And I too.

T W E L V E

AVNER - We talked about predestination - but I am not yet clear in my mind how far I can harmonize my own views with the way you interpret this principle. For instance: does predestination imply that God had willed my stay in a Concentration Camp? Does predestination mean that Chaim should be crippled by his experiences? In other words: can the Concentration Camps be explained - and have they to be excused - because God willed them to exist?

RABBI - These are questions man cannot answer.

EQ - In my philosophy all what happened in Germany has to be seen as a testing stage in the Jewish people's destiny. However, not by predestination! But resulting from the mishandled and mismanaged natural consequences of the historical developments which had grown from the failings of ordinary human beings. I see in the catastrophe which has affected the Jews of Europe one of the series of tests we Jews have to face. I see in these tests results a kind of ultimatum which fate has presented to the Jewish people. But not to the Jewish people alone! All that happened in Germany under the Nazi regime I view also a clear test of the Germans' ethical qualities; of the validity of the German nation's claim to be a bearer of cultural values; of the German nation's ultimate right to survive. And last but not least it was a test of the behaviour at the actual time; and of the consequent reactions of those who were either victims or bystanders. It was in my view a karma-based and -controlled testing process.

RABBI - You take a very courageous view of this tragic episode in Jewish and mankind's history.

AVNER - I notice that in your "courageous view" you exclude any or all divine interference. Was there in the Nazi outrages no divine planning or predestination?

EQ - I would not exclude any such, as in major historic evolvments of this magnitude and nature - for which no logical evolutionary processes can be brought forth as causative factors - only the intervention of an additional supra-natural factor can provide a satisfactory explanation. While I say this I am fully aware, that historians and sociologists do think differently. But I can also say, that with my answer I feel on safe ground because only a divine intervention can provide a satisfying

explanation of what happened in Europe and to Germany a generation ago.

AVNER - I shall have to digest what you told us just now and react possibly later on. I have at this moment another question: why did God create this world? And why has he set man into this world?

ASHER - It seems to me, that whatever we discuss will ultimately always lead back to the Creation issue.

RABBI - The Rabbis say that God created man for his own sake - meaning to have company.

CAROL - St. Augustine agrees with the Rabbis. "You made us for yourself", he said of God.

RABBI - God wants to create a mankind which is ethically supreme and physically perfect. I do not know why God wants to create an ethically ideal; an ultimately intellectually superior; a physically perfected; and a physiologically exactly functioning - human race. But I have no doubt, that there must be a purpose.

EGO - Listen what Martin Buber had to say: "Though you need God more than anything, you know at all times in your heart. But don't you know also that God needs you - in the fullness of eternity, you?"

AVNER - And one more question: do the suffering of the Jews over the ages; the destruction of my nearest family; and my own experiences in the Concentration Camp - fit into what God has decided about the ultimate fate of mankind?

EGO - I cannot answer your question in the sense and the direction you intend your question; but in my own view you have been - and I venture to say still are - tested by these your experiences and sufferings. And you are tested as well by your reaction to your knowledge of the Jewish people's history.

AVNER - Thank you.

RINAT - You believers in God never cease to say that there is God, the Almighty, the Absolute. You define him as having existed since ever. But to my simple mind it is also logical, that what has existed - even if so since ever - must have once not existed. That for everything which exists there had to be the beginning of its existence. In this sense I ask: God has made the world, you state. But who has made God? How and by whom was God himself created?

RABBI - As you rightly pointed out, we theists say that God existed since ever. We say also that he is a Being without origin. That he is without beginning. We have to acknowledge - whatever else one may try to say in this respect - that the nature of God can in any case not be apprehended by us mortals. In other words: there is certainly an explanation - but in our actual imperfect state this knowledge is still

beyond our comprehension.

AVNER - The scientists and atheists are more courageous. They have in common that they try to find an explanation for the origin of the Universe. Unfortunately, they offer a rather infantile explanation: the world just happened, they say. This is by every standard a poor and unsatisfactory reply. I think it was for these and other similarly understandable reasons that man had to create for himself the idea of a Creator. This reflects one of the many human delusions that there is a design behind the creation of the world and the existence of man.

CAROL - I too have a question: is your God the same God as the Rabbi's God ?

EGG - Maybe. I cannot judge. I know only my personal God.

CAROL - Am I justified to say that, because you identify your Self with the idealized concept which you have formed for yourself of the Divine Absolute, your God had inevitably to acquire the nature and the characteristics of the Infinite, of the Incomprehensible you have looked for - and wished for ?

EGG - How can I answer your question, considering I do not know God and all he is - and could therefore not form for myself an ideal which I can incorporate in my concept of the Divine ?

RABBI - Everybody who believes in or thinks of God, conceptualizes him in his own individualized form and personal image. He forms his private concept of the Divine. There is a midrash in Exodus Raba which says, that everyone of the Israelites who was standing at the foot of Mount Sinai at the time of the Epiphany, perceived God in his own way - and that God adapted himself to the comprehension and the intellectual range of each one present.

EGG - I am impressed. This midrash fits exactly what I wanted to say.

CAROL - At Sinai God revealed himself, says the Torah. Is there any proof, that there or at any other occasion God met Moses "face to face" ?

RABBI - Do you realize, that in case such a proof should exist, the very platform, the very raison d'etre of religion would be removed from our religion ?

CAROL - But the Revelation Story sounds so very illogical to me.

RABBI - It may sound illogical - but it must be true. And you must realize, furthermore, that all we know of God derives from that encounter.

AVNER - And still - and notwithstanding all you said - I am not at all convinced that your God exists. And I am not at all persuaded that the Creation did take place in the way you want me to believe. I

mean to say that there could not have been a divinely planned and executed "Creation".

EG_ - The fact that Creation could not have happened without a Creator; that the development of life on earth from an one-celled thing - nay from a mixture of nitrogen, hydrogen and oxygen - could not have happened purely by itself - we have "willy nilly" to presuppose a guiding hand. I cannot see why you should think the Epiphany and the Revelation incongruous. In my view they definitely make sense.

ASHER - I must concede, it is difficult for me to imagine, how, without what the Bible reports about the Revelation; how, without a true and visual appearance of the Deity; and how, without the profound effect of a true corporeal Epiphany - Judaism could have developed and continued to exist as it had and does.

RABBI - What you suggest may be right - but I do not need such a logic. To me the happening at Sinai is totally understandable and fully explainable as the epiphany of a transcendent God. Your reservations are due to your thinking about a mystic, or even of an anthropomorphic God.

CAROL - Could the epiphany at Sinai have possibly been a case of mass suggestion ?

RABBI - Hardly. But even if this had been the case, it could only have been willed by God.

EG_ - Allow me to say, that in my opinion the Revelation at Sinai should not be taken in a literal sense. I view it as a sudden inner awareness; as a sudden inner light; as a sudden inner assertion; as a sudden inner reverberation - at a time and in a place, under circumstances and under conditions, when those present were under great emotional stress and and in a very receptive mood. You cannot call such a condition a hysterical state. For the like reason we should not take literally the repeated "...and God spoke" in the Scriptures.

AVNER - I do not know why you discuss this point. As God does not exist in bodily form - even you agree that this is so - there could not have been an epiphany at all.

CAROL - Any argument along these lines is superfluous. Kant has convincingly argued that God's existence cannot be proved nor denied by speculative reasoning.

RABBI - This is right. You, Avner, argue as an atheist. You better start with tackling this issue as an agnostic and tell yourself, that you have no proof either for or against. And tell yourself above all that you simply do not know.

AVNER - Again I must tell you, how surprised I am, that after all

which has happened in Auschwitz you continue to feel comfortable with your belief in a God.

EG_ - I at least do, because - as I have already explained to you - I see Auschwitz and all it stands for as a testing of the world; as a warning to the world; as a portent for the Jewish people; as the moral annihilation of Germany; as the historical death sentence of the German people; and finally as an opportunity for the world to check on its short-comings.

RINAT - All this is rather complicated. Let me repeat a question I have already asked on a previous occasion: why has God not given us a definite proof that he exists. This would have given substance to what he demands of us. This would have given sense to what he asks of us simple and ignorant human beings.

EG_ - Of course; and without any doubt; and in a definite way; and at any time in human history - God could have given absolute proof that he exists. But were this the case, there would not anymore be for mankind the urge to seek him. There would not anymore be any evil to avoid. There would not anymore good to be pursued. In short: our life would be without an aim; without a challenge; without a sense.

RABBI - The Balsheh Tov of hassidic fame had another explanation: God permits man to doubt his existence, because otherwise man would not be inclined to charity. For in case he had a full knowledge of God, man would leave everything in the hands of God.

ASHER - Why has at least God's name not been revealed ?

RABBI - Because God's name is secret. God does not want his name to be known. If you know your Bible you will remember, that notwithstanding all their urging Moses and Jacob did not succeed in getting God to reveal his name. By the way: also the names of the angels are secret - there is frequent mention in the Bible of an angel refusing to reveal his name.

EG_ - Because there was the belief, that knowing the name of a person meant having power over the carrier of the name. In ancient times it was thought, that whoever possesses knowledge of a person's name can use it for applying magic; can use it to damage the owner. In this sense it was commonly believed, that if you know the name of God you can cite him; can you force him to appear.

RINAT - But do we not know the name of God and only fear to pronounce the name ?

EG_ - Yes we know that YHWH is God's name, though it is - wrongly, I think - said we do not know how to properly pronounce it. In any case this name, the Tetragram, is never used by Jews. It is not used because of an ancient Tabu. It has, therefore, been replaced by Adonai, Lord.

AVNER - To what length our "frumme Yiden" will go ! They replaced the divine name "Yahveh" with "Adonai", that is "Lord". But now also the appellation "Lord" is too holy for Jews to pronounce, and outside their prayers they replace it nowadays with "Hashem", that is "The Name".

RABBI - You cannot be too careful, is the motto. But let me tell you of a delicious 'mix-up' in the Bible. Genesis says that the true divine name was known to Eve, Cain and Abel; but in Exodus we are told that Moses was the first human being to whom God had revealed his name.

ASHER - How do our rabbis explain this discrepancy ?

RABBI - The orthodox faculty accepts it as a divine truth. But to modern thinkers it is explained by the fact, that different authors contributed to the original Pentateuch than those who added to the later edition. Biblical researchers have amply proved this hypothesis to be correct. But there is another interesting point to mention with respect to what we have just now discussed: you may know that at the time the Temple in Jerusalem functioned, the High Priest, once a year - on Yom Kippur and after having, most likely, had to control his inside tremor - entered the Holy of Holiest, there to call out the Tetragram of God. The multitude of fasting Israelites was waiting outside, trembling too, because they feared that the High Priest might force the Godhead to appear - and this would have had grave consequence for him and for the entire nation. When the High Priest emerged hail and hearty from the ordeal, there was great rejoicing, jubilation and feasting.

But somehow this must have changed at some stage in the Second Temple Period. For it is reported, that the Priests who stood outside the Temple and recited in a loud voice the divine blessing on the nation, used Yahwe and not Adonai - while the priests who did so in the synagogues outside Jerusalem used "Adonai".

RINAT - Does what you said - about the High Priest's invocation in the Holy of Holiest - imply that God did not always reside in there, be it in the tabernacle carried through the desert, be it in the Temple of Jerusalem ?

RABBI - It was not God himself who resided there, but his Kavod' which is translated as 'Glory'; while by others it is seen to mean the 'Shekhina'.

EG - Let us say it was God's Self or Image which was always with Israel and could be cited during cultic procedures.

CAROL - You can in every part of the world encounter traces of the belief, that one can cite a god or a spirit if one knows his or its name along with the right incantations. This is reflected in the local myths and legends. Among the people of the East the importance of the magic

attached to a person's name, persists to this today.

EG_ - The fear that the name of a person could be used for casting a magic spell is still prevalent among the Hindus, especially among the Brahmins. I have met many instances where Hindus, males and females, will have a 'public' name which they use in everyday life. They have in addition also a secret "true" name which is known only to few if any people outside the family circle.

RINAT - Let us not slide into the realm of fairy tales, please. Let us remain on the level I at least have enjoyed so far. This leads me to the question: how does one become aware of God ?

RABBI - You cannot ask such a question without being already aware of God.

AVNER - I agree with the Rabbi - not with the meaning he intends to give to his reply. When asking such a question as Rinat's, one can be aware of the object without believing in its reality - in the same way as one is aware of the object in a hypothesis one constructs.

RABBI - Your paradigm does not fit well here. You cannot say that God is a hypothesis. Can you imagine people praying to; trusting in; believing in - a hypothesis ?

RINAT - Whether consciously or not, every one of us has been seeking God. Everyone I know has at one time tried to find God. I am confident that everyone of you here has endeavoured to know him. Those of us who refuse to acknowledge God are most likely induced to do so because we have failed in our search. Ego and the Rabbi have been blessed with greater luck. You two have found God. We have not found God. Can you advise me, how one does search for God ?

RABBI - My reply, coming from a rabbi, may sound strange to you; but I think it is the best advice I can give you: the easiest approach would be for you to read the 'Confessions' of St. Augustine. It is a sincere outline of the way to take in one's search for God.

EG_ - To search for God is to search for the Truth - and vice versa. If you approach your search with an open mind, you will discover that in some way, and somehow, all of us here - and so many people outside our circle - are searching for the same truth. Ask them. Follow them. You may discover, that some of the searchers have found some of the Truth. And you may discover, that all mean the same truth. You will discover, that only the ways to the truth they have taken; and that only their description of what they have come to know as truth - are different.

RABBI - Above all there is the truism: to know God one has to know oneself.

EG_ - This is precisely what I have learned from the Sufis: he who

knows himself knows God.

ASHER - Now that you mentioned Islam, it would interest me to hear what our racial cousins and theological children think about God.

EG - It is true, Judaism and Islam have many things in common. For instance: the Moslem, like the Jew, does not need the intervention of a priest. Every believer can have direct contact with God.

RABBI - As a Jew can perform all religious and ritual functions without the help of a rabbi, so can the Moslem without a Maulvi.

EG - The Moslem pronounces Allah the only God, as the Jews do in their Shma'. "Allah is the One God. Allah is Eternal. Allah is the Uncaused Cause of all being", says one of the suras in the Qu'ran.

AVNER - How do the Moslems perceive their Allah ?

CAROL - I have come across a current of thought in Islam which argues, that if the blessed are going to see Allah in heaven, as the Qu'ran promises, Allah must have a physical form. There was also a philosopher - I do not recall his name - who claimed to possess definite knowledge of this supposition. He described God as having a body. And he defined the body as three-dimensional, i.e. equal in breadth, height, and length. And he saw God radiating with light.

RABBI - Islam has the advantage over Judaism insofar as Allah has a hundred names but only the 99 mentioned in the Qu'ran are known; the hundredth has not yet been revealed.

CAROL - It was of interest to me to learn, that the prayers of the Jew differ from those of the Moslem insofar as the latter repeats, mantra-like, these ninety-nine names of Allah as a proper and valid prayer.

EG - The most frequently invoked - and most likely most important divine name - is "Bismilla el-Rachman el-Rahim", which means in the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate. But still - notwithstanding the many characterizing divine names - the Moslem, like the Jew, will tell you that Allah is beyond the limits of human understanding. You will in addition always be told that Allah is inaccessible.

CAROL - Indeed, the important philosopher al-Ghazzali preached that this is so, because it is impossible to prove God's existence beyond any reasonable doubt. What represents God to us is contained in our perception and in our logical thinking, he said - and he agrees with other philosophers, that neither science nor metaphysics can prove or disprove the existence of God.

RABBI - Al Ghazzali wrote also, that some people have a higher sense of intuition - which he called a "prophetic spirit" - and can therewith gain a higher level of perception of God. These are the mystics and the prophets. All others can at best learn something about God with

the help of their reasoning and imaginative powers.

CAROL - This is not new. This has already been said in Buddhism and by Zen. These preach, that with the help of meditations one can achieve a greater, a higher and a deeper approach to one's Self.

RABBI - But the Moslems approach God with awe and fear, while the Jews do so with a certain degree of familiarity.

CAROL - And the Buddhists face with resignation the fate that has to be faced !

EG - Still, notwithstanding awe, fear and familiarity, to the Jews - no less than to the Moslems - God remains incomprehensible.

RINAT - What about the Christians ?

RABBI - The Godhead is incomprehensible also in Christian doctrine. And as this concept of the Divinity is enforced by - and has been encased in - a dogma, it is to a believer beyond all discussion and analysis to investigate and analyse how Divinity can be defined.

CAROL - We should also mention another similarity between Jews and Moslems which the Christians do not share: for Moslems and Jews it is blasphemous to make an image of God.

EG - I have always wondered why it is so, even though God himself depicted himself in human shape when the Jewish religion was born.

CAROL - The production of an image of God in whatever form has surely been forbidden in order to keep the Jews - and also the Moslems - from indulging in idol worship.

RINAT - We left all this to the Christians.

ASHER - Who, with their magnificent paintings and sculptures, made good use of the latitude granted them.

RABBI - Religious and trusting Jews expect that the Messiah will one day come. Also Islam believes in a Messiah - with the difference that their Messiah, i.e. their "Messenger", has already arrived in the person of Muhammad. However, one hears also that another messenger, most likely the Patriarch Abraham, may return at the End of the Days.

RINAT - Also the Christians' Messiah has already arrived.

EG - There is also the difference that Muhammad, unlike Moses, never spoke directly to God. Nor has Muhammad ever been addressed directly by God. The divine communications took place through the Archangel Gabriel as the intermediary.

RABBI - To add to the list of similarities between Judaism and Islam I am going to mention, that there are currents in Islam - like similar ones in Judaism with regard to the Tora - which maintain, that the Qu'ran is the direct word of God; and that the Qu'ran had been written by Allah himself. But there are many islamic theologians who condemn such a belief

as blasphemous.

EG_ - I have met some Moslems who identify Gabriel with the Shekhina, and others who think he is the Holy Ghost.

RABBI - Moslems can answer all questions about God's essence by telling you that Allah is wherever you look. Everything and all will one day pass away, but Allah will exist forever.

EG_ - Judaism and Islam have - in contrast to the Christians - also the belief in common, that God can become imminent on earth among his followers but not incarnated in one of his mortal followers.

CAROL - This is one of the causes which are cited in explanation of the Christians' hostility towards the Jews. The Christians say that Jesus was incarnated by God on earth - and we Jews could not care less about what they say.

EG_ - But we Jews have had to suffer for what the Christians believe and say, whether we care or not about what they believe. St. Augustine did not hide his absolute certainty that Jews of every generation past had - and of every future generation will have - to expiate through suffering the refusal of their ancestors to recognise the divinity of Jesus.

RABBI - This has not always been one of the Christians' arguments. However, let us not forget that their hatred for the Jews had started before Jesus had been declared divine. It is a fact that initially Jesus had not been thought of as a god-like figure ! He was made into one only in the fourth century ! Jesus himself never claimed that he was a god ! He only stated that he is the "son of God". This statement of his can be variously interpreted. It was Paul who gave this statement an all-overpowering interpretation. It should never be forgotten that St. Paul had, before his arrival in Palestine, been initiated into one or more of the Mystery Religions in vogue in Greece at that time. This is reflected in many of his actions and sayings - and also in his concept of Jesus' divine nature.

EG_ - Though the Moslems grant Jesus the special status, they condemn as blasphemers those who claim him as a divine. He is to them a prophet and no more.

CAROL - For completion's sake let me mention - as I have done on a previous occasion - that Buddhism does not know of a god.

EG_ - To them the Absolute is emptiness - which exists and at the same time does not exist.

RABBI - For completion's sake we would benefit, if we could hear a few words of what the philosophers have to say.

CAROL - I shall give a very short - but of necessity superficial

- resumé of what some of the philosophers have to say. Plato has rightly been called a theist; he believed in a god. Aristotle, who had great influence in the antique; and whose dicta governed the philosophical world far into the Middle Ages - defined God as the 'Unmoved Mover'. He saw God as a pure, eternal, immobile and spiritual being. God is immaterial, he said, because matter is flawed and mortal. God is pure thought and also a thinker of thoughts. God is Supreme Intellect which knows only the purest of all subjects - and that is himself. Therefore, he cannot have any relationship with anything or anybody outside himself.

RABBI - In Aristotle's view God keeps his distance. He does not direct nor control the world. Neither has God any direct contact with mankind.

CAROL - Plotonius, somewhat like Aristotle, saw God as Being, as the First among all beings. He is a Being of a superior nature. The Neo-Platonists of later centuries accepted the concept of the "Unmoved Mover". They saw God as the "Absolute".

RABBI - The Platonists said that God is to be found in the mind.

EG - To me 'in the mind' means within one's Self.

RABBI - I agree. More or less this is the deeper sense. Or let me say: there are many ways and approaches to say the same thing.

CAROL - To continue: Maimonides' statements of faith have already been mentioned. In one of these he says: "I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be he, is not a body; that he does not present matter; that he has no form whatsoever.

EG - This contrast greatly with the contemporaneous Kabbala, which has an outspoken anthropomorphic concept of God.

CAROL - I am now taking a big step which will bring me into modern times. Emanuel Kant said that the traditional argument about whether there is a God or not is useless. Our mind can only understand things which exist in space and time. God was more or less a convenient concept, but a necessary one, with the help of which to induce men and women to lead a moral life and to be compensated for their virtue.

RABBI - He said that the only way to God is through the autonomous realm of moral conscience which is "practical reason".

EG - Kant tried to show that the existence of God is not proved by speculative reasoning. Man is finite, he said, and cannot come to any justifiable conclusions about the finite God.

RABBI - Nowhere in our Scriptures has the attempt been made to prove God's existence. There is not the slightest need to prove God.

CAROL - Moses Mendelsohn, who lived in the 18th century, accepted the biblical God but added, that God is attainable by reason. He also

accepted that the soul is immortal. But, he insisted, Judaism is not a revealed religion - only a revealed law. Martin Buber, who died in 1965, told his world that God can be met in the same way as a person meets another person. Franz Rosenzweig, his friend, wrote that the universe is made up of three elements: God, the world and man. It is religion, and in particular Judaism, which by revelation, creation and redemption binds these three elements together, Rosenzweig wrote.

RABBI - Let us mention another contemporary philosopher: Rabbi Abraham Yizhaq Kook who died in 1935. He was a great and wise man. He was a Kabbalist. The universe, he said, is still evolving and man with it. Ultimately, he promised, man will meet God.

AVNER - One more question, please. Does it not disturb you that the image of God; that the concept of God; that the interpretation of God - change from one epoch in the Jewish history to the next ?

RABBI - Not at all. Not even the most fervent, blinkered theist can mind this, because from the beginning has the concept of God as Infinite and Absolute been expressed in various terms by the theologians; by the magicians; by the mystics; and by the philosophers - depending on their understanding, their intellect, and even the imaginatory power of the period.

T H I R T E E N

ASHER - We have heard it said here, that all has been created according to a plan; and that all we see and are has been created and continues to exist for a definite purpose. Is this an absolute statement which does not permit any doubt ?

EGO - Yes, it is ! As I have said before, it is my firm belief that we are created for a purpose. At which other conclusion could a thinking individual arrive ? There has to be a purpose in everything, as otherwise there would not be a sense in anything. There would not be an essence in all we perceive. There would not be any meaning in our existence.

CAROL - What have you to say to this absolutist statement we have just now heard, Rabbi ?

RABBI - I cannot but agree with what you have heard.

RINAT - If so, what do we know about life and death ?

RABBI - We know that we do not know.

EGO - I believe to know that mankind would not have a future, were there not a God on whom to anchor our faith. Neither would the world have a future, had we not that absolute trust in God which serves us as a lighthouse in the darkness in and around us.

AVNER - Religious faith and the belief in a God may serve as a beacon to those who adjust their life accordingly - but this can hardly be called the purpose of life !

EGO - Whether we can prove there is a God or not, our belief in a Supreme Being; the knowledge of the essentialness of our being; and our trust in God's untiring care for man - may not represent the exclusive purpose of your life and that of those who think like you. But, I can assure you, it gives me and those who think like me, a totally fulfilling purpose in life. What else would and should we see in our existence ? Tell me, please ! What else could be the purpose of our being ? Answer me, please !

RABBI - I would have given Avner the identic reply. All which exists within this tremendous organization we call the universe; all which never ceases to pulsate in this marvellous coordination we call life - has to have a sense even though we are incapable to see the sense. Looking back on the earliest stages of mankind;

and gripped by man's continued acquisition of so much awe-inspiring knowledge - to which, by the way, has recently been added the apparent limitless nuclear and electronic techniques which our scientists have developed - I have no doubt that there is a purpose in our being; in our planet's existing; in the plan behind the creation of the universe. I too have been pondering the meaning of man's life. I too have become convinced, that this world of ours and all therein cannot have a sense if there is not also a purpose. And I have since long become convinced, that this world - at least our planet earth - has been created; and mankind has been allowed to develop at such breath-taking speed - for one main purpose only: that we humans develop into a society of ethic beings.

EG - May I add, that this breath-taking speed in scientific and technological progress of which you speak, has been greatly - and to an even more unbelievable degree - accelerated in recent years.

AVNER - What, in your estimate, may this signify ?

EG - I do not know - but I am within myself certain, that also this must somehow have a deeper meaning. Regretfully, I am not ready to say, that this has a positive meaning. But let me also pre-empt all discussions and say, that I have not the illusion my words could affect those who simply deny anything but a self-propagating and a self-perpetuating technical process as the right explanation. But whoever has only a minimum of faith in a divinely willed creation must be brought to think, that also this apparently unlimited progress of the new electronic and nuclear sciences must have a meaning in the divine scheme of things.

CAROL - This sounds very mysterious to me.

AVNER - What you said - or better said hinted at - can only be acceptable to those who believe in miracles and in some kind of mysterious goings-on.

RABBI - May I remind you, that great dose of mysticism belongs to every faith. And miracles too are an ingredient of a true faith.

AVNER - Might your words possibly point to an early coming of the Messiah ? Or are you hinting at what Armageddon means to the Christians ?

CAROL - I can well imagine, that the unbelievable accumulation of disasters everywhere; of wars and revolts everywhere; of famines and floods everywhere - may make a mystic come to such a conclusion.

EG - I cannot answer your query. Neither can I confirm or deny your allegation, as I am not a mystic.

AVNER - Is it not also the purpose and aim of a religion to be the parent organization of mysteries ? Have the magicians, who were most likely needed in the creative stages of a religion - and had a hayday in consequence - no role to play anymore ? Has the injection of a fantasy-rich mythology - which, I concede, may have been indispensable as the birth-helpers of a religion - still to be continued ? Are miracles and wonders still needed to make up the skeleton of a religion ?

RABBI - Every religion, as if by definition, has common borders with the mysterious and the numinous, with the metaphysical and the holy. People do need myths and miracles not so much to make their religion believable, as to make the drabness of life tolerable. This is so, because every religion has been created with the evident aim to bring relief to the insecure, fearful, uncertain people of its time. However, every religion is built up in such a way that - while remaining firmly anchored on the fundamentals of its theology - it can undergo changes in accordance with the changing times. It can adjust itself whenever necessary to the advances in scientific knowledge; to every progress in technology; to whatever change occurs in whatever century's intellectual perception. Were this not so, a religion could not continue to provide and satisfy the never ceasing spiritual needs of the time in the technicolour which makes it fit into the times.

AVNER - I hate to contradict you - and this not only because I have no special knowledge in this field. I do so from what I have seen here in this country. The only adjustment the ultra-orthodox have made to the modern times is the issue of the Talmud on computer discs.

RABBI - The ultra-orthodox live in a different world. They have their own closed-circuitry world. They have to be judged from their own perspective and not from ours. You may take it for granted, that the way they live, think and act is perfect in their eyes. They will assure you that they are happy with their own concept of what is right.

RINAT - Has anybody the right to claim that he is in possession of such a total insight in the ethics of his religion ? Has anybody even the right to say that he completely, unconditionally and without a blemish fulfills the demands of his religion ?

RABBI - I could have answered you, that every religion has indeed followers with such an inbuilt potential. But I have to hedge my words by saying, that I know of no religion in which all

strata have the same views. There is not even the most coherent religious group which has not its doctrinal stratifications.

ASHER - Why not live and let live ? You must accept that the Orthodox are faithful to the religiously prescribed and outlined Jewish way.

CAROL - I can live in harmony with them as long as they keep themselves within these bounds.

RABBI - Let us be thankful for what is today's state of affairs. The Orthodox are by far not as powerful as they once were - and as they would wish to be today. They dream of continuing the power they once had in Central Europe. When liberalism started its triumphant march there, it proved a shock to the Jewish communities who felt their Orthodox supremacy threatened. They used the powerful threat of ostracism, and did not hesitate to make use even of the extremely powerful weapon of the excommunication ban.

RINAT - Why did they object to modernization ?

RABBI - Because they felt threatened. They saw the young people in their shtetls exchange their tefillin for the walking stick; their peyes for a cigar; and their kippa for a hat. Even the Orthodox rebbes outside Russia and Galicia and Lithuania, who presided over the communities of Orthodox Jews who had migrated to Germany and France, to England and America during the last century, applied every means they could get hold of, to assert the shtetl-used way of life. One of these rabbis, who made Moses Mendelsohn responsible for all the liberal evil he saw slowly eroding his Orthodox community of Atona near Hamburg, issued the order that all his married male parishioners had to grow a beard "at least half-a-thumb in length".

AVNER - I am happy our own Orthodox have no such power here.

CAROL - But the Haredim are in power here in Jerusalem. There is nothing which happened to Jerusalem; or what is done in Jerusalem - without their permission.

EG - This is so, because they are clever and know to make use of their political power.

ASHER -and because in the Knesseth all the political parties will do their utmost to be in the good books of the Orthodox.

RABBI - It is not as bad as it appears to be.

EG - It is bad enough, although they are numerically not as strong as they appear to you.

RINAT - What is the number of the religious Jews here relative to the number of secular Jews ?

RABBI - I do not know. But I can tell you, that the number

of religious Jews of all denominations in Jerusalem relative to the secular ones cannot be overpowering. I deduce this from the fact that for the 400 000 Jews in Jerusalem there are only some fifty synagogues, This means one synagogue for every 8000 Jews instead one for every 80 Jews.its potentialities are fully made use of.

RINAT - But there is no doubt that their influence does great harm to the harmony among the people here.

RABBI - I am ready to agree, that one reason for this handicap is the reluctance of these ambiances to allow modern conceptions to enter their world.

ASHER - Does this not render a religion antiquated - and in view of its need to appear trustworthy - to a great extent also useless ?

RABBI - I agree that the rigidification of the religions, our own included, has estranged a great many people.

EG -and has forced a large part of dissatisfied mankind to seek in revolutionary movements; in a priori disobedience; in social upheaval - that inner adjustment which a properly arraigned religion, a religion which caters for the actual demands of the time, might have provided.

AVNER - I am afraid you have a very optimistic, and no less also a very lenient, view of the effect religion has on our society. I can accept what you say - without judging you a hypocrite - only because I know that you consciously and with conviction occupy your religious platform; that you look at all things through highly polished religious binoculars; that, as if by a conditioned reflex, you judge everything from a religious point of view.

RABBI - How could it be otherwise ? Does the atheist, who denies the possibility that God exists, not also judge from a purely personal point of view whatever "smells of religion"; and whatever approaches the metaphysical ? And does he not look at matters of religion differently than even the agnostic who is more careful and tells me that God's existence cannot either be proved or disproved ? You demand scientific proof of the existence of God the Creator, the Sublime. But God cannot be proved scientifically. He can only be accepted - and this only by unconditioned faith. God is to us theists a transcendental God. He is the Creator of the Universe. To us religious Jews there exists only one God, the one who has revealed himself.

AVNER - You know that I am a convinced atheist. From your

words I must conclude, that the way I think and react is due to the fact that I have no tradition and no family from which I could have carried a tradition. Do you think this is so ?

RABBI - This sad and fateful fact has certainly deprived you of the starting point from which you can judge whenever you are gripped by doubt. But it has deprived you also of the means with which you can develop a sense of constructive disappointment whenever you are faced by a crisis or whenever something goes otherwise wrong. This has induced you to the negative attitude and the doubting philosophy which you so ably know to voice. If you were relaxed; and if you would permit yourself to enter into a frank discussion with yourself, you might have developed a more positive philosophy which - under the guidance of your remarkable intellect and, hopefully, under the influence of your unique experiences - might have turned you into a grateful, relaxed and unbiased believer in the guiding hand which God has kept over you throughout your life.

CAROL - Can I not be a Jew, a proud and self-assured Jew by merging into the Jewish culture ? Can I not be as good a Jew as the deeply religious Jew, without the need to subscribe to the Jewish faith ? Can one not doubt what is officiously taught as the Jewish faith - and still be a valid and valuable Jew ?

RABBI - I am ready to honour your attitude, as long as your doubt is the result of a prolonged study; the result of long and deep thinking; the result of a thorough analysis. For doubt has not of necessity to reflect a trend to nihilism. It can also be the starting point for the philosophical approach to the truth.

CAROL - In the Cartesian sense of "Cogito ergo sum" ?

RABBI - More even in that of Augustines "Si fallor, sum".

AVNER - May I in all honesty say, that it is not so much my grudge as my surprise, that not only so much value is placed on the Bible but that it is also granted a divine attribute. As you will know quite well, the Codex of Hamurabi tells us that these very same ethical principles which are admired in the Bible have already prevailed in ancient Babylon. Is not the suspicion justified, that the writer of the Bible may have copied his ethical legislation from there. Or am I totally wrong in what I expressed in this conjecture ?

RABBI - Why should there not have been an influence of the babylonian ethical codes on the ancient Israelite people ? It is a well known and generally accepted fact, that neighbouring cultures always influence each other. This was the case in ancient

times as it is today. You will find in Judaism also reflections of hellenistic, iranian and other cultural influences. But this in no way reduces the greatness of the Bible which reflects next to these influences I mentioned also the specific high morality and justice, honesty and decency of Judaism which you will miss in other religions. Let the following suffice as some of the many examples I could cite: the Bible commands that the slaves have to be treated as members of the family; that the property impounded or mortgaged has to be returned after seven years etc.

EG_ - And let me add that Hamurabi demanded that one has to honour one's father, while in the Ten Commandments it is ordered that one has to honour one's father and one's mother. This command in its amplified form must have expressed to the people of those ancient times a tremendous difference in conception.

FOURTEEN

RABBI - It hurts me very much whenever I meet people who in matters of religion and faith do not accept with open-minded tolerance what they know is the accepted standard and the *modus vivendi* of intelligent and cultured people all over the world. Such negativism is regrettable. We can say that much of our negativism is due to an unsettling inner disquiet and deeply rooted unhappiness. Our inner disquiet is due to the doubts we harbour. And much of our unhappiness is due to the inefficiently or wrongly answered questions by which we are bothered. In a world which should ideally be based on truth and reality - but where at the same time we are not granted absolute knowledge - it is the duty and task of religion not only to provide comfort and assurance to worried and anxious mankind. It is everywhere and in all circumstances also the task of religion to answer at least a great part of life's metaphysical questions.

AVNER - I breathe a sigh of relief, because all this cannot affect me. I have no religion, as you will have discovered. My intellect would in any case be unable to accept the type of comforts which religion has to offer.

RABBI - Better say you have no specific faith; for everybody harbours some kind of religiosity within himself.

AVNER - Why should I not have said faith and not religion ?

RABBI - Because you may in all honesty state that you belong to no faith whatsoever.

AVNER - What is the difference.

RABBI - Faith is the state of mind and the range of spiritual perception of a religious minded person. And faith, furthermore means basically a person's obedience to God's moral demands.

EGO - We are supported by our faith. We express our faith in prayers. Our prayers are mostly supported by symbolisms and ritualisms. And faith eases and planes differences between people. Faith is the common denominator which unites equally believing and likewise trusting individuals into a community of worshippers. Once you learn to pray your attitudes to the Divine, to religion and to society will change.

CAROL - "Faith is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands", is the simple definition Kant has provided.

AVNER - Have I to conclude from your barrage of definitions that prayer is a sine qua non for indulging in a faith ?

RABBI - Not necessarily; but prayer is the most adequate form, and the mostly used opportunity to verbalize all one thinks, fears and hopes. It is the line of communication with the divine. It is a way to clarify one's thoughts. And very significantly it shows the path to repentance. "It is the midway to atonment", says a Midrash. Once you can pray, all your rigidity of mind and hardness spirit will melt.

AVNER - This sounds very complicated. What you expect today to gain from your "divine service" in the synagogue, was in ancient times a far less complex process: it was given managed in the Temple of Jerusalem in form of rituals and with animal sacrifices performed by the properly appointed priests. Our jewish forefathers benefited by standing around as onlookers. Why do the Jews not continue with these practices ?

EG - Because we have learned to pray. Because we have learned that it is better and more effective to approach God through prayers than - as our ancestors could and did - through the sacrifices of animals. And because we have learned that rituals of this kind are only useful as a symbolic approach by people such attuned; in times with such a philosophy; under the guidance of a theology thus inspired. When this kind of milieu changed, also the approach to the divinity changed along with the form in which prayers were expressed.

RABBI - I shall quote form Psalm 50: "Let thanks-giving be your sacrifice to God; fulfill the vows you make to the Most High - then you can invoke me in your troubles and I shall rescue you..."

CAROL - People are supposed to pray regularly, every day and without any specific outside motivation. But is it not a fact that most people only pray whenever they are in trouble; when also otherwise something is wrong; and when it is hoped that divine intervention might solve an impasse ?

RABBI - Indeed, this is and always was mostly the case and the cause. May I point out, that the english word 'prayer' is related to 'petition'. The jewish word for prayer t'filah has not such a root. In any case, a t'fillah never intends to ask God for the satisfaction of some personal needs - though one may add such a request to the regular institutionalized prayers. There is also

another very important characteristic of the Jewish prayer: nearly all the Jewish prayers are offered in the name of all the Jews. We pray as 'we' and never as 'I'. By the way: also the regular daily and seasonal sacrifices in the Temple were offered in the name of the nation. They were paid for by the half-shekel every Jew had to deliver annually to the Temple Treasury.

ASHER - Let us take the case of the person who prays in Hebrew or Greek or Latin but is not familiar with the language he uses in the prayer. He may on occasion mispronounce a word in such a way, that the sentence is turned into a curse or into an infamy against God. Will he be punished for his blasphemy? Or will God not mind and simply ignore the prayer?

RABBI - In no way can this have any consequences! It really does not matter which words we use in our prayers; what we say aloud when praying - as long as the prayer comes from our heart. That is to say: as long as the prayer does not originate from the lips but comes from within ourselves.

RINAT - In this case there is no need to shout the prayers or even to say the words aloud.

RABBI - Precisely so! Words are not important. Nor are the decibels. One can equally well pray silently - without moving the lips even. Sincere devotion, a full outpouring from an overflowing heart are better than reciting prayers from a prayer-book. You may have heard the legend of the mentally retarded shepherd boy who accompanied his father to Shul on a Yom Kippur. He was suddenly so gripped by the atmosphere which had been created in the prayer room by the devotion and the prayers, by the fasting and the tears of the congregation, that he took the flute he carried in his pocket and began to produce a shrill cacophony of sounds. The father was terrified; the congregation was in an uproar - but the old Rabbi made them listen to the sounds of the flute with the words: "I would gladly give away the rest of my life were I able to pray with the same kavanna, with the same devotion as this boy".

CAROL - I have to hand a crown of laurels to Judaism. For in Hinduism only the Brahmin priest is supposed to know how to chant the prayers and how to perform the sacrifices. The lay people gladly grant the priests this privilege - and happily pay for their upkeep - as otherwise the gods would get angry and might bring plague and pestilence over their heads.

EG - May I underline how important it is for us to understand, that a prayer has not of necessity to be spoken; that a prayer can

silently be expressed in one's heart; that a prayer can be offered also in other ways than in words; that it can with equal effect be offered while in a state of meditation.

CAROL - Is it necessary the move about while praying ? Or to shake one's upper body ? This seems to be to many Jews an indispensable exercise while they say their prayers.

RABBI - Those who do, explain this with the words of the Psalmist: "...all my bones shall say: Lord who is like Thee ?"

EG - In my own world praying means that I am entering into a conversation with the Sublime; with the God within me; with my Self. I can well understand - and I do not see anything wrong in this - that others are in need of giving physical expression to their devotion by their shaking, crying, bending, kneeling.

ASHER - Is not the posture a person occupies during prayer of some significance ? The Yogi has to take up a certain posture for his meditations. Likewise the Buddhist and the Catholic.

RABBI - Take up any position which helps you to relax while you pray. You may adopt whatever posture or expression which will help you to shed all extraneous intrusions. You may do whatever will help you to communicate with what you perceive as the Divine. But I have to warn you not to make an image of God appear in front of your inner eye. Your prayer will be the more effective, if you succeed in creating within yourself the sensation of finding yourself in an unusual state of mind. If you can create in yourself an exceptionally solemn mood. If you sense you are gripped by an elevated perception.

CAROL - The true service to God is ".....invisible, that is in the service of the heart", says Kant.

RABBI - Let me make one fundamental thing clear to you: we have no right to expose to arguments nor to ridicule the individual who says, that he does not require for his communication with what he perceives as the Divine, an organized religion; nor a synagogue or temple; nor any rites or symbols. Nor have we to disbelieve the person who maintains, that he can communicate with God in his mind; that in his state of meditation he is in contact with his God; that God has entrusted his soul to direct and guide him. You have to respect the individual who tells you, that he does not need prostrations and lamentations, but can communicate with his God in his heart. Know that such an individual is blessed. But these individuals thus blessed should in turn be warned not to fall into the error of trying to describe their faith in rational terms. For

by doing so, they will only succeed to kill all the sensations of wonder, of surprise and of gratitude which are undoubtedly imbedded in their hearts.

EG - And their prayers would lose every effect.

AVNER - It follows therefore, that if this individual does not make too many mistakes, he may ask God to make him win a million dollars on the lottery ticket he is going to buy.....?

RABBI - Your question shows that you have totally misunderstood the meaning - let me also add the value - of a prayer. In a prayer we do not ask for favours except the one, that we may free ourselves of evil, of doubts, of anxiety. We pray we may be given insight into our own weaknesses. We pray for guidance. We pray for the right way to decide an issue. We pray for the strength to face an ordeal. We pray to be forgiven the wrongs we have committed. Of course, we do often add prayers for our health and the health of those near to us; for the wellbeing of the State of Israel; for divine guidance for our Government in the decisions they make.

EG - How can I ask God to make me win the lottery, I ask you in all sincerity ? It would be like asking myself ! However, it is my firm conviction that God can be approached in certain cases and under certain circumstances with profane or materialistic things in our mind - but these will certainly only be accepted and rewarded in very rare cases and in very unusual circumstances. But one should never - I repeat never - pray for personal financial gains.

CAROL - If I understood you well, you believe that the God you address in your prayers is the true God; that through prayers you have access to God who by definition is inaccessible except at rare times.

EG - I address the Absolute God through his presence within me, through my Self which is given me by God.

CAROL - I understand you well. To all appearances you think, that this finite and incomprehensible God listens to every miserable human's prayer.

EG - I believe that through prayer every human being can find the key with which he can gain access to God. I do not fear that my prayers might not reach God, because I believe - as I have so often explained - that God is within me; that my consciousness of God is my God; that my God is my awareness of the Absolute within me.

RABBI - Although you once categorically stated that you are not a mystic, a mystic would have given us the same answer.

RINAT - I read of people who during prayers had a kind of vision. Would this be a mystic event ?

RABBI - I tend to think that this is not in itself evidence of an access to mystic knowledge. I see in this only an indication that a way has been opened by which the individual may reach some greater understanding.

EG_ - May I enlarge on the value of prayers - and add to what the Rabbi has in clear words stated - that all which faces us; that all we encounter; that all we suffer or enjoy; that all we gain or lose - can through prayer make us conscious of the basic and ultimate purpose of our existence. Mankind's tragedy is, that only few of us see this and realize this.

AVNER - What, for instance, do I not see or realize ?

EG_ - That all which we have to face in our lives - the good and the bad; the pleasures and the pains; the failures and the successes - are tests with which we are confronted.

AVNER - If this is so, I can from my experiences only conclude that more or less the entire world, and certainly every religion past and actually in existence, have failed the most elementary tests. But why are we humble mortals to be blamed ? We are nothing but the passive participants in these tests. Would any reasonable person blame the laboratory animal if the test in which it is used fails or gives wrong results ?

EG_ - It is not only the actions of the active participants which are weighed. It is not only the outcome of whatever may be counted as a test which is judged. What counts also - and it counts a great deal - is how and to what degree whoever is involved uses the opportunities offered to him in the evolvment of such a process. In other words: what represents to a great extent a true test is not what we do or not do; not whether we consciously, unconsciously, positively or negatively affect our neighbour or our environment. That which in addition counts greatly in the evaluation of the test; that which is counted for or against us - is how we ourselves react to our fortunes or failures; to our suffering or escapes.

RINAT - You mean to say that we are tested by the way we as individuals handle a pleasant event or an unpleasant situation ? And in particular how we react and behave as individuals in our relationship to other individuals ?

RABBI - I am willing to agree. But such a system places a very great burden upon us ! Only a rare individual will succeed to live and act accordingly. Such an unceasing endeavour, i.e.

to act in accordance with such a purpose of our life, must have taken up every hour and all the energy of even those who qualified for sainthood. But, may I ask you, would we here - and with us most all of mankind - not have to be dismissed as failures, as failed products, were this the exclusive purpose of our being alive in this world? From what I learned of you in the course of our conversation, I do not doubt that you strive to live in accordance with such a program. I sincerely hope and pray that you will overcome all the difficulties you will inevitably and undoubtedly encounter. But such a program cannot and does not fit all of us mortals. I am ready to confide in you, that during all the years I am engaged in my rabbinic profession I have not met even one person who is actively or practically engaged in such a way of life. How then do you justify my existence? How do you see my life? How do you judge Avner's life? How do you view life on earth?

CAROL - In still other words, we want to hear from you, how you see the purpose not only of our own existence, but the ultimate destiny and the final fate of life on this planet, in view of the fact that the vast majority of mankind has so far failed - and continues to fail - to live in accordance with the strict program you have outlined just now?

EG - I well understand the doubt, the mistrust even, I sense behind your questions - but I am afraid I cannot help you. I am compelled to tell you, that I do not know more than what I have told you so far. Sorry! I used the wrong word. I do not know - I only believe I know. I am sustained by an inner assurance that I am right. I feel within me that this is the truth.

RINAT - But what you have depicted as your philosophy of life cannot be the exclusive purpose of our life. How can this have been the real intention behind all Creation? Why has life continued to exist throughout all these billions of life, considering that the divine experiment - which you presuppose is the reason for our being here on this planet - has so far in every generation absolutely and clearly ended in failure?

EG - I have to repeat that I do not know the answer to your questions. But let us play for a moment with the hypothesis, that our actual living world is not the first one to have existed on this planet? Or better still, that the human race is not the first one which had been developed - let me better say has been allowed, has been made to develop - over the untold millions of years since life was possible on this planet? How do we know,

whether in the course of this planet's billions of years old history we are the only living entity which has been slowly brought up to the prevailing high intellectual, biological, scientific and technical standard ? That we are the first race of living beings which has been given every facility to grow into that ethical standard which I mentioned as the purpose of the creation of us living beings ?

ASHER - Do you imply that there have been other races ? That before us there have been other kinds of beings which have failed to survive ? What happened to those who have failed ?

EG - They are gone. They have disappeared.

AVNER - Can you prove this with archaeological finds ?

EG - I too had to face this objection. I succeeded to overcome it by persuading myself, that those past worlds had to be in every aspect different from our actual one. Even in case the beings of these past worlds had possessed a highly developed standard of civilization - and they are sure to have had one such - it should not surprise us that whatever they had left in structures, of arts and of literature may have been totally different in nature and character from what characterizes our achievements. And let us suppose that even this was not the case, is it surprising that all they had and that all they produced has disappeared, totally and without a trace ? Do not forget that I speak of cultures, of civilizations, of living races which had existed possibly many hundreds of millions of years ago !

RINAT - Only the underground oil deposits may witness their past existence.

EG - Not at all. These are at the most a hundred million years old and are "left-overs" from the living beings of our actual cultural-generational cycle.

CAROL - The folklore of many a people in ancient times, and that of not few of those of today - in particular of those which we love to classify as primitives - speaks of worlds which have once existed on our earth and have disappeared without a trace.

RABBI - Also our own Bible hints at past worlds of such a kind - or at least of races which once existed and have gone. We are told, for instance, of giants - it is hinted they were angels who in pre-Noah times had descended from heaven to mix with the earthly creatures - and who were wiped out by the Flood.

AVNER - These types may have been only invaders from another continent here on earth. Do not forget that when the first Spanish

conquerors appeared in the Americas in the 1490s, they were thought by the natives to have arrived from the stars. Had these brutal invaders not proved how much they are earthly creatures, the saga of godlike beings having come down from heaven would to this day confuse historians and theologians alike.

CAROL - I wish certain elements of our society would also disappear, namely those who are responsible for the prevailing state of affairs in which antiquated rules of conduct are allowed to go on dominating the Jewish life of today. Thus the old Jewish traditions, that is the antiquated halachic rules, have remained valid to this day.

RABBI - Modernizing trends have at all times been known in our history; but they were never allowed to penetrate the walls of Orthodoxy. Even to this day we rabbis and our reformist program have not gained acceptance by the Chief Rabbinate. However, I am happy to say that many changes have entered modern Jewish way of thinking.

EG - For instance, it is today - at least to some degree - possible to give women their rightful position in society. To some degree even homosexuality is thought acceptable today.

RINAT - I wish there were not such much diversion in Israel.

EG - It can't be helped. It is unlikely that Israel will become a pluralistic society within our lifetime. The political power of the orthodox Jews will continue to influence whatever government is going to be elected in the near future.

RABBI - This is indeed an unwelcome situation. But it should not colour our outlook on life. It should not make us despondent. It is wrong, pitifully wrong, that you and so many of us react so negatively to the exigencies of life. This is only possible because we see our lives as a futile span of existence. This is wrong. Our life is not at all futile. Our relationship with others, with our neighbours should never be futile. Such a pessimistic outlook destroys not only the joys which life has to offer, but it makes also a mockery of whatever purpose life may have. Whatever that purpose may be. For there cannot be any doubt that it is an important purpose; an ethically significant purpose; and a for mankind rewarding purpose.

AVNER - Let us not turn romantic. We exist; this is a fact. And it is a fact also that we are conscious of our existence. And our program in life is to exist.

CAROL - This cannot be enough.

RABBI - I would formulate it similarly: the purpose of life and what forms man's destiny, is not his struggle with his neighbours. Nor is it his unending efforts to dominate nature and to overcome its limits. It is instead man's inner struggle against evil and his efforts to overcome the negative side of his nature.

F I F T E E N

RINAT - I am grateful for the opportunity you have given me here in our circle, to learn about Judaism in general and about our Jewish religion in particular. I have to confess, that in the past I never bothered about such matters. Had I been interested, I could have made ample use of the many opportunities which are offered here in Jerusalem. Having said this, I must also add that I am not satisfied with what I have learned so far. I mean to say, that it is not enough what I have learned. I want to learn more. I want to know more. We have touched on so many issues. We have heard mention made of so many ideas. We have seen so many problems illuminated. But, in my opinion, much of all we have talked about has not gone deep enough, has not been encompassing enough. I am sorry if you find me too outspoken - but hear me out at least. Our kind host has renewed his offer, that we spend further weekly evenings in his study until we think all our questions have been answered to our satisfaction. He has also kindly offered, that under his guidance we deal also with all the related matters which may be of interest to us. I propose, therefore, that we do take up again some of the items which, in my opinion, we have heard mentioned only en passant.

AVNER - I fully agree with Rinat. She has put in words what most likely most of us have been thinking. Allow me to start the program at which Rinat has hinted. I am going to put forward the question to which I have not been able to find the answer on my own: do religion and reason conflict ?

RABBI - Not necessarily; they may even be used to explain each other.

AVNER - It has been presented to us as the basic belief of the Jewish religion, that God cares for man. We have been told that God created the world and mankind because he wanted man to serve for his own fulfillment. Can you, please, tell us what you meant with these words ?

EQ - These words are only understandable - and thus acceptable - in the sense, that this assurance is necessary for man's Self to find assurance. For without such an assurance his faith collapses

and his prayers remain without a meaning.

AVNER - Have I to take it, that what you said just now is a part of the objective Truth which, in your opinion, is available to everybody ?

RABBI - There is no objective truth which is accessible to everybody.

EGO - But this knowledge should make us inclined to accept and to tolerate the religious and philosophical views of others which do not conform to our own.

AVNER - If this is case, you should have no aversion to pray also in a church or in a mosque ?

EGO - I certainly would not mind doing so.

RABBI - Neither would I. This possibility - nay, even your asking about this question - would, of course, have been unheard of in times past. But times have changed, and it is for us to adapt to the changing times and circumstances. We cannot deny the impact which increased knowledge and new insight have upon us. Our views have to change with the new discoveries and the progressing sciences. Above all, these adaptations to our times will teach us to be kind and tolerant. And - I do not have to convince you - everyone of us in this modern world badly needs to be taught tolerance and kindness.

EGO - Every religion - and ours no less than that of others - has to advance with, and to adapt to, the times. As for everything else it is an axiom, that a stagnating religion becomes an obsolete religion.

AVNER - I have observed that you never use the word "reason" in your arguments or formulas. Why ?

EGO - Is this so ? I have not been aware of this. Rest assured that I at least did not do so on purpose. The reason why I never particularly mentioned the word "reason" or called in "reason" to support an argument is, that all I had to say in whatever I have contributed to our conversations, went every time far beyond the restricted and restricting limits of reason. For where reason ends religion begins.

RABBI - Precisely what the famous hassidic Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav once said: he judged religion to be on a far higher level than reason.

RINAT - Allright, I do not mind accepting your argument. But does one at all need a religion ?

RABBI - Very much so. For mankind needs religion to give God

a place in its life.

AVNER - Alright. But do we need God in our life ?

RABBI - We need God as the guide and as the purpose to give value and justification to the ethics we pursue. And we need God in our life, so that we can find - through the ethics we pursue - the way to the truth.

EG - I will go further and say that, whether there is a God or not we badly and urgently need one in our life.

AVNER - Because you have incorporated into your concept of God all you understand under transcendence; all which is to you incomprehensible; all which you hope will happen to you after death.

CAROL - What Avner just now said, is a general phenomenon which affects large circles. It is pitiful at times to see how theologians and philosophers of religion try to find an explanation for the anthropomorphic figure of an irascible God of the Bible. In reality their efforts are mainly intended to find an excuse or a defense.

RABBI - As I had already occasion to point out, God is finite and unchangeable. But the image of God and the ideological presentation of God change with the changed times and with the changed point of observation. Every generation of philosophers; every cultural movement; every shift in the spiritual atmosphere - are liable to create a different image of God. They change the way in which God's appearance is dressed up. They change the set of colours in which he is painted. They change the way in which the creation of the world is explained. They change the method with which revelation is depicted. But they never change the essence of God nor the meaning of God within his creation.

EG - However, you should never forget, that in the course of these changes the ethics contents and the eternal values of Judaism itself have never changed. In whatever way the Jews have seen and approached and described their God, Judaism's basic ethical principles have never changed. Judaism is a religion of historic dimensions. It started with Abraham and was consolidated when Moses and the Children of Israel stood at Sinai. And it continues as such to this day.

ASHER - And God continues to impose his will and rules. Like the followers of all other monotheistic religions, a Jew prays that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

RABBI - Yes, for this he prays. It is in this sense that God is approached with prayers and devotion.

CAROL - The Buddhists and the Hindus have a better way, I think.

Their approach is by contemplation and meditation.

RABBI - Nothing prevents a Jew to approach God in this way. But I have to point out, that in our religion people are not invited to speculate or to meditate. They are expected "to do and to obey", as the Bible says. Inner discipline is eo ipso a way to approach the Divinity. Let me add, that also charity, and no less also physical work, may be viewed as a sacred function.

RINAT - I would have difficulties to live in accordance with such rules. I find the Jewish religion too strict, too prohibitive, even too ascetic.

RABBI - On the contrary ! It is anything but strict, and no more prohibitive than a religion is supposed to be. And it is most of all not an ascetic religion. The talmudic Rabbis have quite explicitly declared, that asceticism has no place in Judaism. They considered it sinful to deprive oneself of the physical pleasures which God has granted to mankind. A Jew has to enjoy life, we are told. It is a Mitzvah. And in any case, neither asceticism nor meditation are in Judaism specific forms of worship. The right way of worship is to testify one's faith; to act within the limits of morality; and to obey the laws. The Jewish religion is basically presented in simple and plain terms. A faithful Jew has not to dig into history. He is not obliged to immerse himself in Jewish philosophy. He has not to ponder all facets of Jewish tradition. It is enough, if he feels himself a member of the Jewish nation; if he acknowledges God as his Creator; if he follows the laws and the commandments.

CAROL - Also Spinoza has pointed out, that the Scriptures contain no sophisticated ways of reasoning. Nor do they invite philosophical pondering as is the case in most other religions.

RABBI - This is evidenced in the Covenant of Sinai. It could not have been presented in plainer, clearer and more unsophisticated terms.

EG - It was not only addressed to the Israelites present at Sinai, but to all future generations of Jews. And the commandments and laws propagated at that moment are, therefore, obligatory also to all the future generations of Jews.

RABBI - The Sages have expressed this very clearly: every Jew of every generation should feel, behave and believe as if he himself had been standing at the foot of Mount Sinai on that tremendous occasion. This by the way is the great value of the Pesach Seder when the Exodus is minutely described. I forgot to mention this

when I was asked about the value of the "imitation of a Roman banquet".

AVNER - Do you feel yourself thus personally addressed ?

RABBI - Yes, I do. And in addition I feel bound to the Covenant by virtue of my identification with the general history of the Jews following the revelation at Sinai.

ASHER - It is my firm conviction, that no thinking person should rely on what tradition and religion tell and demand - not even on what philosophy and history try to convey. He has to think things through by himself.

CAROL - Even though I would love to have a faith, I have been unable to do so. I would love to follow your example and to submit to a trustful acceptance of all the things which make up your religion - but with the best of will I can only accept that which does not conflict with my own way of reasoning. It would have been contrary to my principles to come to a compromise with myself and to accept a kind of modified Jewish religion. I have come to a satisfactory modus vivendi without a place in a synagogue. I agree, however, that the common people, hoi polloi, needs a firmly and clearly outlined religious system. Every other approach would only confuse them - and this would be most unkind.

AVNER - It disturbs me that the Jewish God is supposed to care only for the Jews and not for any of the other peoples.

RABBI - You could not be more wrong. Listen to what Isaiah had to say: "Blessed be my people Egypt, Assyria my creature, and Israel my heritage, says God". In our synagogues we pray for peace all over the world and harmony among the nations.

AVNER - It is hardly fair to try and answer an atheist with biblical quotations.

RABBI - You may be justified in what I interpret as a complaint. Let us spend a few minutes on the atheist's way of approach to religion in general and to Judaism in particular. May I ask you, within the frame of my program, whether your atheistic ideology is due to the frustration arising from the fact that you have to deny God because you cannot find God within the concept you have formed for yourself of God ? Or is it because you find it impossible to believe in God ?

AVNER - How can you expect from me that I thank God for having allowed my parents to be killed ? How can you expect from me that I sing the praises of a just and merciful God who had proved himself anything but just and merciful ?

RABBI - May I tell you, Avner, that within me I know quite well, that you are very concerned about the negative way in which you are reacting to your pain. I have listened to you for many weeks now; and I have become convinced that you are no more convinced within yourself by your own arguments - but you continue to use them because you are struggling hard to keep up your fences. And, Avner, I know, that for this reason you are a more religious man than even I can claim to be.

AVNER - Concede to me the liberty that I do not react to your words, please. But I take also the liberty to enlarge your insight into my psychological make-up by informing you, that I have come to my denial of a divine presence in the same way as you have reached your own certainty of a divine presence. I do not need a God to supervise our world. Darwinism is for me a sufficient formula with which to explain the development of our world. I have no need of a God for this development. And in turn let me ask you: why has atheism taken such a strong hold on modern society? Had it not been a justified ideology, this could not have been the case. And thirdly: I think it is retrogressive attitude in our days to belittle science. All the explanations I have heard here are not worthy of rationally thinking people.

RABBI - What you said about the theistic views; and the way you belittle the faith of those who do not share your views - confirm only too well what I have said. I am not going to argue with you about your views. But let me point out to you how much you miss. All through the centuries, and all through the various cultural epochs, the common people have accepted God as their loving and caring father and protector. They felt secure in the knowledge of God on whom they can rely; and in whom they can put their trust. There came the time not long ago, when the scientists dethroned God; when the philosophers killed God; when the theologians tried to find a substitute for God. The effect was, that the common people, the simple people, lost their support. And what is worse - they lost hope!

AVNER - I needed neither philosophers no theologians to show me the truth.

RABBI - What you said just now gives me the great hope, that you will in due course discover your error.

EG - I share this hope. It is fortunate, that in our days a Jew who denies his faith remains a Jew. In ancient times he would have been persecuted, if not killed, as a heretic.

CAROL - This was also the case in Christendom in old times, when not the slightest deviation from the established doctrine was allowed under the threat of losing one's life. Surprisingly, in Islam such deviations - even if not permitted - were not found objectionable, as was the case with the Sufis' mysticism and the Shias' Imamology.

RABBI - Atheism was unknown in the antique. People accepted God as a fact. There is no hebrew word for atheism, as far as I know. In ancient Greece and Rome it meant, that a person had failed to show the due reverence to the gods or had omitted to bring them a sacrifice. In ancient Israel it meant to chose other gods. When the greek philosophers' influence became more widespread; and when their way of reasoning was more commonly used - it became a favoured object of discussion whether there is a God or not.

CAROL - I think here a clearer explanation of the hellenistic influence on their and the neighbouring environments is called for. When the greek culture was at its height - between 2000 and 2500 years ago - it had a deep impact on the then civilized world, the jewish world included.

EG - It is true that the Jews of that time were influenced by the hellenistic thought process. Judaism has also absorbed much from the babylonian, egyptian and persian cultures. It has also learned from the way the Romans practiced politics.

ASHER - You speak of syncreticism ?

EG - I do so in a positive sense. These influences were the elements which adjusted the mentality of a desert people to the demands of the progressing civilization.

RABBI - This influenced ceased after the Second Temple was destroyed.

CAROL - It ceased in reality after the byzantine government came into power.

RABBI - Let us not overlook that Judaism has in turn influenced the culture of the surrounding mediterranean world from the time Solomon reigned until the 5th century when Christianity rose in power.

CAROL - But the encounter of greek philosophy with jewish monotheism had to lead to a conflict with established, priest-dominated Judaism. The greek concept of God was not only that of a superior kind of humans, but also that man himself can become a godhead.

RABBI - Of course, the two cultures had to clash. In jewish

belief man could never become a god or even god-like. The Greeks' gods mixed with people, but the Jewish God had no direct physical equation with man. The Jewish God was above man. God had created the Universe and mankind.

EG - The large hellenized section of Jewry - the upper social strata and the intelligenzia - made great efforts to hellenize also Judaism itself. From this trend resulted among other things, the Septuagint, the translation of the Bible into Greek. All this caused the Jewish world to split into two camps.

RABBI - This was indeed a very interesting - and no less also a deeply hurting period in Jewish history. But unfortunately it is also a poorly understood - and even less studied - period in Jewish history.

EG - All through the nearly 2000 years which followed, Judaism enclosed itself into a defensive crust. Until, with Enlightenment a true revolutionary change occurred. In the enlightened civilized world it was no more such an overwhelming sin to defend atheism or to declare oneself an atheist.

CAROL - Descartes and Pascal showed the way. The former maintained that our intellect suffices to discover what we are looking for. And this includes God. By reason we can reach and prove the same truths as are postulated by the religions, he said. By reason we can prove what faith wants us blindly to believe. Pascal, on the other hand, reasoned that we cannot state with certainty what God is and whether he is. We cannot decide this question neither by reason nor by faith.

RABBI - They had good company in the philosophers of the post-Enlightenment era. Voltaire was their flag-bearer. He framed the famous dictum: "If there had not been a God it would have been necessary to invent him".

CAROL - But at the same time Voltaire condemned "the legends about God" as offensive to the sacred standards of reason.

RABBI - Another philosopher of that revolutionary age was Diderot. He argued that at the moment we do not care whether God exists or not - God ceases to exist. And Nietzsche too had his say: all is permitted since God does not care, was his contribution to the tireless debates of the last two centuries. Man who has to pass through a tortured life, Nietzsche proclaimed, looks for martyrdom. He therefore invents God to be better enabled to inflict this martyrdom upon himself.

CAROL - "God is dead", he finally concluded.

AVNER - Freud too decried theism as the wishful thinking of those who are in need of support. They see in God a father figure which they can project into the heavens, was his dictum.

EG - In this company we have to grant a place also to Karl Marx. He and his socialist movement became ardent supporters of atheism. They blamed theism for having deprived the masses of their justified complaints about the social inequalities under which they have to suffer.

ASHER - You all have forgotten to mention Spinoza. He certainly fits in, although his atheism had taken the shape of pantheism.

CAROL - I think only a non-conformist atheist can at best adopt Spinoza's line.

RABBI - Possibly also a reasoning and logically thinking person who believes in a divinely ordained Creation, may do so.

EG - After what you have heard just now, you cannot but feel assured, that neither the lines of Voltaire and Diderot, nor the pointers of Spinoza apply to me. That is to say: I have neither a pantheistic nor a panentheistic view of God. Neither have I a mystic view of God. I have, as I told you already, a transcendental view of God. I make this this statement, because I want to make you understand my conviction that the God I know is within me, and that he addresses me.

ASHER - Is there still any use for what we have been talking about ? Has in your view religion still a meaning today ? Has religion not become irrelevant in today's world ?

RABBI - Religion can only be irrelevant to those to whom their religion has become a matter of routine; a profession without a sense; and a confession without a meaning. It is anything but irrelevant, if we demand of religion that it answers our spiritual needs. Our quest for the truth, is anything but irrelevant. Our demands for the eradication of the rudeness and misery which has affected our society, is anything but irrelevant.

EG - Religion has in addition also to answer the questions which arise from our dissatisfaction with life. It has also to deal with the replies which the theologians and politicians have to offer. Religion must be felt, lived and not automatically accepted.

AVNER - Do the Ashkenazim and Sephardim - though they have each their own, nearly exclusively owned, rites - share the common basic views of Judaism ?

RABBI - Certainly so. You must not be confused by the diverse

customs and rituals of these groups. As in ancient times so also in the late Middle Ages did Judaism, but more so the Jews, take over attitudes, aspects and concepts from their surrounding. However, the Jews in Europe and the Jews in the Middle East lived in different surroundings. In the West - especially in Germany and under the impact of Protestantism - Judaism became more restrictive; while in the East, under the then benevolent rule of Islam, it turned more relaxed. But otherwise there is no difference whatsoever in what Judaism is fundamentally, and what is cherished by both these groups.

S I X T E E N

ASHER - What had in times past the wise men of the East to say about the questions we discussed during our last meeting ?

CAROL - It would take up too much time for me to enlarge on all the relevant aspects of the eastern religion. In part we have already analyzed many of these issues. Should you, however, be interested in a deeper and wider understanding of this material, you will have to study the relevant books.

RINAT - The East, and especially China, is said to be full of wisdom - but we have never heard any of it mentioned here.

CAROL - Your criticism is justified. I could more than once have mentioned the classical scholars of China. Among these I very much appreciate Confucius' way of looking at things. He believed that man's virtues have been implanted in his heart and mind by 'Heaven'. He made it very clear, however, that he did not care for miracles nor for heavenly mysteries. He did not even accept the possibility that an individual can personally be immortal. He did not care for prayers and obsequies. He preferred man to express his ethical duty to 'Heaven' by doing works of piety and by serving others.

RINAT - Among the large number of greek philosophers some must certainly have made a contribution to the West's conception of God and religion ?

CAROL - From among the large phalange of greek philosophers who followed Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle I am going to mention first of all Plotonius. He lived in the third century of our era. He had great influence on the three monotheistic religions. He withdrew in himself the better to explore his 'psuche'. In this way he discovered that his own soul - as well all mankind's souls - require purification. The Ultimate Reality is "The One", he taught. All things owe their existence to him. "The One's" qualities can impossibly be described. We cannot say, however, that "The One" exists, as "everything is nothing". "The One" is the point within the circle from those emanations all the other circles derive. The soul - called the "Psuche" by the Greeks - derives from the mind in the same way as "The Mind" derives from

"The One".

EG - His ideas remind me very much of what Hinduism and Buddhism have to say in this regard.

AVNER - I am certain in myself that - without identifying with these profound sounding philosophical theories; and without trusting the hedging of all these clever sounding theoretical philosophies - I am as good a Jew as any Jew anywhere. And had Carol and I children of our own, they too would have continued to be Jews.

ASHER - I agree with what you say. But do you realize that you are privileged to think this way only because you live here in Israel? You may take it for granted that, were you living in the Diaspora, you - or at least your next generation - would cease to be Jews.

RABBI - I too am sure that the current wave of assimilation, which is so threatening abroad, would have engulfed you too.

AVNER - In other words: both of you cannot visualize, it seems, that a Jew can remain a Jew among the fleshpots of New York or Los Angeles?

RABBI - When I grew up there were six million Jews in America. By every standard this is a comfortable and promising number. Given the natural jewish birthrate in addition to the post-WWII flow of immigration, this number should have doubled today. But in reality the number has decreased today by about a million. Of these 1½ million are only jewish by name. Only two million belong to any kind of a jewish organization. Is it surprising, therefore, that the inter-marriage rate is over 50% and climbing?

ASHER - Why do you imply that a mixed marriage is to be lamented as presenting a negative factor for Judaism? I have found many very proud and sincere Jews among those who have converted to Judaism.

CAROL - Look back into history and you will discover Ruth, the Moabite, who converted to Judaism - and one of whose descendents was King David.

RABBI - I agree with you. I welcome those mixed marriages in which the non-jewish partner converts to Judaism.

EG - I agree with you. It is genetically and culturally often a great advantage for the jewish people.

ASHER - Mordechai Kaplan, the Reconstructionist, was right when he defined Judaism as a civilization with its own unique land, language and literature; with its specific days of celebration and mourning, eating habits and rites of passage.

RABBI - Only if we teach our children to appreciate this great civilization, can we grant them the necessary qualification to decide their own jewishness.

EG - We should in these our days and in this our country concentrate all our endeavours on educating our children to this effect. But, alas, school education is poor, even backward, here in Israel. The children in the Diaspora may be said to receive a better jewish education than our children in the non-religious schools in Israel.

RINAT - Forgive my asking, Rabbi; but is the Reform Movement not also a starting point on the way to assimilation ?

RABBI - You have nothing to fear in this regard. Reform Judaism is very much and very firmly anchored in Judaism. It is committed to the preservation of Judaism and its ethical values. Reform Judaism's defences against assimilation are strong - and constantly kept so. It tries to give a new expression to an existing old, valuable and cherished form of thinking. You may rest assured: we are as good Jews; as convinced Jews; as religiously Jews - as any of those who make up the Jewish nation; who are dedicated to the sacredness of Judaism; and who try to strengthen the totality of Jewry.

ASHER - Does liberal Judaism, as represented by Reform Judaism, not want to bring about a revolution in religious thinking?

RABBI - Let us be clear in our thinking and exact in our wording, please. There is quite a difference between reform and revolution. The latter wants to remove the old and create something new. We, on the other hand, want to preserve the old. We only want to remove its accrued incongruities. And in addition we strive to deepen its true values.

RINAT - Allow me to enlarge the theme we are discussing by asking, what attitude the Christians have to religion ?

RABBI - Their "attitude" is very straight forward and most uncompromising. Christianity does not allow any deviation from the strict doctrines the Church has from time to time promulgated. Nor does christian doctrine permit any interpretations other than those issued by the Church. But it has to be said, that also in this respect things have enormously changed. Today a Christian can survive even his most severest disagreement with the Church. While whoever dared in the past to raise even the slightest suspicion of such a disagreement, was considered a heretic and could expect the severest punishment.

AVNER - In my personal view we should not bother about the views of the catholic Church and the other christian denominations. There are so many other things in the christian religion which are beyond credulity. For instance: could you ever sympathize and emphasize with - or consider holy - a God who is depicted as a humiliated, suffering, weeping, crucified being ?

RABBI - You can expect that Christianity does not lack the proper explanation for what you said just now. In this case we are told, that by adopting human nature and experiences; that by exhibiting human weaknesses and undergoing human sufferings - God invites mankind to identify with Jesus and to learn in this way, that it too can find the way to salvation.

AVNER - This explanation does not make Jesus and his Church in the slightest more sympathetic to me.

RABBI - We are not asked for sympathy. We are only asked for tolerance. Let us hear now, how Islam views the points we have raised. You may possibly find Islam's conceptions more to your taste. As you will know, the word "Islam" means "to surrender". Hence a Moslem is a person who surrenders all he is and has to God. Like Judaism, Islam states categorically that there is no other God than God. On this conviction is based the righteous believer's acknowledgement of his creed which he states in form of a prayer five times a day and also on as many as possible. Islam like Judaism says, that through Abraham and the other prophets God has made an eternal pact with mankind.

RINAT - Why do they call God by the name 'Allah' ?

CAROL - In pre-islamic times 'al-Illah', along with three female deities, had been the gods of the desert tribes to which Muhammad had belonged. Muhammad's concept of God centred on Allah alone. He could only with great difficulty get rid of the other gods.

RABBI - Muhammad insisted that all theistic religions try to define the reality of one and the same God. In other words: all properly constituted theistic religions come from the one God. Allah is this one and only God. This is the alpha and omega of Islam and Judaism and Christianity. The Qu'ran does not speculate about God's essence as Judaism's and Christianity's scriptures do. There is One God. This is an undisputable fact - and this should suffice. This does not demand any further explanations or descriptions. Allah is to be understood by what he has created and by what is perceivable in nature.

ASHER - It has to pointed out as a unique feature of Islam, that it shows tolerance to the "People of the Book" - that is to say to the Jews and Christians. Under moslem dominance Jews and Christians were granted religious liberty, though they were forced into a socially lower status - that of the so-called 'dhimmis'.

CAROL - You mean the Covenant of Omar. But to my regret I cannot agree with you in all points. What what you told us sounds good but does not correspond to the naked reality. You better look at this covenant as a kind of "Nuremberg Law". The Covenant had been promulgated by the Caliph Omar when he conquered Jerusalem and other territories which contained a non-islamic resident population. The dhimmis, Jews and Christians, were exposed to often severe discriminatory laws. They had to pay a toll-tax. They had to wear special hats and badges. They were prohibited from riding on horses and camels. They were forbidden to ride in carriages. They were not allowed to build synagogues or churches. And those churches and synagogues which already existed had to be reduced in height so that they were lower than all other moslem-owned buldings.

RINAT - Even today not much of tolerance is to be found in moslem countries, although you will hardly find anywhere such a large percentage of religious people as among the Moslems.

RABBI - This is explainable by the fact that, unfortunately, the easily incited masses have succumbed to the poison of politics. But the Qu'ran clearly states about the Jews: "We believe in that which has bestowed on you; for our God and your God is one and the same".

EG - Also Maimonides said of the Moslems, that their God is also our God.

RABBI - At the time Maimonides lived and wrote, Islam was at the height not only of its political power, but also of its cultural splendour. The Jews fitted in well with the Moslems. There was a reciprocal benefit from this collaboration and cohabitation.

EG - The Moslems' actual outpouring of hatred for the jewish 'Children of the Book' surprises me greatly. For the Moslems too believe that the Qu'ran has been revealed by God. The reverence the Moslem has for the Qu'ran is impressive. It is far greater than the Jew's for the Torah scroll.

CAROL - The Christian, on the other hand, has no such respect for his own scriptures. Nor does he maintain that God or an Angel has revealed the gospels, for instance, to any of the apostles.

RABBI - The suras which the Moslem recites in his prayer, are those which Allah has made Muhammad write down. The Qu'ran contains much material taken from Jewish scriptures - but in nearly no instance in the form it is known to us from the Bible. After all, we should remember that Muhammad derived his knowledge of Judaism and Christianity from the Jewish and Christian tribes who lived alongside the Arabian desert tribes. It is not surprising that their intellectual standard and their expertise had been on a rather low level. Only after Islam had conquered the West, did it come into contact there with a highly developed culture. It was for the first time also exposed there to a positive criticism. This, to a great part, made it possible for the visual arts and literature to flower. These developments had also a great impact on Islamic theology and philosophy.

RINAT - I wished there was among the Arabs a little more understanding of, and friendship for the Jewish Israel. How could this burning hostility ever have developed? After all, the Arabs have no historic claim on Israel, and certainly not on Jerusalem.

EG - Islam's claim on Jerusalem is indeed very tenuous. It is based on a dream Muhammad had one memorable night. Or call it a vision. In this dream-vision Archangel Gabriel took Muhammad from Mecca to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. On the Temple Mount he mounted a heavenly horse which took him straight into heaven, where he was received by a committee made up of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. He was given a guided tour through all the heavens. In the last of the heavens he was granted a glimpse of what he perceived to be God - in shape of a lotus tree.

AVNER - Why do you think you can laugh about Muhammad's journey to the heavens? Because it can't possibly have happened? Do you also laugh about the Pope who is going onto his knees when he venerates the "Holy Shroud of Turin"? And do you also laugh when you hear about Mary's corporeal ascension into heaven? This is as likely to have happened as the ascension of old Enoch, which was accepted as truth by the Jews in the desert - but is totally unacceptable to you today. But the shroud with the imprint of Jesus' face; and Mary's ascension into heaven are accepted and believed as absolute truth by millions of scientists and intellectuals today.

RABBI - St. Augustine too had the vision - which nobody would think of disputing - that he was taken, along with his mother, on a visit through the heavens

CAROL - Also the Shaman - whether of Tibet or of South America

- has visions of excursions into the heaven.

RINAT - Do you see any satisfactory solution to the problem of Jerusalem ? I must confess that I am worried. Notwithstanding the repeated declarations of our government to the contrary, the Arabs have not ceased to claim Jerusalem for themselves.

RABBI - It has been made very clear to all concerned that Jerusalem was and is our holy city. We do not mind Christians and Moslems to worship at the shrines which are holy to them - but that is all. Jerusalem is the capital of the sovereign State of Israel - and will remain it in all future.

ASHER - I foresee very great problems arising in future about this.

AVNER - If so, the blame will have to be laid at the feet of our politicians. It is unbelievable, how clumsy they are in handling this issue. They act and talk as if the Arabs have a justified claim on Israel.

EG - What do you mean ?

AVNER - I can give you a bagful of facts which show you that our politicians are to blame for the actual state of affairs. And for what I fear the future will bring. Why does the Ministry of Tourism publish propaganda material abroad in which the Dome of the Rock figures as the symbol of the City ? Does it want to compete with the Eiffel Tower ? Why does our government go on exclaiming at every opportunity that Jerusalem is "holy to all three faiths" ? This is not only not true but places the Arabs' claims on the same level as ours. Why do I hear again and again that Jerusalem is the place of pilgrimage for all faiths ? This is no less an error and untrue. Jerusalem - which the Moslems call al-Kuds - is to them not a place for pilgrimage. Only and exclusively Mecca is the place for the Haj pilgrimage. Throughout the centuries Jerusalem has been in the hands of the Moslems, but none of them ever came to Jerusalem on pilgrimage - or even to pray. Except for the King of Jordan who prayed in the al-Aksa Mosque. But even he never declared Jerusalem his capital. Jerusalem has never featured as important in the world of Islam.

RABBI - The Jews have always faced Jerusalem in their prayers. The Moslems turn to Mecca. Even the Moslems who pray on the Temple Mountain in these days turn their faces into the direction of Mecca. Jerusalem has never been "holy" to Islam. Jerusalem is mentioned 657 times in our Bible. Jerusalem is mentioned 154 times in the New Testament. But Jerusalem is never mentioned in the Qu'ran.

AVNER - And what, for heaven's sake, is the meaning of "East Jerusalem" ? By this odd geographic label we have already granted the Arabs the right to demand their half of the town.

EG - It is worth pointing out, that the Qu'ran does not mention the Machpela Cave either. Nor that Abraham has purchased it. This has since 1967 been the cause for much dispute - and unavoidable bloodshed.

RABBI - But they have usurped for themselves the Patriarchs buried there. In the Qu'ran Muhammad appointed Abraham to a rank which approximates more or less to moslem sainthood. Abraham is called in the later suras "al-Khalil", the "Friend of God". This appointment turned Abraham into a fatherly friend of the Arabs. But on the whole the Qu'ran reflects Muhammad's disappointment in the Jewish tribes because they did not accept his faith.

RINAT - Does the Qu'ran contain any reference to anything which may have been loaned from Buddhism or Hinduism ?

RABBI - Not to my knowledge. But this is explainable. Although both Hinduism and Buddhism were already well known in the West at the time the Qu'ran was written, Muhammad in his desert environment did not know of them. His only contact with bearers of an organized religion was with Jewish tribes - and that only at the time of the Hidra; that is, when he had migrated to Medina. He had hoped to turn the Jewish tribes into his followers. The Jewish influence was definitely felt in Muhammad's world. Like the Jews, Muhammad prayed at first only three times a day, turned into the direction of Jerusalem. He fasted also on Yom Kippur. It was around this time that he must have learned about Abraham and Ismail. When the Jews rejected his approach - because they discovered that Muhammad was not the expected messiah - he turned hostile.

AVNER - The Moslems think the Qu'ran has been dictated by God himself ?

RABBI - This is the accepted belief. The Mutazilis maintained, that the Qu'ran existed already when the world was created; that it was created long with world.

EG - This is also a common belief among Jews regarding the Torah.

RINAT - What are the Mutazilis ?

CAROL - The Mutazilis formed a philosophical movement. They played an important role in the early developmental stages of Islam. They tried to bridge what they perceived was a contradiction between revelation and reason. Where things did not agree with logic and

hard facts, they made revelation take over.

RINAT - Were they similar to the Shi'ites ?

CAROL - There is no connection. You may say that the Shi'ites started as a political movement. They considered - and continue to do so to this - Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, the rightful heir and Khalif. Ali's son was murdered and is now mourned as a martyr by the Shi'ites.

RABBI - The Shi'ahs or Shi'ites gave the Qu'ran also a mystic interpretation: Muhammad had entrusted his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib, they maintain, with certain secret knowledge which was henceforth transmitted from father to son. Although none of these descendants was ever elected or appointed Khalifs, they were worshiped by their shi'ite followers as Imams, as the spiritual leaders who had been deprived of their political power.

EGO - God is said to dwell in these Imams.

RINAT - What is the Shariat Law ?

ASHER - It has no connection with the Shi'ites. Shariat Law is based on injunctions found in the Qu'ran plus the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in the Hadith and the Sunna.

RABBI - The Shariat is as antiquated as the Halacha. No changes are permitted. Reforms are heresy. In order to make moslem society and government function in the modern world, many an ingenious way had to be built around the obstacles of the Shariat Laws.

ASHER - The banking system is a good example. It would not be able to function otherwise, because the demanding and paying interests on loans is explicitly forbidden in the Qu'ran.

RINAT - Neither did women's rights exist in ancient Islam. Women were even supposed to be excluded from paradise.

CAROL - Do not think that ancient Islam is unique in its disrespect for women. Also in ancient Greece were women considered second-class individuals. There they had also been forced into some kind of purdah.

RINAT - And do you think that women are today better off in fundamentalist islamic society ?

CAROL - The modern society, which is developing in western-oriented moslem countries grants its women an ever greater equality with the males. But in the conservative world of Islam - e.g. in the Gulf States - they are as much suppressed as before.

S E V E N T E E N

RABBI - Last time Rinat had asked us for a kind of review - or better said for a deepening and enlargement - of what we had talked about in the preceding meetings. You all have agreed to take up this program, and I am only too willing.

Last week, you will remember, we have been talking at some length about the meaning of religion per se. There must be also some other topics you had in mind. Let us not stop here and keep the ball rolling.

ASHER -I take the liberty to start with the review of a point which has remained unclear to me.

We had been talking about religion and Ego has remarked, that in his opinion all religions past and present are deviates - and transformations - of one simple, uncomplicated, plain, original, ethic religion. On my question who may have promulgated this original set of ethical rules, I got the reply, that it was "God". You were further asked if you perceive there is a God, and you answered - I quote you more or less verbally - "There is a Creator, a Supreme Being - call him God or by any other name - who had created this Universe; and within this Universe God has selected our planet earth - for a purpose".

Can you enlarge on what you said, please ? "

EG - I am ready to confirm, that what you quoted does indeed represents my personal and firm conviction. Let me make, at this stage, one very essential point clear to you all: unlike the vast majority of those who have more or less grown into their unshakable, solid and uncritical faith with which they are blessed, I have come to my conviction by way of plain reasoning and by the use of simple logic. The Rabbi will surely have a more specific; a more amply documented; and a more intricate way to explain what I want to convey to you now. I hope he will, possibly at a later stage in our talks, enlarge in greater details upon what I am going to say. But at this moment you will have to bear with me if I repeat what I said on a previous occasion: it is to me inconceivable to me, that what I am; that what is represented in Nature; that what goes on in our immediate world; that all what man has achieved - can have originally

started with an ordinary combination of hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen into a simple cell. It is impossible for me to accept, that this our world came into being through the often vaunted "creatio ex nihilo", that is out of nothing and by means of a big explosion. I cannot understand how an explosion of nothing can have created a something. Maimonides' statement, that such kind of concept is philosophically unacceptable and scientifically unprovable, fully fits what I want to convey. The development of the living and growing elements on this earth with their complex chemistry and biology; with their marvels of complex DNA strains and specialized genes - cannot have been a chance process. The development of the first primitive cell bundles into the man who walks on the moon, and who has now started to interfere in the creative process of living beings, cannot have happened without a specific and purpose-directed guidance.

RINAT - This means that you deny Darwin's theory.

EG - You misunderstood what I meant. I do not deny what Darwin has postulated; viz:- that imperfect products coming to the surface in the developmental process have been thrown out. I fully accept, that since ever there has been in nature an ongoing evolution towards an ever greater perfection; and that for this end the unfit, the discard and the failed in the productive process could not be kept. They had to be eliminated. And I am no less than you convinced, that this process continues to this day - and should continue also in future. All this - and all what Darwin has brought forth in proof of his theory - fits perfectly into what I imagine to be the planned divine scheme of things.

RINAT - Darwin's theory appears not to apply to the Haredim, however, who produce large numbers of children, intermarry, maintain and propagate abnormal strains.

EG - I cannot agree with you. It is true, that you do not find mixed marriages among the Haredim community. It is true, that much inter-marrying goes in their community. It is true, that this maintains their specific jewish characteristic in a more or less pure form. But you will not find among the Haredim a greater number of congenital defects or other abnormalities than among the other groups of Jews who merrily inter-marry with the most variegated ethnic groups. This is so even among those who have an occasional addition of a gentile strain. Mind you, I say all this although I am not at all enamoured with the social organization, the political comportment, and the halachic ruling of the Haredim. But let me

add in conclusion, that "Nature" shows also here the impact of its finely tuned functions: it has been observed, that in many instances certain imperfect or damaged strains simply disappear because their carriers turn sterile and cannot produce further offspring. In such a way a defective strain simply ends.

RABBI - Whether we like the Haredim's outlook on Judaism or not, we have to acknowledge - I may even say be grateful for - that they cultivate and preserve Judaism in its ancient Jewish form.

CAROL - I would go even further and say - though I am far from identifying with them - that I have learned to appreciate their moral way of conduct; their preservation of family values; and their interpretation of man's duty to God and to others.

AVNER - This too makes them hardly less unacceptable to me.

RINAT - We have to grant exemption to the Habadniks. One can hardly bear a grudge against them. They are good-hearted people. And whatever excesses there may be in the way they go about living their Jewishness, these result from the goodness of their hearts. Nevermind their motivation which roots in their messianic fervour.

ASHER - In all honesty I too must say that I envy them and the other Hassidim for their strong belief in their God and their duties.

EG - If all of us could share their deep and openly declared convictions - e.g. that as long as we endeavour to live as decent people we are under the protection of God's Shekhina - we too would instinctively tend to behave strictly in accordance with the ethical laws prescribed.

AVNER - What precisely is the meaning of the Shekhina ?

RABBI - With Shekhina the glory of God is meant. You will find many references to this effect in the T'nach.

EG - This concept has a very interesting history. There was a stage in the development of Judaism's religious perceptions, when under the impact of heathen influences the image of God - still in his anthropomorphic form - demanded a less specific, but easier understandable representation. The Israelites were told, that it was not God himself who appeared or resided in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, but his Kavod, his Glory, his Shekhina. Since the destruction of the Temple the belief has developed among the Jews, that the Shekhina has not gone away but dwells now everywhere among the Jews in the Diaspora.

RABBI - To some degree you are right: in the Zohar the Shekhina is described as having separated from God after the Temple had been

destroyed; and that it wanders now disconsolate through the world.

CAROL - It satisfies my pride as a woman, that at least in the Zohar the Shekhina is described as the female aspect of God.

EG - The Gnostics say the same of "Sophia", of the Wisdom of God.

RABBI - The Hassidim are more than any other Jews aware of the presence of the Shekhina in and around them. The Shekhina is to them the spiritual light. It always resides in man. In line with the kabbalistic teaching, the Hassid sees it as his task to liberate the divine sparks which are in everything and everywhere.

ASHER - Does this not sound like pantheism ?

RABBI - This is not so. The Besht - the Balshem Tov who has founded the hassidic movement - did not mean to say, that God is to be found in everything. Or that everything is God. He meant to say, that all and everything exists in God who has created all and everything.

AVNER - If God's Shekhina resides in man, does it not also take part in man's activities ? Is it not also responsible for man's sins ? If so, why does it not prevent man from sinning ?

RABBI - The Talmud has the right explanation for you: the moment an individual commits a sin the Shekhina leaves him.

AVNER - May I go back to my original question ? We have been told of your firm conviction, that the world has been created by a Divine Being. You told us furthermore, that by pure logic you had to conclude that all we see and all which is, has been created for a purpose. Do I cite you correctly ?

EG - Yes, you do ! Of all you quote me as having said, I am fully convinced. We are created for a purpose. Everything in the Universe, including our earth planet, has been created for a purpose. All our evolution, all we are, all the facilities we are offered have a purpose. What purpose, you ask ? There is the all dominating purpose that we develop into decent human beings. There is the ultimate purpose that we become moral beings. There is the important purpose, that we turn into loving, honest and responsible beings. And finally: all we face and all we encounter; all we suffer and all we enjoy; all we gain and all we lose - is merged into our development. All which is placed in our way has the aim and task to make us conscious of this purpose. This, in short, is the truth as I perceive it. But I have to concede that only few of those I know are aware of this; perceive this; realize

this. And let me finally add, that everything we have to face in our conscious life - the good and the bad; the pleasures and the pains; the failures and the successes - are tests with which we are confronted. They are tests of our moral fitness. It is not the manner how we make use of all our opportunities and how we face our failures, which represent the test which alone is being counted for or against us, but also how we handle such episodes in our life as individuals. In other words: how we react to them.

CAROL - As far as I understand, you see in the way we face the tests - should I better have said whether we pass the tests or not ? - the purpose of our life and as the reason for our existence ? But is this the only, the exclusive purpose why we exist ? How do you see and explain your life, my life - life in general.

EG - What I see as the purpose of our life, you ask me ? Would what I described not be a sufficient purpose ? Would this not be an acceptable toll-boot on the road to the perfection which is demanded of us ? However, I confess that although I do not know more than what I have told you so far, there is no doubt in my mind, that what I told you in clear terms - and especially what I may have only implied - cannot be the all excluding purpose. In short: I have no other answer to the mystery which is our world and our life.

RABBI - No doubt, there must have been a divine intention which led to the Creation. But how can we presume to truly know what this intention was ? How can we expect to know what the divine plan for us human beings was and is ? Neither do we know why life has been created; why it came to exist; why it developed; why throughout all these billions of years it has grown into the biological marvels around us. Nobody knows, even though every religion pretends to know the answer to this question. In nearly every generation have scientists tried to constructed appropriate models and schemes. Philosophers have not been less diligent in spinning their courageous theories and hypotheses. Also every school of mysticism has tried to find a fitting key. And finally myths have been invented in a lame attempt to answer our pressing quest for an answer.

EG - Thus the myth of "Nirvana" has been introduced. And thus the myth of the "Heavens" has been created.

RABBI - But all this to no avail. We have not been given the answer we have been looking for.

AVNER - But it is by far not a myth that life can be a burden, a "vale of tears".

RABBI - It is wrong, pitifully wrong, that you - and also so many of us - react so negatively to the exigencies of life. Such an attitude - I will generalize and say every pessimistic view of our existence whatsoever - is inevitable, as long as we see our lives as nothing but a futility-loaded span of existence. This is wrong. Our life is not at all futile. The ethical rules of our life - that which are the main principle we have to follow - are not futile. A truly lived life is never futile. Our attitude to others; our relationship with next man; our tasks in life - should never be thought futile. Our family associations, our relationship to our children should never be thought futile. Let me tell you in all sincerity and with all candor, that such a pessimism as yours destroys not only the joy which life has to offer, but makes also a mockery of whatever purpose our life may have.

AVNER - Let us set aside all arguments in this respect and be satisfied with the undeniable fact that we exist and that nolens volens we have to live with this knowledge.

CAROL -and with the unenviable fact, that we are conscious of our existence and all it involves.

RINAT -and with the inescapable fact, that this makes us conscious of ourselves and our responsibilities.

EG_ - I would say it makes us conscious of our Self and the demand it makes on us.

RABBI - I would formulate it similarly: the purpose of life and that which forms man's destiny, are not man's struggle with his neighbours; are not man's endless efforts to dominate nature and to overcome its dangers. The true purpose of man's life is his ongoing inner struggle against evil and his efforts to overcome the negative side of his nature.

ASHER - What says Judaism about life ?

RABBI - In principle it says that life comes from God.

EG_ - And that we are responsible to God for the way we live.

AVNER - How is life figured ? What is the life factor ?
Where is life localized within us ?

RABBI - Statements to the effect where life is localized, are by no means uniform in our Bible - which the Christians so self-assuredly call the "Old Testament". In the part of the Torah which is attributed to the 'Yahvist' editors, life is supposed to be contained in man's breath. In the so-called 'Priestly Version'

life is thought to be contained in the blood.

AVNER - What have the Scriptures to say about the origin of our life ? And what have they to say to my question why has man been burdened with life ?

RABBI - Our Bible tells us that life is a gift; that God has granted this gift to mankind for an existence filled with joy and fortune, with health and wealth - but only under the condition, that man is just and honest, kind and selfless. If we follow these ethic precepts, we are told, we are assured of God's grace and protection. In Judaism life is called a most valuable possession; a precious grant from God; a gift of immeasurable value. Life, all life on earth, is important to God. It will be known to you, that all religious laws and rules are suspended whenever it is a question of saving a life. "A living dog is better than a dead lion", says the Talmud. And the Mishna explains this principle in a parable in which "the feeding of hungry dogs has to be given preference over the reverence to be shown to the dead King David".

AVNER - Has Christianity taken over these concepts too ?

RABBI - According to Christian doctrine life is given to man by divine grace. True life lies in the far future. Real life comes to man only after his death. But, not well: a true and real life is granted only to those who repent their past sins; and to those who accept the promise that salvation is only possible with Jesus' help.

CAROL - Christianity declares - as far as I can remember from my school days - that all biological existence is mortal; that human life is granted by God; that man owes his life to God; that true life rests only with Jesus Christ. In short: that while the biological life of man is sustained by nourishment, his true and eternal life is the spiritual one he lives in Jesus.

RABBI - Within the frame of this set of doctrines you have mentioned, the New Testament states also in the clearest words, that man is responsible to God; that throughout his life man should strive to find his fulfillment in God in accordance with the basic rule outlined in "Revelations": "Fear God and praise him". In one of St. Paul's letters we read: "I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me". On another occasion Paul categorically establishes that "...everything is subjected to God".

ASHER - This is to my mind too all-encompassing - and also too vague. What attitude have other religions' to life ?

CAROL - According to the non-theistic cultures, as for instance expressed in the dharma principle of Hinduism and Buddhism; and as is meant by the moira or logos concepts of ancient Greece; and as is outlined in the tao in China and Japan - life is nothing but a realm of sin and ignorance, of suffering and misery. Life will ultimately lead to death and rebirth.

EG - But notwithstanding what you enumerated, the eastern philosophies do at least also indicate, that life can be spiritually fulfilling and physically pleasurable; and that it can lead to redemption and liberation - provided the individual lives a pure life. And provided, he lives according to the tenets of the cosmic law. These guidelines, as you may know, are also clearly underlined in Judaism.

ASHER - I have a vague recollection of having read once upon a time that Buddhism has found an appropriate formula for making life acceptable.

EG - The mainstay of Buddha's teaching is for everybody to find - and also to convey what he has found to others - the proper modus vivendi. That is to say, to identify the causes of human misery and to find the means and ways to eradicate them.

CAROL - But at the same time Buddhism teaches also, that it is detrimental to man's aspiration to gain eternal salvation and peace, should he dedicate too much of his time to the search for an answer to all the questions of life. This applies in particular to the search of an explanation of and for the underlying process of one's metempsychosis. That is to say of one's reincarnation. In other words: we may by all available means strive to discover the causes for all our misery, but that it is not advisable that we concentrate too much of our time and energy on this effort.

RINAT - Allow me to say, that in this respect we should take notice of what science has to tell. Biologically speaking, life and death are inseparable. The science of biology shows, that life and death, generation and destruction follow each other. The logical conclusion, no less than our daily experience, make us aware of the fact, that also for us humans our death is never far from our life. Is it not a fact, that whenever man talks about life he thinks of death too? What have Scriptures and wise men to say about death in respect to life?

CAROL - Modern thinkers have no difficulty to answer your question: death is the end of life.

RINAT - And what do these modern thinkers have to say about

death itself ? About what happens to us after we die ?

CAROL - Our philosophers are not bothered by this problem. It is in their opinion of no significance what happens to us after our death.

AVNER - I was not suprised to learn, that in this our post-Shoah era life and death are apparently of no significance to the wold of intelligent non-philosophers either.

RINAT - Even though I cannot claim to be one of the 'modern thinkers' I do feel the need to know more about the definite and inevitable fact of death. I do feel the need for an explanation - and let be honest, also of some consolation. Is there a life after death ? Is there an after-life?

RABBI - You are no exception. Man has thought about death from the time he could reason. Since ever has he been pondering about his destiny after death. But nobody has yet provided us with a true answer.

CAROL - One of the burdens man has to live with is, that he alone among the living creatures knows that he has to die. I was deeply impressed by the sorrowful resignation in Kierkegaard's words: "I too must die...".

AVNER - Much has been written, thought and taught about what happens to us after our life ends. But let us be honest with ourselves: nothing of what has been written is of any definite value. I will go even further and say, it is not of the slightest value. You will concede, I am sure, that nobody has found the true answer. Nobody has returned from death to tell us what he has experienced....

EG - This is true. And this is a fact with we have to live. But we are not the only ones to lament this fact. Let me cite you a verse of Omar Khayyam:

Strange, is it not, that of the Myriads who
Before us pass the door of darkness through
No one returns to tell us of the road
which to discover we must travel too.

E I G H T E E N

CAROL - How and as what do you see our life on earth ?

RABBI - I see it and now it as Coleridge did, namely as "is-ness".

AVNER - Why has mankind been cursed with such a difficult life here on earth ?

RABBI - I feel more comfortable with God's evaluation of life than with your definition. For God said that life is good.

AVNER - This can impossibly be always and entirely so. No, it cannot be so, even though God says so; and even though all which happens in life is supposedly identified with what God himself determines. No ! It cannot be so, even though we are supposed to harbour within us a part of that which you defined as divine - which would eo ipso have to suffer too. No ! It is not so, even though you did tell us that God is free of evil; and that all he stands for is a priori good.

RABBI - Everyone of us carries something of the Divine within himself. You may with justification call this 'something' our life. Therefore, life cannot be a priori bad or evil. I am willing to say, that life is a priori good. Or better, that it is within our power to make our life a good life. Many a time we have been shown how to do so.

ASHER - I suppose it is the religions' business to show us the way ? And has life not to provide us also with a solution to all our problems ? And in particular, has life not to explain to us mortals the meaning of death ?

CAROL - After all, life and death are always coupled together as one unit, aren't they ?

RINAT - What do we know about life and death ? Tell me, please.

RABBI - As I have already told you on a previous occasion, we know that we do not know. Today I will add this statement a word of Pascal: "It is easier to endure death without thinking about it, than to endure the thought of death without dying".

AVNER - We know, however, that the life is a burden and death a release.

RABBI - Let us be less pessimistic and say, that death completes

the life-cycle of man.

AVNER -and that they are in good company with each other.

CAROL - You might prefer the way the german philosopher Leibniz formulated this very same question: "Why are we living beings ?", he asked. "Why is there not simply nothing ?"

RABBI - I cannot sympathise with your implied pessimistic views. Even though most people are overwhelmed by the thought of having eventually to die, this thought can nonetheless also act as a great stimulant. I see you are surprised by what I said, but let me explain what I intend these words to mean. I intended to convey, that the thought of our inevitable death - which all of us certainly harbour in our subconscious mind - constructively shapes our life and influences the way we live.

CAROL - This is indeed the case. And it is no wonder, that our being conscious of the immediacy and of the inevitability of our death acts also as the midwife to philosophy.

AVNER - Indeed, philosophy and religion work hand in hand. The former tries to comfort people with its manifold, often very convoluted explanations; and the latter attempts to provide us with its soothing, often mishappen myths.

EG. - The main theme of all which the many philosophies have produced; and the mainstay of all which the myriads of myths have created - is the indisputable fact, that the moment of death is the point when existence ceases. This applies to everything in this world: to the humans, to the flora and to the fauna. I will go even further and say, that in mankind it ends a life whose continuation is not anymore justified. And you are not wrong should you suppose, that with these words I also implied that this life is not always ended for physiological or pathological reasons.

ASHER - Can your words possibly imply, that religion enjoys the privileged insight - which in this case is dressed up as the knowledge - that our death can also be due to the sins we have committed ? That our death can possibly - and even mainly - be due to our misconduct in life ? That because of our sins a stage is reached when we have lost the right to go on living ?

EG. - You may add "...or that we are condemned to die for having failed to wipe out the sins we have committed in a former existence ?"

RABBI - In answer to the manner in which these questions have been presented; and for the reasons we here have been forming our questions; and in order to soothe the angst which resounds in your

words - I will answer you, that more or less each and everyone of the religions I know of has since ever attempted to find an explanation for the meaning of death. And for these very same reasons has every school of mysticism past and present endeavoured to find the right key. But I have also to add, that all have laboured without success. Finally it was found necessary to call in also mythology in the expectation it might have help to offer. And myths have indeed done their best to provide an answer to our pressing demands for an answer. But alas, they have not provided the answer. They have only supplied us with a series of soothing tales which give us the illusion as if they contain the answer.

AVNER - You said it well. The myths which fill the scriptures of every religion may be useful. They may make things acceptable to the trusting masses. But to the normally reasoning mind their simplicity cannot be but offensive.

EG - Do you realize that the word "myth" - likewise mystery and mysticism - derives from the greek word "musteion" which means to close eyes or mouth? And that a myth, which by definition is something not true, is something like a tool with which a deeper meaning or a hidden truth can be brought forth?

RABBI - This is the reason why our Prophets have not had to use mythology to convey God's message to the people. In their approach to the people they present God in his immediacy. They present God as directly and immediately involved in what is going on at the moment. And in what will happen in the promised future.

EG - I am grateful for this explanation. May I add, that among the many myths which have been introduced into the various theologies there are many others which are "hard to swallow" by a discerning mind, like e.g. those relating to a "Nirvana" and to the "Heavens", which have already been mentioned here. But there are still many other such myths which are made of a very intelligent substance.

ASHER - Let's not lose the thread, please. What does the Bible tell us with respect to death and its meaning?

RABBI - The Old Testament says, that death comes when life has come to an end, as you heard already. Undoubtedly, death is mostly caused by some pathological factor. Due to the progress the medical sciences have made and continue to make, death occurs nowadays mostly for physiological reasons like old age. Or it comes to victims of wars or of accidents. But Judaism maintains, that man's death - at whatever age and due to whatever cause - is the result of the guilt he has loaded upon himself. In other words:

in Judaism's conception man himself is responsible for his death. The Bible states more than once and in clear terms, that death is the punishment for disobedience to God's commands.

CAROL - This principle is continued in christian doctrine. Also in the New Testament is disobedience named as the cause and reason why man has to die. Death is due to the fault of man, it is said there. Adam, the first man on earth, had to die because he disregarded God's command. Christian preaching and teaching goes still further: death has come into the world because Adam, the original man, had disobeyed God's command. This primary sin has led to the 'Fall', to the introduction of sin into the world. "The Fall of Man was due to pride and lust", explains the Church.

RABBI - "Original Sin" is indeed a very important item in the Church's list of dogmas. However, to my surprise the Church has not been consequent in her reasoning. Although "Original Sin" is the outcome of man's disobedience to God's commands, the Church has - notwithstanding the above mentioned very clear statements - never included disobedience to God among the "Seven Mortal Sins".

CAROL - I find it worth mentioning in this context, that lust and death are also in buddhist doctrine intimately associated with each other.

ASHER - And what - according to the Jewish Bible - will happen to us after we die ?

RABBI - First of all let us be clear in our minds, that when we speak of the 'Bible' we mean the Torah, the five books supposedly written by Moses. We do not mean the entire biblical canon which we describe as the "T'nach". I have already pointed this out on a previous occasion. Let me repeat: under no circumstance should we Jews call our T'nach the "Old Testament", because we do not think the appellation "New Testament" is any more appropriate than the christian claim to a 'New Covenant'. Having clarified thus point, let me answer Asher's question: our Bible says, that after death the human body - in the form and the shape which it had occupied on earth - continues to exist in Sheol. Only the soul of a small number of privileged just men and women may immediately after death pass across a "river of fire into a terrestrial paradise"; and from there, in due course, into a celestial paradise. According to the Bible it has only very rarely happened that an individual, while still alive, is taken up by God straight into heaven where that individual continues to remain alive in the shape and in the form he had been before his transport into heaven. All in all such a

miraculous bodily transfer has been reported only twice in the Bible. Once it had been Enoch, and the other time the Prophet Elyas.

ASHER - What fate and treatment can I expect when my time comes to be sent to Sheol ?

RABBI - Sheol is perceived as the "Netherworld". It is a region which is depicted by the writers of the T'nach in terms similar to that by Homer for the "Hades". It is also identical with the Mesopotamian "Arallu", the dark, cheerless underground depository of the dead which is described in the "Gilgamesh" epic

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Hermann M. SELZER (all)

7/3

A man's fate

pt. 3 (chapter 19 - 29)

p. 198 - 294

1993/4

AR 25045

Hermann M. SELZER Coll.

A man's fate

pt. 3 (chapter 19-29)

p. 198-294

N I N E T E E N

AVNER - Last week we could not complete our talk about the meaning of death and about what expects us after death. I personally would in particular have liked to get some more information about the Sheol place. May we take up where we left off last week? First of all can you let us have an idea where Sheol is supposed to be located. And - having started you on a geographic expedition - have you any precise information where precisely Hell is supposed to be located? You talked of underground worlds. I suppose this means that there are enormous underground caves which harbour the Sheol Organization. This leaves me more confused than ever before. Because, I should think, such a place would have to be of an enormous size. For it would have to accommodate billions, nay trillions of deceased people. And in case such an underground world exists anywhere here on our planet, our geologists would surely and since long have discovered the place.

RABBI - Sheol and Hell had in times long gone served quite well to give the people - be they Israelites or Mesopotamians or Greeks - a concrete idea, as well as a figurative image and a working concept, of some kind of existence after death. But nowadays, with our progress in knowledge and our greater sophistication, we do not need all this. Or at least, all these tales of Hell and of Sheol have not anymore to be taken literally. Judaism has since long accepted the intellectually more comfortable kabbalistic view, that Heaven and Hell, Paradise and Sheol are only to be taken as symbols behind a deeper meaning is hidden. Except for the orthodox Jews, we Jews of today consider it as the more or less absolute truth, that the Bible expresses in mythological and symbolic form the concepts and the precepts, the lessons and the warnings which the writers of the Bible had intended to convey.

ASHER - Let us presume - in the absence of a better explanation of what will be our fate after death - that there is indeed a Sheol. What fate and treatment can I expect when my time comes to be sent there?

RABBI - You have already heard, that Sheol is perceived as a kind of netherworld similar to that which Homer has described

as the 'Hades'. You have already learned, that such an image of an after-death depository had been part of other cultures, e.g. the 'Arallu' of Mesopotamia, the cheerless underground reservoir of the dead which is described in the "Gilgamesh" epic. To satisfy you I am going to be more precise: Sheol is in general terms perceived as a universal tomb in form of a dark underground cave, where the dead "go to sleep with their fathers". Its dead inmates - whatever their status may have been in their lifetime - exist in Sheol in a state of suspended animation. They exist there as lean, limp shades in a semblance of their former selves. They exist there without any strength and without any initiative. They exist there without any knowledge of, nor any influence on, what happens in the living world on earth. I was once surprised to read in some opus, that Sheol is said to know of a certain ethnic categorization and social differentiation: the dead belonging to different nations 'live' together and are embedded in their own separate sections of Sheol. Poetically, Sheol has been described as "a monster which sucks down people". All those who presume to possess knowledge of Sheol agree, that it is a place of no hope. That it is a land of no return. That it is a world of absolute silence. In early Scriptures it is hinted, that God has no influence on what goes on in Sheol - which justified the inmates complaints that they are abandoned by God. However, later parts of the T'nach (Ezekiel, Isaya, Chronicles etc) knew to differentiate between the lot of those who had in their lifetime been good and just, and those who had been wicked and evil. But even the Book of Job - which one of the younger books of the jewish biblical canon - still insists that the dead have no expectation of being ever allowed to leave Sheol before the arrival of the Messiah. On the other hand the Book of Daniel - the most recent one in the jewish biblical canon; it had been written after the Maccabean Wars, apparently with the intention to compensate for the persecutions of the Jews had to suffer under Antiochus - predicts, that at the 'End of Days' certain of the dead, and in particular the martyrs and the fallen of the wars, "will awake to ever-lasting life while others will be condemned to shame and contempt".

EG - At some stage it must have been accepted as a fact, that God - or as you may say his Shekhina - is also to be found in Sheol. I have here Psalm 139 in which I read these words addressed to God: "...if I ascend into heaven you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold your are there".

AVNER - What do the christian Churches tell their people about the fate they will meet after death ?

RABBI - Whereas the New Testament preaches the all-encompassing principle of resurrection, Christianity has no reason to go into further details about the state and fate of the dead.

ASHER - What did the non-biblical ancients say about man's fate after death ?

CAROL - In the Mesopotamian opus "Gilgamesh" - which we have just now heard mentioned - we read that "when the gods created mankind they destined death for man". This predestination affects all human beings - and is given as the explanation why Gilgamesh had to be unsuccessful in his quest for immortality. As you have already heard, it was also the accepted belief of the people in ancient Mesopotamia that the body and the soul are entombed together in a Sheol-like, miserable and dark "House of Dust". There they are always hungry, hardly sustained by the food which their living relatives bring to the graves. At times, these people believed, a soul may escape from that underground place and roam around as a ghost.

RABBI - Egyptian mythology gives great importance to the fate a person has to expect after his death. Also in the Pyramid Papers are we told, that death did not exist before the gods, the world and mankind were created. In other words: death was introduced into the world along with the creation of mankind. The ancient Egyptians felt certain that we human beings continue to exist after his death. Often the dead continue to exist under most comfortable conditions.

CAROL - The embalmed mummies and the contents of their graves witness the expectation of such a comfortable life after death. The Stoics among the Greeks - who practiced a monotheistic form of religion with Zeus at its centre - firmly believed in the immortality of their soul. In ancient Rome it was thought, that the dead continue to exist inside their tombs in a reduced state of life. They too had to be sustained by the food which their living relatives regularly offered at their graves. The dead could appear in dreams or as ghosts.

RABBI - But later on, when Rome came into contact with - and under the impact of - the Greek's culture, also most of the latter's views and beliefs were adopted.

ASHER - And what says Buddha ?

CAROL - In buddhist teaching death is the transition from one

earthly existence to another.

EG_ - As far as I know, Judaism does speak of some kind of after-life. Or am I mistaken ?

RINAT - What do you mean with "after-life".

RABBI - It means some form of survival after death. It includes the principle of immortality of either only the soul, or of the latter along with the body. Sheol, the shadowy underworld we have just now heard described, represented what in biblical times was perceived as an "after-life". We have also heard, that there was also the exceptional form of survival Enoch and Eliya enjoyed.

EG_ - The principle that we can look forward to some kind or other of an after-life certainly had - and still has today - for mankind a major psychological value. For by feeling confident that there is some form of continued existence, we are given to understand that we human beings are not temporary expendable residents on this earth, but can see ourselves as building stones for than unending series of future generations. By being assured that something essential of us - of what we are and of what we have acquired - will not perish but will survive after our death, we feel entitled to the satisfying and elevating surety, that the values with which we are endowed - enriched by what we have acquired in our lifetime of intellectual and spirtual values - will somehow be transmitted to our descendants. And the certainty that something of or within us survives, grants us the knowledge that we harbour within ourselves an immortal something. And finally we are justified to think, that it is that immortal and indestructible something which survives in us, which has turned us into what we are.

RABBI - The ancient sages must have been aware of the value you describe. They taught, that those who deny that there is an after-life; that those who deny that there will be reward and punishment in the after-life; that those who deny also that the soul of man is immortal - will be deprived of all benefit in the Hereafter.

CAROL - They must have had the Saducees in mind.

EG_ - I agree. We have among other appropriate things also already learned, that in the Book of Daniel - more or less for the first time - the promise of immortality was made. This must have been due to hellenistic influences. It was in that period that Rabbinical Judaism began to speak of an "Olam haseh" - our living world - and of an "Olam habah" - a future world.

RABBI - This is correct. The Pharisees, the predecessors of

the Rabbis of the Talmud who took over the spiritual leadership in Jerusalem - and later, after the Destruction of the Second temple in 70 CE, that of the entire Jewish Commonwealth - preached, that Israel has an assured place in the world to come. They preached also, that in due course - that is at the time of the Redemption - the body and soul of the dead will reunite and face the Divine Judge. After the talmudic era had come to an end, the religious belief system of the now leaderless Jewish Diaspora was influenced by the imagination of jewish and non-jewish philosophers; by the ever flourishing "home-produced" folklore; and by the impact which the cultures of the various host countries began to exert.

EG - This state of affairs has continued into our days. In recent years I heard rabbis preach - and wise women promise - that whoever lives in Israel will live forever; that whoever speaks hebrew will live forever; that whoever says his "Shma prayer" daily will live forever.

RINAT - I wish it were so.

EG - Maimonides made his ususally impressive contribution by saying, that what happened to a sinner after his death should not be perceived as a punishment, but as the deprivation of the bliss which the righteous are permitted to enjoy.

RABBI - He also assured us, that we do not have to wait until after our death - that is until we start on our after-life - for the benefits we have earned in our actual life. He assured us that we shall not have to wait for the 'world to come' - that is for the time this actual world of ours comes to an end - to reap our rewards. He assured us that the rewards are actually available to us here on earth and now in our actual life.

RINAT - This makes me feel good. This makes the fate of the body in the grave and the whereabouts of the soul after death, less problematic to me.

AVNER - Still, there is something which needs clarification. You have told us some time ago, that according to Jewish belief the body is mortal, unimportant, temporary; and that all which is left is the shadow of the dead body which goes into Sheol. Why then is the grave containing a body in progressive stages of disintegration given so much importance ?

RANIT - The same question has bothered me too in the context of my next question: Why is the grave a place of worship at which one prays ? If there is still somethng of the deceased's personality left inside the grave ? Is there something vital of the dead person

still left in the grave? Do those who pray at the grave really hope that the body inside the grave will respond to the prayer of the visitor? Why then, if the answer is in the affirmative, does that something of the deceased not return physically - at least during the period of mourning - to the consciousness of the family which laments his death? If nothing vital of the deceased exists anymore inside the grave, why do all these parades to the cemeteries go on?

RABBI - Of course, the dead body in the grave will disintegrate - and will in due course disappear. Whatever is said or written about the resurrection of the body itself from its grave, cannot be but a myth. However, let us be charitable. This myth has been introduced to console the people and soothe their pain. It is no less a myth, that the soul of the deceased hovers around the grave - at least for some time.

RINAT - What then can our wise men of today tell us about the essential part of a deceased person which does not perish after death? I mean what is the something which does not disintegrate inside the grave alongside the body?

CAROL - You ask what the wise men of today think about these matters. You will have to take note, that modern Jewish thinkers have since long - to be precise since the world has been blessed with the Age of Enlightenment - given up pondering about man's possible resurrection after death.

RABBI - This is also the teaching of Progressive Judaism - by which I mean our Reform Judaism. In its "Philadelphia Platform" of 1885 our Movement has explicitly rejected the "belief in a bodily resurrection of the dead. We have also discarded for ever the belief in a Gehinnom and an Eden as abodes for eternal punishment or reward".

ASHER - But I remember from my school days, that mention has been made somewhere in the Bible of people having been resurrected from their death.

RABBI - In biblical times Judaism seems to have accepted as a fact that there is a resurrection of the dead. In Deuteronomy God tells Moses before his death: "...you will rest with your fathers and I shall raise you again..."

EG - In ancient times also the Rabbis had, as far as I know, no doubts in this respect. They were certain that the dead - body and soul, and dressed in their regular clothes - will be resurrected at the appropriate time.

RABBI - You are right. Somewhere one of the talmudic Rabbis is reported to have said that the dead "... will not return to their dust. They will arise healed from all their ailments".

CAROL - It seems to me that Maimonides did not agree. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle he maintained, that only the souls will be resurrected. He called the mortal part of man the "acquired intellect". It will be these intellectual capabilities which the soul has developed which, he maintained, will go on living.

EG_ - He explained his stand with the fact, that only physical elements can die.

RABBI - Maimonides did indeed write that the soul is immortal. But there was a time when he believed that there will be a bodily resurrection - and that what had been resurrected will die again at the arrival of the Messiah. At the time the Messiah makes his appearance, he believed, the souls will return to, and unite with, their bodies. They will eat and drink and make merry. After some years of such a happy life all these resurrected human beings will die again along with the Messiah and enter the "world to come".

ASHER - Maimonides envisages a rather complicated business, it seems to me !

CAROL - We know by virtue of what the Church teaches, that at the time of Redemption those who are believers in Jesus Christ will be raised and will be judged. I think also Islam preaches that body and soul will be resurrected in one. What, by the way, do we know of islamic teaching in this respect ?

RABBI - The Moslems have no doubt that they have a soul.

AVNER - This they announce to the wide world whenever they demonstrate against Israel in their slogans "... our blood and souls we are ready to sacrifice...."

RABBI - The Qu'ran predicts a resurrection in the true sense of the word. "In the end Allah causes man to die.....and he brings him to his grave; and then, if it is his will, he will raise him again to life". This belief is the reason why Moslems do not permit autopsies to be performed on their dead.

EG_ - And this is the reason why they do not donate organs of their dead for transplantation.

ASHER - Belief in a bodily resurrection you will find here in Israel not only in our folkore, but very much so also in the belief system of all graduations of orthodox Jews. This makes them take the same stand as the Moslems with regard to autopsies and transplant organs.

AVNER - Let me go back to our discussion about the graves. You said quite clearly, that what is left in the grave will in due course be totally decomposed; that the grave does not contain anymore the slightest residue of the deceased's personality; that in fact the content of one grave will after some time not be different from that of any other. What then - if you know all this - induces you personally to regularly visit the grave of your wife ?

EG_ - Because it is her memorial. Because it is my figurative memory of her.

AVNER - Would any other memorial, dedicated specifically to her, serve the same purpose ?

EG_ - Anything which reminds me of her is a memorial of her. In our culture the cemetery is the best environment for such a memory. Its peaceful atmosphere and its starkly plain environment prevent distractions. They invite memories and lead to reflections.

CAROL - Something similar can be said about the funeral. The Christians - but also the Buddhist and some other cultures - provide music at a funeral, not for the delight of the dead but in the assumption that it creates among the mourners a mood of insight and reflections.

RABBI - Indeed, at the funeral of the Jews and Moslems no music is allowed nor required. The recitation of appropriate prayers and psalms are thought the best medium.

CAROL - I agree. A grave is not necessary for remembrance, nor for reflections. Think of the funeral rites of the Hindus and Buddhists ! Think of those cultures where the dead are incinerated, where the ashes are dispersed and where no graves exist. Think of the ancestor worship in China and Japan and in so many other cultures, where at the daily or yearly remembrances most commonly nothing but a picture of the deceased is present.

AVNER - Our orthodox Jews are still far away from such concepts of the dead. I read the other day, that the Chief Rabbi of Safed called together all the rabbis of the town to pray for the pardon of the dead entombed in the local cemetery which had been flooded by waste water from a nearby burst pipeline.

RABBI - The Chief Rabbi's reaction is, as you will by now have understood, a reaction to be expected of the orthodoxy. The Hassidim are even more orthodox in this respect.

RINAT - Can somebody explain to me the meaning of the Jewish custom to put a pebble on the grave one visits ?

EG_ - The pebble should be a witness of such a visit; of the

respect we have shown to the dead person in that grave.

CAROL - May I correct you, please ? The pebbles placed on the graves are not witnesses that the one who did so had visited the grave. This custom derives from the primitive Urzeit, when the family and the villagers placed rocks on the grave to avoid the spirit of the deceased to leave the grave and to harass the survivors in revenge for their enjoying pleasures and comforts which were denied to the person in the grave.

RABBI - This is correct. Also the gravestones we erect today over the graves are residues of this custom.

T W E N T Y

RINAT - I am sorry I have to beg you this evening to come back again to the question which we discussed in the last week. The answers you offered have not made the matter sufficiently clear to me. Please, expand on what I am going to ask you. It has been authoritatively stated by you, that apart from the body of the dead of which at the end nothing is left; that next to the memory of a deceased for which no corporeal fixtures are needed - there is something which is not mortal; which had not been part of the original intra-uterine human process of development; which has allegedly "been given us on loan" from a Supreme Source as I learned on our way home. This "something" is supposed to remain, I was told. It is supposed to survive, even to reappear in some new incarnation. I mean, of course, the human soul - or better the soul the human is said to harbour. Can you tell me, please, how you incorporate this hypothesis into your personal philosophy?

RABBI - There should not be the slightest doubt in your mind that we humans own a soul. And likewise there should not be any doubt, that the soul cannot but be a divine element within us. In other words: we definitely harbour within us a part of the Divine. We are certainly endowed with something imperishable which is associated with the Divine. We certainly carry in us something which is imperishable. We have certainly within us something which is immortal. We can certainly be assured that the soul with which we are endowed, will survive after our death.

CAROL - The medieval philosophers agree with you. They said that the humans harbour a soul. They maintained that this soul we carry in us has a definite mission; and that this mission can only be performed while it resides within a human body.

EG - There are definite indications in Jewish Scripture that Judaism accepts the survival of the soul. It must be known to you, that the Kidron Valley below David's City here in Jerusalem is called "Jehoshaphat", which means "God will judge". A talmudic midrash enlarges on this, saying that at the end of the days all souls will gather around the valley to be judged by God who will be seated on the Temple Mount.

RABBI - Let us review this issue with a logic mind and not slip into the metaphysical. Let us a priori accept as a fact, that we know nothing definite about anything beyond what we perceive with our senses. And that fundamentally we cannot accept anything for sure beyond that which can be brought into logical order and which makes sense. But man is endowed with an enormous intellect. He enjoys indulging in courageous speculations. This makes him imagine what he does not know. This makes him speculate on what he does not see. This makes him tend toward forming for himself an image of what is hidden to us. I am ready to concede that not one of the theories of the Wise Man of the past, nor one hypothesis of the philosophers past and present is based on facts and can be taken as absolute truth. But man has been endowed with the divine grant of religion, and is blessed with the divine gift of faith. It is this which distinguishes man from all other creatures. It is this, which must somehow be part of the program mapped out for mankind. It is this, which motivates the rabbis to go on speculating. It is this, which makes the philosophers go on forming hypotheses. And it is this, which induces the theologians to continue writing their learned books.

AVNER - All this does not answer the question with which we started: in which form is the soul supposed to survive? In other words: what answer would these wise men, the rabbis, the theologians and the philosophers of the past have to give me were they here in this room this evening?

RABBI - Manyfold are the answers they would have to offer. There are religions which teach that after death the soul remains with the body and that both together are submitted to punishment or elevated to bliss. There are religions according to which the soul is separated from the body and returns to God. There are religions which preach that the soul of the dead is placed in some kind of storage. And there are religions which tell us, that the soul is going to be reincarnated in another being.

EG - Though I will not and cannot claim to be a wise person, neither a theologian nor a philosopher, I would answer you that your soul is your Self. I would tell you, it is that which makes you a human being different from other living beings. And it is also that which makes you as an individual similar to, but also somehow different from other individuals. I think I can assure you, that what I am talking of is that which is the divine part within you; that which has been allotted to you; loaned to you;

entrusted to you.

AVNER - How can you know your Self ? And how can you know of your Self ? How can you at all know you have a Self ?

EG_ - I have no direct nor specific knowledge. My Self is as enigmatic to me as the All-Self, the Absolute, whence it has originated. But with my senses I know it is nearer to me; more familiar to me; easier approachable by me.

AVNER - But in some way or other you must know the shape or form of that Self within you ?

EG_ - I imagine my Self as formed by the ethics which my consciousness has programmed. I see it made up by my unconscious identification with something which will always remain unknowable to me; with something mysterious which I can sense but cannot know; which something I can approach; and with which I can identify as controlling my behaviour. It is something, which makes me aware of - and in consequence makes me avoid - whatever contradicts my moral duty. And once I have become familiar with the tasks my Self imposes upon me, I realize that my Self is myself.

RINAT - You sound as complex as a chapter of the Talmud. What, by the way, has the Talmud to say about all this ?

RABBI - In this regard various opinions are discussed in the Talmud. Mostly the Rabbis are agreed, that the soul of the righteous will be rewarded and that of the wicked will be punished. There arose once a dispute between the two famous schools of Hillel and Shamai about the question, what is going to happen to those souls which have to a lesser degree been stained by sins. Shamai declared that there is no difference: that these souls, like those of the heavy sinners, will be immersed in fire until they are purified. Hillel, however, was absolutely certain within himself, that God in his mercy will forgive these lighter sinners.

CAROL - According to Plato man's soul will free itself from the mortal body and return to God. And Zoroastrians are told, that their soul remains for three days with the body inside the grave where it is severely punished and tortured by spirits or angels.

EG_ - Interestingly, also Islam believes that the soul remains inside the grave for three days, there to be tortured by angels. After that - and ultimately - the soul will end either in hell or in paradise. However, and this too interesting, it had originally been thought, that women are excluded from ever reaching paradise as they were supposed not to have a soul.

ASHER - What precisely do other religions have to say with

regard to the origin, destiny and quality of our soul ?

CAROL - Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the first century of our era, wrote that the soul's original home is in heaven and that it returns there after death. He knew also that the Patriarchs belong to a more favoured class, because their souls return to "the intelligible world of ideas".

EG - Philo had no real influence on Jewish thought !

RABBI - But more so on the development of Christian doctrine. The Church considered him one of the earliest Christians. It should be pointed out, however, that Christianity's doctrinal direction had not been given an even approximately final shape during the lifetime of Jesus. Christian thinking developed, under the influence of the Church Fathers, in the course of the early centuries. One of these Church Fathers was Tertullian, for whose way of thinking I have developed a liking. He lived in the second century. He preached that the soul of man is born of the breath of God; that the soul is "immortal, corporeal and eternal". He thought that also God is corporeal. He explained his conclusion with the argument that, whereas nothing can exist without a body, ergo God, though spiritual, has to have a body. And furthermore, he pointed out, were the soul not corporeal, there would not be anything to leave the body. In parenthesis I will mention also another of Tertullian's ideas: he taught that every soul is a branch of Adam's original soul. Therefore it has inherited all of Adam's sins. However, our kind-hearted philosopher-theologian did not draw the ultimate conclusion. It was St. Augustine who made the definite statement that every single man, woman and child is at birth already tainted with the "Fall", Adam the first man's sin.

ASHER - Are there not somewhere in the christian scriptures specific references to the issue we are debating now ?

RABBI - There are many such references. At this moment I can recall only one of the many relating to our subject: in Matthew's Gospel we read: "...do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul".

ASHER - In this context it would be interesting to learn what the Hindus think about their souls.

RABBI - It would indeed be very interesting to take this matter up in the coming week.

T W E N T Y - O N E

EGW - In principle, and not very different from other religions, also in Hinduism is the soul considered the superior, the more valuable part of an individual. The body, the abode of the soul, is on the other hand viewed as the perishable part of the human being. The soul survives physical death and is reborn. According to the Vedic concept, the soul escapes during the cremation of the mortal remains, and flies off to the world of the ancestors.

CAROL - In this context it may interest you to learn, that in the tradition of ancient China each person has two souls, viz:- the "Hun", the "air soul" which originates in the upper air and which will return there after death. Hun is considered the rational principle which survives the grave and is the object of ancestor worship. The second half of the soul is the "P'o", the earth soul, the lower soul, which has been created from earth and will at the time of death return to earth to disappear for ever.

RABBI - Ancestor worship is on the same level as the fear of ghosts and spirits. James G. Frazer has drawn a very interesting conclusion: "Ancestor worship, or fear of ghosts, has on the whole been the most important factor in the evolution of religious beliefs".

RINAT - Do we have Jewish ghosts roaming around ?

RABBI - Our forefathers appear to have known and feared such roaming ghosts. In Leviticus we read: "Do not have recourse to the spirits of the dead, nor should you have recourse to magicians. They will defile you".

ASHER - Is it the soul itself, I mean soul-the-substance, which is suspected of roaming around as a ghost ?

RABBI - It is the soul which is perceived as the individual's spirit. Souls can roam around in form of ghosts and as spirits. Bad souls may turn into demons.

CAROL - The spirit of a dead person is granted a great deal of importance in more or less every religion. Spirits may become manifest as ghosts. Deceased ancestors who appear as ghosts in or near their former place of residence, are known in a large number of mythologies. Spirits are feared for the great power they are

oresumed to possess. Whenever the spirits are angry for one reason or other - mostly this happens when they think they have not been properly buried or cremated - they can be very dangerous. It is commonly thought, that the spirit of a dead person remains in some kind of contact with his family.

EG_ - You would be surprised, were you to learn to what a degree this type of ghosts populates the world of the demons in the belief systems of the Hindus and Buddhists.

RABBI - This type of superstition was very common in the antique world. Early Judaism was not spared. It inherited a simple form of demonology from Canaan and Mesopotamia. However, under the impact of Zoroastrianism the belief in malicious or hostile spirits was more common and took on greater importance. Demons - this became the predominant belief - were angels who had rebelled against God and had escaped from their subordination to God. Christianity was later to take over this type of demonology from Judaism. This state of mind and outlook on mankind's fate has found its marked expression in the Apocalypses, where the myth of Satan has been given prominence along with that of the angels.

RINAT - How could Zoroastrianism in far away Persia have had such an impact on the Jews in the mediterranean area ?

RABBI - This was quite easy. A flourishing jewish community existed already at that time in Persia. This jewish community was in constant contact with the jewish community and the Temple in Jerusalem.

EG_ - Islam has identified with these originally iranian ideas and has made Satan and the demons - either as good or as bad Jinns - play a great role in moslem scriptures and traditions.

CAROL - Would this not logically and in principle lead to a situation where the spirits or ghosts or demons - call them whatever you want - are turned into divine elements ?

RABBI - Such a situation has indeed come to pass, especially in christian and moslem perception. In both the soul is a spirit-like element which God has been 'blown into the flesh'. Thereby the "flesh" becomes a soul-bearing body. It is this soul-substance within the body which gets free and roams about as ghost or demon.

EG_ - Before we leave this subject it will interest you to learn, that the great english philosopher Herbert Spencer - he lived in the last century - was firmly convinced that the spirits of the dead roam all over the earth. And you will certainly be no less surprised to hear, that also C.G.Jung - the famous swiss psychologist

- appears to have believed in demons. He appears to have been convinced, that demons can penetrate the human psyche and become active therein.

AVNER - I think we have heard enough of ghosts and spirits. We can leave them roam happily through the realm of the story tellers. Permit me to turn to a more serious - and to myself most important - subject. From your description, and also from the contributions my friends have made, I feel entitled to conclude, that more or less every religious system embraces the belief in a soul which inhabits and governs the human body. Are there no exceptions? Are there no variations to this presumption? What is specifically the Jewish view? Could you point out, please, what the various religions preach; what the ancient cultures have thought they knew; and what the ancient priests have believed themselves entitled to impose?

RABBI - I agree it will be of value to each one of us, if we can gain a wider overview of the theological and philosophical conception of the human soul. Let us hear of the significance which is given to basic belief and its variations, that every human being carries a divine part within himself. Let us study and discuss the range of the spiritual and metaphysical elements which we human beings have to incorporate into our philosophy of life in order to make life understandable and livable.

In enlarging on this subject which you have submitted for our talk - I am reluctant to use in this context the word 'discussion' - I am no less aware than you that we are going to enter a large realm which is made up many complex thought structures and many exquisite image patterns. But no less await us there also many pitfalls and the ruins of many antiquated thought-edifices. I shall, with your help - and the expert contributions of one or the other of you - make a survey of what we can expect to find. I can predict that we shall not exhaust this subject in one evening. I suggest, therefore, that during the week you find the time to read up on the apposite literature.

EG - I fully agree that we are about to deal with a very interesting, and no less also important, subject. I am equally certain, that it will help many of us to set his compass into the right direction.

RABBI - Let us agree, that we shall dedicate as much time as will be necessary to gain an understanding of the meaning the soul

has been given in various cultures; in most of the religions; and in the different philosophies.

I shall start with ancient jewish world. There - similarly to, and certainly absorbed from, the surrounding cultures - the soul was considered the life-carrying factor within the human being. It is expressed as Nefesh or Ruach or Neshama in the ancient jewish scripture; as Psyche or Pneuma in the greek culture; as Spiritus in ancient Rome; as Atman or Jiva or Purusa in the Hindu world. In the Upanishads, the Hindu Scriptures, no definitely outlined formula is provided. The soul is described there as "Neti, Neti" which means 'not this nor that'.

CAROL- Hinduism sees the soul as the Self in man - and this Self in man it views as a part of the divine Supreme Self. "Behold all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings", say the Upanishads.

EG - This is indeed a basic concept of Hinduism, especially of Brahmanism. Atman - who stands for Brahman, the Godhead - is the Self, the Soul. The human soul survives physical death and is reborn. In the Vedas the soul is the immaterial spirit. It is described as flying off the body during cremation. Hinduism too - that is similar to Judaism - speaks of a threefold composition of the soul: 'Jiva', the living being, is the biological personality of a person; its functioning personality; its individuality. It is that which differentiates one person from the other. It is continued after death. 'Manas' is the mind portion, the awareness, the intellect part of the soul. In the relation to, the contact with the divine. And 'Asu' is the breath of life, the part of the soul which animates the body. Nothing of it is transmitted after death.

ASHER - As I understand you, "Jiva" corresponds more or less to our concept of the soul.

EG - To some degree this is true. But there are variations in the various indian religions. In Hinduism - in the Vedanta - Jiva is that of the world soul Atman-Brahman which exists in the Self of every individual.

AVNER - The Buddhists do not recognize a soul ?

EG - The Buddhists speak of "jiva" as an animate object, as something which makes animate objects breathe. The Buddhist do not accept that we have a soul. When the Buddha was asked whether a person's jiva is different from his body, he answered that this question is "unanswerable". The buddhist point of view is, that whereas nothing exists, also a Jiva cannot exist.

CAROL - Let us continue now in our rapid survey: in Taoism - best translated as the 'Way of Life' - 'Tao', the soul, is ineffable, indescribable. It is inactive and yet active.

RABBI - In the New Testament the soul is equal to life. Psyche is the individual soul. It is that part of the person which feels, suffers, desires. Islam has concepts similar to those of Judaism. NAFS is the soul, the Self, the personality. RUH is the Breath. The angels are supposed to have been created by the divine breath.

ASHER - Is this not what the Kabbala says ?

RABBI - You are right. The kabbalistic view, which makes much of the tripartite soul, originated in Jewish neoplatonism to which theosophic and mystic ingredients were added.

AVNER - Do these various religions grant animals also the right to a soul ? I have especially the Primates in mind. Is the newly discovered similarity of their DNA with that of the humans an indication that they have also a soul like us human beings ?

RINAT - This question has since ever been a debating point among not only the philosophers but also among us biologists. I have personally become convinced that animals do have souls. They have their own kind of souls, I believe. I have, after all, the right to presume that our own human soul has developed from the one we have harboured once upon a time before we started to master this planet - that is to say, that our soul has developed from the stage when we ourselves, that is our ancestors, were animal-like beings. Do not doubt that animals have emotions. They show fear and sorrow. The great apes give ample evidence that they are aware of other people's feelings and psychological reaction. 99% of the human DNA and that of the great apes are identical. The only real difference is that we possess a spoken language.

EG - I agree with most of what you said. But we do not even have to limit their similarity in the way you just now mentioned. It is nowadays accepted by most biologists and zoologists, that the apes and whales - and possibly many other animal species - can and do communicate in some kind of language. This makes me think, that the possession of a soul is necessarily associated with the degree of development of the DNA system. Why should the presence of a soul not be associated - in the same way as in the humans - with a striving for an ethical behaviour. And also for an understanding of ethical conduct. I am sorry ! I should have said, that the presence of a soul is manifested by such efforts and by such understanding. Yes, I agree with you. I cannot avoid thinking,

that also animals know of a kind of ethical conduct. If you consider the way animals care for others of their breed - I would include here also the maternal instinct shown by most animals - you cannot avoid seeing in this an indication, that animals do have some kind of soul. Their souls may possibly be less demanding or less developed. But whatever our definition of a soul may be, it will also apply to the one which the animals harbour. Let us take the dolphins as an example. I read the other day, that dolphins rescued three men who, in heavy seas, had been stranded on a reef during a fishing trip off Brittany. Four dolphins swam around their boat for half an hour protecting it thus against the tide, and slowly guiding it through the reefs.

RAMIT - Cases are known where dolphins showed divers the way back to safety. And dolphins have been seen carrying the body of a dead dolphin between them.

AVNER - And similar tales are told of whales and dogs and birds and many other animals.

ASHER - Allow me now to follow up my question by asking whether human souls are supposed to transmigrate at times also into the bodies of animals ?

EG_ - Followers of Jainism - a daughter religion of Hinduism - believe that this is indeed the case. They believe that human souls can enter not only animals but also stones, trees and so on. However, if we accept that the soul is expected to undergo a continuous process of improvement or maturation, its sojourn in a stone or tree does not make any sense. In such an environment a soul would hardly have a chance to improve or mature. The case of a transmigration of the soul into an animal is different. But we have the right to suppose, that by the time it has come to be harboured in a human body, a soul has reached a certain degree of maturation if not perfection.

ASHER - I may say, that with your and the Rabbi's exception, nobody of us has ever spent much time in studies relating to the human soul. Could you give us a general, not too-much-detailed survey of the ideas which have been developed in this respect ? And - let me add - we would welcome to hear the ideas you yourselves has developed in this respect. You have occasionally hinted that this is the case.

EG_ - It is true that in recent years I have spent much time on the study of the history of religion. This has brought me again and again to the frontier regions of the metaphysical - which I

have every time made an effort not to cross. I shall gladly give you in the coming week an expose' of what I have learned; of what I believe I have come to know; and of the hypothesis I have constructed for my own personal satisfaction. I do not mind to explain to you in detail what I think also about the human soul. But whereas the description of my personal views in this respect may take up some more time than we have still at our disposal, I prefer to do so at the next opportunity.

T W E N T Y - T W O

RABBI - I am sure we all have been looking forward to this evening and to the discussion we are going to have.

EG - I shall start the ball rolling by giving you a short resumé of the matter which we talked about last time. I do not mind giving you also the resumé I promised you of the working hypothesis I have formed for myself. This may take some time, but I have no doubt that you will have sufficient patience to hear me out. With the help of my notes I shall start telling you about the theories the various cultures and religions have developed about the human soul.

In the biblical view the soul is totally different and separate from the body. It is independent of the body. It gives life and power to the body. Once breathing ceases - nowadays the cut-off point is when the brain wave activity stops - the soul is supposed to have escaped from the body and death occurs. Thus one can say that the soul as such represents life. The soul is equalled to life. I think at this moment of the biblical imploration "as God lives and as your soul lives...". The soul is an individual, a separate substance within the body. It resides in some specific part of the body. The localization varies. Some say it is in the blood. Others believe it is in the heart or the spleen or the breath. But all agree that the soul is separate; that it is not a part which insoluble from the body; and that it is separated from the body at death. The most frequently accepted view is the one we have already heard mentioned: that the soul is divine; that it is a part of the Divine; and the body is a temporary residence of the body. In many myths the soul is made to originate from; to escape from; to be exploded from - a divine source. For example: in the course of the Zumzum, as described in the Zohar, the divine sparks escape and form the souls. Their return - after having been cleansed from the contaminations they have in the meantime acquired - is the aim of the world's creation; is the purpose of life.

CAROL - The Gnostics have developed similar ideas.

RABBI - We may take it that the writer of the Zohar has taken this symbolism over from gnosticism. Or that he has at least been greatly influenced by it.

CAROL - What has been said in the last few sentences leads us again to that very same theme which - as we have agreed among us by common consent - should be the topic of our conversation this evening. I have a hunch, that this evening we shall hear - and that we shall be made to react one way or other to what we are going to hear - what might become, at least to a great extent, the basis for much of what will form our future outlook on religion in general, and on our jewish heritage in particular. I take the liberty to pinpoint in a few words, what above all we shall hopefully hear outlined this evening; and what we want to hear exactly defined and very clearly circumscribed, viz:- what we have learned from you about the statement you have cited from the jewish Scriptures that the body and the soul of a dead person are not separated and will enter Sheol together. But whereas - I read this somewhere - at a certain time in jewish history our theologians began to talk about a tripartite composition of the soul, the question can with justification be raised, which part of the tripartite soul is going to be confined to Sheol along with the body ?

RABBI - Your question is indeed justified. Originally there had not been any problem in this respect, as there was no perception of a tri-partition of the soul. The human soul was perceived as one single compact unit. The three names under which the soul is mentioned in the T'nach and all our other Scriptures had originally meant one and the same thing: namely the soul which God had given to Adam; and which since then every human being receives from God at the time of birth. The idea, that the soul is made up of three separate and distinct parts is of more recent vintage. It has been introduced by the Kabbalists some 7-800 years ago. The enthusiasts of this powerful movement of jewish mysticism who have carried this concept forward to this day, had successfully integrated this view of the soul into their view of God, man and the world. And soon, from generation to generation the concept of the tripartite soul was eagerly adopted, steadily strengthened and without criticism perpetuated by all the streams of Judaism. It can safely be said, that today the idea of the soul being made up of NEFESH, RUACH and NESHAMA, has become the generally accepted and undisputed theology in Judaism.

ASHER - But this is not so new ! In one form or the other this subdivision is already mentioned in the Bible. And, as far as I remember, it occurs also in some of the jewish prayers.

RABBI - You may conclude from what I have just now explained,

that whenever in a prayer the soul is meant to be made up of three different parts, you can be sure that the prayer has been influenced by the Kabbala. Otherwise, in older prayers and particularly in the T'nach these are three different names for the one and the same thing - the human soul.

RINAT - How are these various parts of our soul supposed to function ?

RABBI - While I am unable to give you a definite and clear answer, I can also assure you, that in this respect I am not an exception. The specific literature available to us is filled with the most variegated explanations. This will show you, that nobody can offer a commonly accepted definition and a generally satisfying explanation of the - to all appearances harmonious - function of these three parts of the soul. There is, however, some kind of a consensus insofar as all three names are supposed to signify the same. That is to say, that ruach, nefesh and neshama are the three alternatively used names for the soul of man.

EQ - May I disagree, and in doing so express my own thoughts, please ? Starting from the premise, that whoever constructed such a triple concept of the soul could not but have intended to give each of them a specific meaning if not function, I have tried to construct for myself an interpretation which satisfies my critical mind. I think it may interest you to hear me tell you, how I could make myself comprehend this tripartite system. NEFESH starts the life. It is Being. At conception, about eight hours after the sperm penetrates into the ovum, the Nefesh process starts. When the 23 chromosomes of the egg and the 23 chromosomes of the sperm form the first unit of life, life should be considered to have started.

RINAT - But life exists already in these two cells before the fertilization takes place.

EQ - You are right. But life was more or less only potential. I had not yet developed. It could not develop. Observations in the process of in vitro fertilization prove quite definitely that life begins at the moment of fertilization. It is at this point - that is when the process of fertilization in the egg is started - that the life process begins to function. From this moment the fertilized cell will divide again and again. In this way Nefesh propagates the inherited strains, all of which are inherent in the fertilized egg which has now been turned into an embryo. I shall go even further and maintain, that Nefesh is the DNA, the genes,

the transmittable and transmitted qualities. Nefesh is the load of heritage carried in the embryo. It is the means and method of creating an ultimately perfect mankind, with finally perfected neurological, hormonal, enzymatic and other such systems. But, mind you, although Nefesh has made the embryo into a being, the latter is in its early stage of development nothing more than an embryo without life. By the way: all I have described just now - that is to say, the period from the starting point of developing from a cell-bundle into an embryo - can be seen and followed with the help of the ultra-sound waves.

By the same method the next stage of development can be pin-pointed: the one, when RUACH comes into play; when the embryo's first movements start, including those of its heart and circulation. Ruach is only the motor fuel. Ruach is the breath to live. When ruach comes in, the embryo is turned into a living being, a fetus.

The final part of the soul, the NESHAMA, enters the body at birth. Neshama is the individual's imperishable part. It is the soul proper. It is its divine part. It is the ethical part of the tripartite soul. It is our ethical guideline. I will go further and say, it is the harbourer of the karmic gyroscope. It carries our karmic destiny in search of perfection. It is not affected by physical defects or changes in the body - but it is expected to react to whatever affects the body. It is that part of us, which is vulnerable to our weaknesses, to our faults, to our moral trespasses. It is that part of us, which is exposed to reincarnation and which will undergo transmigration. Its inbuilt directives do not change after every life cycle; but these adapt themselves to - and in accordance with - the Nefesh-determined physical traits and racial characteristics of the body it inhabits. The way the Neshama, the soul, acts and reacts - I mean to say, how it is directed by the eternal ethical precepts which are valid for all mankind, whatever its race or colour or constitution - will determine its next reincarnation. This is the part of the tri-partite soul which is immortal. This is the component of our tri-partite soul which is assured of eventual salvation.

RABBI - Which part of the composite soul would you call the most important one ?

EG_ - All three parts are important. But you may say, that the perfect human being has a perfect nefesh and a pure neshama.

AVNER - Is there a specific jewish neshama ?

EG_ - There is no specific jewish neshama. There is nothing

specific in the ruach. The only specific jewish part is the nefesh which carries the jewish nation's heritage, its characteristics and its traditions. It is this which has to be maintained, improved and carried on to the next and next and next generations. This principle applies, of course, not only to the jewish people but to all national and racial units.

CAROL - Does not the entrance of a non-jewish nefesh-strain spoil, or at least dilute this program ?

EG - In my view the contrary is true - as long as no bad or abnormal genes are introduced. My opinion is based on the common experience, that the racial strain benefits from such an admixture. The fetish of racial purity - which has also taken roots among the Jews - was unknown among the ancient Israelites who absorbed as many neighbouring peoples as they could conquer.

AVNER - You mean to say, that the ultimate purpose of all this is the production of a perfect human society; of non plus ultra specimen of homo sapiens ?

RINAT - With a mens sana in corpore sano ?

EG - I could not have said it better.

RIMAT - What - according to your philosophy - happens to Nefesh and Ruach when we die ?

EG - In this respect too I had to discover, that all the explanations I encountered in my studies of the specific literature, are vague and unconvincing. Permit me to give you also in this respect my own interpretation. Ruach is independent of nefesh and neshama; it ends with the last breath; with the cessation of the brain waves; with cardiac arrest. Nefesh in turn is independent of Ruach and Neshama. It is that which is inheritable. It is that which carries the racial and individual characteristics forward in the genes. It is that which continues the family, the nation, the race and the generations. Nefesh becomes inactive at the time of death - but can be recognized and distinguished long after in its DNA strains. The inheritance embodied in the nefesh will, of course, end when a family nefesh is not continued further.

ASHER - It is that which continues the Jewish nation....

EG - It is the carrier of the characteristic and specific Jewish heritage.

AVNER - You will have to provide facts and proofs, if you want us to accept your hypothesis.

EG - It is unrealistic to ask for proof. My hypothesis - as hypotheses go in general - is a tentative attempt to dress into

a still vague form my thoughts, which have manifested themselves in a far more vague shape within my conscious and subconscious thoughts.

RABBI - When does in your view physiological life begin ? Is it at the moment of conception ? Or when the first movements begin ? Or when the human shape is first recognizable ?

EG - In my hypothesis Nefesh and Ruach are inherent in every potential fertility cell. Nefesh is activated the moment the fertilized ovum starts to divide, or possibly only when it implants itself in the uterus and turns into an embryo. Ruach is from the beginning a potential factor. It is triggered and makes it's appearance when the embryo becomes a fetus; when its movements start; when the circulatory system begins to form; when it shows human features. It is approximately the time when the nervous system begins to form. It is about the time when the woman experiences the first "quickenning".

RINAT - This would be around the 10th to 15th week.

RABBI - I am interested to hear you give this definition, for according to Aristotle - and at a later date it has also been said by Thomas Aquinas - a fetus becomes a person after it is "vivified" or "ensouled".

RINAT - How do you bring your thesis in harmony with the fact, that the ovum as well as the sperm are already alive ? From a biological point of view their DNA is functioning even before they become united. In other words: every human cell harbours in its make-up already the image of human life.

EG - I have no difficulty to see my hypothesis cover this otherwise unexplainable mystery: indeed - as I have already mentioned - ovum and sperm have been endowed with Nefesh at the stage and at the moments you describe. Every ovum and sperm has it own potential nefesh. It becomes active the moment both cells are united.

CAROL - This would mean, that only the expendable Nefesh and the Ruach waiting to enter, but not the eternal Neshama are lost when, in the process of artificial insemination, the large percentage of fertilized eggs fails to be implanted ?

EG - This is so according to my hypothesis.

RINAT - Through the genes contained in the DNA our heritage is transmitted from one generation to the next. Does this mean that - apart from the genes in the ovum and sperm which you see as part of nefesh - neither Ruach nor Neshama carry any of our

inheritable features nor any of our permanent and transmittable characteristics ?

EG_ - I would explain it this way: at the time of fertilization the resting Nefesh is activated; and in turn it activates the potentials dormant in the uniting first cell which carries now all the inherited features. View it as a key which has been turned, or as a spring which has been loosened, and which set this process in motion and keep it going, until a certain stage when Ruach takes over. View Ruach as the fuel henceforth required for the process of development to go on. When the embryo, the fetus or the infant or the fully grown person perish, their individual Ruach along with their personal Nefesh perish too. Our Neshama, our soul is only added at the moment of birth. Should the new-born being, which has already acquired its Neshama not survive, the Neshama will not perish too. It will survive and enter a new incarnation.

RINAT - You exclude the possibility, that the soul might also be a carrier of the specifics of a post-natal individual ?

EG_ - The soul we acquire is not individualized. It is not the carrier of any of our genes. It acquires none of our personal features. Our personal heritage is implanted in the fertilized ovum and its Nefesh. These, the paternal and maternal genes they contains , continue as our specific heritage.

CAROL - Therefore the modern process of IVF - the artificial fertilization with donor sperm - interrupts the chain of family genes ?

RINAT - Only if one of partners is an external donor.

EG_ - Both of you are wrong. You cannot speak of a chain of family genes being interrupted. In every regularly perceived infant the mother's and the father's nefesh are comixed. In the case of IVf where the donor of the sperm is not the fater - or in case of an adulterous liaison resulting in a child - instead of the genes of the father that of another man is added. Even in case the sperm has been donated by a non-Jew, you cannot be speak of a break in the family genes. At least not of those of the mother's.

AVNER - On the other hand we may see in such a case a clever arrangement of nature, as thereby in many instances an improvement of the human race in the Darwinian sense will take place: namely bringing in "fresh blood" and eliminating, or at least weakening, the human elements which nature wants to eliminate.

EG_ - In the sense, I agree, that nature - or whatever you want to call this regulating instance - wants to eliminate such

an undesirable strain by having made the man or the woman of the sterile couple infertile.

RINAT - ...or allergically or immunologically incompatible.

RABBI - Would you say, that the "Nefesh" in the national anthem of Israel is meant in the sense you have outlined ?

EG_ - Definitely so ! Nefesh is here used as something which vitalizes; which is jewish; which has remained jewish and will remain jewish by transmission from one generation of Jews to the other. It implies a unique heritage and a characteristic specificity. It is that which is contained in the genes. It is that which perishes with the mortal body - but which has over the millennia been carried and transmitted in the human seed from one generation to the next.

RABBI - Do not mind if I interpolate, that in the context of the anthem this concept can be made applicable from the individual to the general. Such a transferral from the single individual to the entire nation is accepted in Jewish theology.

AVNER - May I conclude from what you have told us - though you never said so in plain words - that you imply the existence of a specific Jewish soul which is transmitted only by and through Jews ? That you imply the separation of the human souls into white, black, brown, yellow categories ? Does this mean, that a white man's soul will have to return into the body of a white man; that of a black man into the body of a black man and so on ?

EG_ - You misunderstood me. I did not imply this. The soul has no reserved or restricted area. There is no jewish nor a non-jewish soul. The soul of an African is not different from that of a Caucasian; the soul of a Chinese is not different from that of a Norwegian.

AVNER - The Nazis would not have accepted your statement. They determined that a soul was contaminated even if only one grandparent had been jewish.

EG_ - The Nazis are the last to be cited as experts. Whatever they suspected could never apply to the soul of a Jew i.e. the Neshama, which has no ethnic characteristics. These latter are contained in the Nefesh; and are carried on - though definitely diluted - in a mixed marriage. The Nefesh of one jewish partner in a sequence of non-jewish generations carries a share of Jewishness into far more distant offsprings than a grandchild.

RINAT - This means that the reincarnating neshama will have to exist in always new and changing environments ?

EG_ - When the Neshama enters the body it acts and reacts

according to the nefesh-inherited characteristics of that creature it inhabits.

CAROL - In a mixed marriage this may be a christian body with an ethnically unspecified soul ?

EG_ - This may indeed be the case. However, my hypothesis will be easier understood - or possibly become only valid - if the principle of Karman is allowed into its structure. It is my firm belief that - to some degree at least - the principle of "Karman", as preached in Hinduism, Buddhism and so on, is applicable to us Jews as well as to all mankind. With these words I want to say, that Neshama, the human soul, strives to free itself from all the impurities and defects it carries; that it looks for its constant improvement; that it searches to reach a state of perfection. The perfection of the soul, and its chances to get cleansed of the imperfections it has inevitably accumulated in the course of its transmigrations, can take place - I will even say has to take place - in a series of incarnations into a variety of bodies; in a diversity of situations; and in the most variegated environments.

RABBI - This applies only to the Neshama !?

EG_ - This applies only to the Neshama. You must see in Nefesh the transmittable, inheritable jewish factor which remains within its national or familial orbit. The Neshama, that which is the true soul, can enter any body, whether jewish or gentile, european or asian or african.

ASHER - You are evidently not a Hassid; otherwise you would believe - in accordance with the Zohar - that the Jewish soul differs from the gentile one; that gentile souls belong to the domain of the demons.

RINAT - I am sorry to hear this. We Jews should be careful....

RABBI - You have no reason to feel apprehensive. Christianity wholeheartedly reciprocates these kind sentiments. It says that jewish souls are satanic and demonic forces.

RINAT - I must confess, I am attracted by the hypothesis we have been offered. It certainly removes many a doubt which has plagued me since some time. But some problems remain, and I hope I can solve them with your help.

CAROL - I too have learned very much. But I too have a problem which I shall submit here for you to help me solve.

RINAT - You say that in an individual, whatever its stage of development, heart action and movements of the limbs are evidence of life; and that in a living person a soul is present. What happens

to the soul if a patient is brain-dead but his breathing and heart action are kept alive artificially ?

EG - I should think that the neshama has left the body from the moment the brain waves have ceased. There is every reason to think that at that stage Nefesh and its life-force still exist within the body, because organs of a body in such an apparent, or let us say proved life-less, state can be transplanted - and can be made to function by the recipient's ruach

RINAT - Like ova and sperma.

EG - Fertilization is after all a transplant.

RABBI - A living person has a definite personality. One may say, that the soul makes up a person's personality. At least to a great extent. What happens, according to your hypothesis, to an individual whose personality has deteriorated, even disappeared, as for instance in a case of Alzheimer's disease ?

EG - I do not think this question applies. As long as a human being is alive he contains his Neshama as well as his Nefesh and Ruach whatever the state of his personality. It is the body which is sick. In an Alzheimer the central nervous system is affected and not the soul. In such a case the normal neshama is harboured by a sick body. However, there are no sick souls, no diseased or damaged souls. I would go even further and say, that also in an Alzheimer patient the soul is to some degree tested. I would go still further even and imagine, that in their contact with an Alzheimer patient the souls of the relatives, of the attendants and of the human environment are tested.

RINAT - The character of such a patient's human environment is tested ! I like this idea.

EG - Indeed - for it provides a situation which is similar to any other situation in which a person's morals are tested.

AVNER - In the final analysis we have only to take care of our souls. Our physical state and condition, the hurt and the sufferings afflicting our bodies, do not count.

EG - Of course, these count. But your reaction to your physical conditions - and that of those who come into contact with you - count a great deal as a test.

RABBI - The soul is holy. But in Jewish thought also the body is holy. It is not tainted by "original sin and carnal desires". How do you fit this in ?

EG - The body is certainly holy. It is certainly the program of nature - I say the intention of the Creator - to have mankind

grow up to a state of perfect physical and mental health.

CAROL - I have been wondering, how you might judge the moral dilemma of a pregnant woman who demands an abortion; and of a doctor who agrees to perform the abortion. How do they react, whether or not they know that the embryo or fetus have a soul or not; whether or not the aborted fruit harbours already a nefesh and ruach, that is whether they harbour life ?

RABBI - This is indeed a problem as all life is sacred. In Judaism abortion is permitted whenever the mother's life is in danger; and whenever we have to deal with a case of rape or incest.

CAROL - Instinctively or subconsciously our reactions to an abortion fit into such a classification. In a woman - except for one who for many years has attempted to get pregnant - the sight of an aborted embryo of a few weeks will cause only a slight, if any, psychological upset. Nor, I think, will she react stronger if she sees the aborted fetus of a few months. But the miscarriage at the end of the pregnancy, or the birth of a dead infant, are likely to cause a strong psychological reaction. It will make her mourn as if for the death of a living person.

ASHER - The attitudes and decisions of many legislators and theologians are directed by the fact that in the third semester of a pregnancy the nervous system is already developed.

CAROL - Why is abortion permitted for rape and incest but not otherwise ?

RABBI - Because it is murder.

AVNER - You would not agree to the abortion of a fetus because this would amount to murder. But you would not mind murdering a living being because it is the product of rape or incest.

RABBI - You have brought the 'Abortion Issue' into our discussion. Be it so. Let us express our opinions. Is it only a moral or also a legal question ? Do we load guilt upon us if we annihilate a formed or even a forming life ?

CAROL - I have pondered this problem and have found the only possible answer: in a democracy it should be left to the woman to decide whether she wants to continue the pregnancy or not. If other than health problems are put forth as indications - that is to say when the woman cannot continue her pregnancy due social conditions or reasons - our society as a whole, every one of us is to be counted not only responsible but also guilty.

ASHER - This should indeed be the right attitude. It is also generally the legally accepted one, because the Authorities

are of the opinion, that in the first trimester the fetus is not yet alive. This is indeed an advantage, as otherwise those involved would be accessory to infanticide.

AVNER - Were this so, every legally pronounced death sentence too should be judged an attempted murder; and every execution a planned murder.

ASHER - What you said is in fact a dilemma all over the civilized world. In most all countries - except for Sweden, the USA and China - abortion is made difficult by legal injunctions.

RABBI - How is the abortion issue handled in Israel ?

ASHER - It is only permitted in the first three months of pregnancy - provided it is approved by a doctor. And this only in women under the age of 17 and over 40; or if there are ethical reasons like illegitimacy, rape, incest, the mother's health or genetic defects.

AVNER - What, Rabbi, is the religious attitude ? What has the so-called judaeo-christian ethic to say ?

RABBI - Within ancient jewish thought abortion was permitted. Modern rabbinic thinking is divided. But there is a clear rabbinical unanimity, that it is incumbent on a woman to undergo an abortion if her own health is endangered.

AVNER - What has the Church to say in this matter ?

RABBI - The Church will not agree to an abortion under any circumstance whatsoever. She bases her restrictive attitude on the authority of the Holy Augustin who had ruled, that although abortion is "less sinful" if it is performed before the fetus is endowed with a soul, only God and not man knows when the embryo or fetus are "ensouled". Therefore, abortion is a grave sin at any stage of pregnancy.

CAROL - It comes again and again to this: whether the embryo or fetus are already endowed with a soul or not. In this connection the question arises, in how far the soul of a suicide may be affected by such an argument. What says Judaism in the case of an intended or successful suicide ?

RABBI - Nowhere in Jewish Scripture is suicide stamped a crime. A military leader's honour demanded quasi, that he does not surrender but takes his own life. But in jewish tradition there is hardly a more serious or condemnable sin than suicide.

RINAT - Why ?

RABBI - Because a suicide not only destroys a human life but it denies also God's desire for man to be positive and creative.

EG_ - What is the position of the legal branch of mankind ?

ASHER - The issue of suicide is viewed differently in the various legal systems of today's so-called judaeo-christian culture. In general it is not an accepted nor a recommended way for a person to make its voluntary exit from life. In many a country even a man recovered from, or failed in, an attempted suicide is liable to be persecuted.

AVNER - Alright ! But how does the soul of a suicide fit into your own hypothesis ?

EG_ - From my viewpoint it means, that by this action the soul of the suicide has been made to fail its karman. Or better, it has not been given a full chance to act according to its karman.

AVNER - There will be an additional notch on his karman's escutcheon.

EG_ - In theory man has the free will to do with his life as he wishes. But by cutting short his life, the soul has not been given the chance to clear any or part of its karmic load. It may also mean, that it has been saved from further karmic guilt. For whatever man does, or omits to do, affects his karman.

RINAT - How does your theory explain the suffering of the innocents ?

EG_ - The suffering of an innocent person, especially of a child, does not prove that I am wrong. It certainly does not disprove my hypothesis. Karman answers your question in full.

AVNER - Please be more specific ! How does your karman-theory explain the death of an infant ?

EG_ - It does not directly affect the soul itself. A tragic episode like the death of an infant may be due to an inherited negative factor - that part which is within the domain of nefesh and ruach and is not under the command or the control of the neshama. It may also be a test for the parents or the society as a whole.

AVNER - Before we disperse, please enlighten me on one problem: I have heard again and again that the soul is contained in the blood of man and beast. Considering the fact that we accept it today as an accepted fact that the soul is not contained in the blood, I am allowed to ask why the jewish housewives continue to get every drop of blood out of the meat or the chicken they bring from the market ?

CAROL - It is true that the orthodox woman, the not-so-orthodox woman and also the well-educated woman continue to make all meat products kosher, by keeping the raw meat covered with salt for an

hour or more - in this way effectively getting rid of all blood therein. Why do they carry on with this out-of-date custom ?

EG - It is an old-established custom - and it is difficult to get rid of old-established customs.

RABBI - But it is not so wrong after all ! The blood is after all the carrier of life. We all know only too well that when there is no blood left, life too has ceased. What, therefore, is wrong with one's wish to have every notion of life removed from the meat or chicken one is going to eat ?

T W E N T Y - T H R E E

CAROL - May I request you, Rabbi, to discuss with us a problem which has bothered me since you have confronted us with our Jewish identity. It is true, we have already talked about this and related matters. But it has left me unsatisfied and somehow also confused. We have heard that the soul is eternal, that after death it leaves the body and even the earth. This is to me understandable, as also Plato had maintained that the soul is divine; that it is imprisoned in the mortal body; and that when ascending again to God the soul must have freed itself from the objectionable earthly acquisitions like passions, desires and so on. But I do not know how to fit in the surprising fact, that our Sages of old and our philosophers of today have not succeeded in providing us with a clearer picture of the relationship between soul and body after death. On the other hand I remember my parents lighten candles at the grave of relatives. I saw others pray at the grave of some Zadiq, a supposedly saintly Jew.

RABBI - I remember such visits also in my own young days. My parents believed in a certain miracle-producing Zadiq, a simple man who earned his living as a shoemaker. For it is not necessary that such kind of a mystic saint is or was a scholar or a member of the religious hierarchy.

CAROL - I imagine that he has been turned into an avatar-like figure.

AVNER - What does a Zadiq do ?

RABBI - A Zadiq is seen by his followers as an intermediary between them and God. He is supposed to be near to God; to have a direct communication with the Powers in Heaven. He is also supposed to stay alive in his grave after his death. And he is supposed to intervene, even after his death, for the wellbeing of his disciples and followers.

EG - Also Islam knows of zadiq-like figures. I have met among Moslems men who were respected and venerated as saints while alive. And at the gravesides of such saints one can always find a number of people praying for his intervention with Allah.

CORAL - The image of the Zadiq you describe, reminds me very

much of the Bhodisattvah, the saint of the Buddhists.

RINAT - Explain this to me, please.

CAROL - According to ancient - and to this day still accepted - Buddhist belief the Bhodisattvah is a Buddhist saint who has reached enlightenment but does not want to make use of his right to enter Nirvana, because he has chosen to remain in the world; to have the wide world benefit by his presence; to help others so they too may obtain enlightenment.

RINAT - Is this not also something to which the ancient Prophets had aspired ? In other words: would you not say, that the mystics of today and the Prophets of old belong into the same category ?

RABBI - Not at all. Firstly you must not put prophets and mystics into the same basket. The only thing they have in common is their occasional state of ecstasy. The mystic is as a rule a self-centred man - one centred on his own spiritual well-being. The Prophet, on the other hand, aims his message at the public at large. He is gripped by the inner certainty that God has entrusted them with a task. He feels that he has to spread God's words. He believes he has a mission to perform. The prophets commonly state, that they do not preach on their own initiative but that they have been instructed, ordered and sent by God to bring the people back to a righteous life. In addition you will not find an instance, where a Prophet has claimed or believed that he himself had reached anything approaching a state of enlightenment.

EG - It is my opinion, that by their direct involvement by and with God they must certainly have qualified for a higher state of being.

RABBI - The Prophets never thought themselves on such a higher level. They saw themselves as channels of communication. They were messengers who conveyed an appeal of God to the Jewish people.

EG - I agree that most of the ancient prophets were only plain people. They were certainly not theologians nor philosophers. They knew God and represented him in his relationship with man. They knew well to express God's concern for man.

CAROL - You mean to say that God spoke through them ?

RABBI - They never made such a claim. In their utterances they translated into their own language and imagery what may have been in their subconscious mind only a vague perception of the divine message.

ASHER - Would you not agree that prophets do often sound hysterical and emotional ?

RABBI - I do not think you can call them either hysterical or emotional. However, I am ready to concede that they may give this impression due to the zeal with which they give expression to what overflows in their mind.

RINAT - Do you think God continues to appeal to mankind through prophets, messengers or anything else of this kind ?

RABBI - I am convinced that God intervenes at certain times in the decourse of history, and especially so in the fate of the Jewish people. Whether he does so through prophets or by other means may depend on the circumstances. The bearer of such messages may appear in manifold shapes. They may be statesmen, journalists, scientists or one or the other welfare organization. I could give you an endless list of such possible channels.

ASHER - Would you include the Holocaust in this list ?

AVNER - The Holocaust must have been such an occasion, when a divine intervention was called for. Where were the prophets in those years ?

RABBI - In that days and under those circumstances the warning voice or threatening tone of an old type of prophet would certainly not have been the appropriate method to convey God's message. Apart from this you must not forget, that the prophets of old used in the name of God expressions, threats and metaphors which in our society of today would hardly be found acceptable. They may have had an effect in those years - but certainly they would not have any today.

CAROL - Their's was a language which their listeners must have well understood. Today's specimen of such type of prophets would, of course, be using a language along with the kind of metaphors which are appropriate to our times.

RABBI - Instead of the prophets we have today writers, poets, philosophers, politicians and statesmen who take on this role.

EG - Let us be clear in our minds that, notwithstanding the harsh, cruel and often offensive language the prophets of old have used - and which we accept without demurring when we read the weekly Haftara portion - these prophets are an intrinsic part of the Jewish history. They were well educated and eloquent people. They had a good knowledge of the Scriptures. And in addition they were excellent psychologists.

AVNER - Are you going to tell me that you accept the testimony of these people as being made up of an absolute truth ? Do you take literally their threats and trustfully their promises ?

RABBI - Whatever criticism you may raise, it is a fact that they were inspired men. They presented in their sermons the highest ethical ideals. They possessed superior human qualities. They knew the demands and the needs of their time. They must have been inspired to preach in the name of God the truths, the love, the ethics which had survived at the subconscious level in the Jewish nation while it was on the brink of a moral breakdown and was threatened by ethical chaos.

CAROL - May we for a moment go back to our Zadiq, please? The continued attention such an individual enjoys even after his death has to mean, I think, that according to Jewish belief his soul is still maintaining a close association with its body, also when that lifeless body lies in its grave and has undergone a more or less total decomposition?

RABBI - This is indeed the popular belief among Jews. It seems to me, that this belief dates back to the time in history when our forefathers practised some kind of ancestor worship. This explains the gifts of food which our ancestors regularly brought to the graves of their deceased family members. All references to such a practice must have been erased from the Scriptures, I believe - except for the one which the censors overlooked and which I discovered in the T'nach: I found a place where mention is made of a man who in his defence declared, that among the food items he had on a certain occasion brought to the grave of a relative there had not been any of the kind which is forbidden during a "Shmitta Year". Look at the number of visitors praying daily at Rachel's grave. Look what is going on at the graves of the Patriarchs in the Cave of Machpela. All this has to be taken as an indication that the visiting worshippers believe there is still something left to be worshipped inside the grave.

RINAT - I have seen many Jews pray at the tomb on the Zion's Mount which is supposed to contain King David's body. I have seen many Jews pray at the tombs of the Patriarchs in the Cave of Machpela. But not only Jews, also Moslems pray there regularly. Does this imply that also in Islam the belief in the sanctity of the grave exists?

RABBI - Definitely so. We have touched on this point in a previous discussion; but we have not gone into details about a related issue which in our actual discussion is explanatory, viz:- Islam's concept of the human soul. It will be worth our while to throw some light on this point. The Qu'ran repeats to a great part

what our own Scriptures tell. It speaks of RUH which is perceived as the spirit; of Nafs, which is perceived as the soul, as the Self. Both Ruh and Nafs are the non-material part of man. Ruh comes from God. God has breathed Ruh into Adam and thus brought him to life. Ruh has been breathed into Mary and made her pregnant. Nafs, the soul, is the moral and religious part in man. The soul, the Self, blames itself whenever the body commits a sin. There is, however, the specific belief in Islam, that after death the soul will leave the body for a short time, only to rejoin it soon afterwards - after which it will remain with the body inside the grave until the Day of Judgement. This will explain to you why one can see so many supplicants around the many graves of moslem saints.

ASHER - Surprisingly this is not the case among the Saudis, although they are supposedly the religious leaders of the moslem world. I was told, that in Saudi Arabia no grave is marked; that there are no graveyards in our sense; that the body of the dead is put into a grave, which is covered with sand; that grave-stones are not known in Saudia; and that soon nobody knows who is buried and where. What may be the explanation ?

RABBI - I do not know. The Saudis will have a reason. Perhaps because according to islamic doctrine the graves contain the bodies and souls of sinners only, while those of martyrs, of holy men like that of the prophets go straight to heaven.

EG - I think it is so because the rulers of Saudia belong to the Wahabi sect which is very strict in its interpretation of the islamic faith. Along with other fundamentalist ideas the people of Saudi Arabia do not acknowledge saints; and they abhor the respect given to graves.

CAROL - I did not know of the customs in ancient Israel you mentioned. I thought that only in ancient non-jewish cultures had the belief persisted - as is shown by the food, ornaments, weapons etc. in the ancient tombs - that the dead survive in their graves.

RABBI - You will find that even in our days highly civilized and educated people follow customs and rites which are based on superstition and are grounded in magic. As intellint and eductated people we should never indulge in judging or criticizing other people's customs, traditions and belief. We should always be aware of the fact that myths and superstitions have taken a great hold of humankind's imagination. Let us by all means continue to light a candle for the dead - and while doing so remember the dead person. But we should not imagine, that with the lighted candle we recall

the dead person's soul from the grave or from anywhere else. And let us never nourish the belief, that the candle we lighten might in any way be of benefit to the body inside the grave.

AVNER - But when you said Kadish over Chaim's body you must have thought, that the poor man in his grave was going to benefit, if not profit, from your intervention.

RABBI - You are wrong in thinking that this is the purpose of the Kadish prayer. Do you realize that in the Kadish nothing is mentioned of death, of grave, of redemption and so on ? The Kadish is only a prayer in which we praise God in memory of the dead.

RINAT - Do the souls which have been delivered from the body ever return to earth ? I do not think of reincarnation or of transmigration at this moment. My question is: do souls continue to maintain a contact, some kind of an affectionate association, with the survivors of their family ?

RABBI - Nothing of this kind has ever been known to have occurred.

RANIT - What does this indicate ?

RABBI - It can only mean that God, that Instance and Power which directs our world, has thought it wise that such an association does not continue.

EG_ - May I be permitted to differ ? To me it indicates that after death the soul has no further interest in the society it has left; and equally not, once it has left the body, in its past earthly existence. To say this in other words: the soul has left its former surroundings for ever. It has cut off for ever all connections with its mortal body, and no less also with all the mortals it has left behind. In still clearer words: All what has happened during that life cycle is of no significance anymore to the departed soul. For I see it as a basic part of the divine plan, that the body transmits the nefesh, the inheritable mass to the next generation; and that the neshama provides the ethic direction as well as the intellectual guidance for this process throughout its sojourn within the mortal body. But the soul itself, the neshama, remains unaffected in its purity by any defects or mishaps of the body. Nor are there after death anymore bands of sentiments or questions of responsibility connecting the souls with the body. The soul has only been affected by its mental, its spiritual, and its moral reactions to the exigencies to which the body-soul partnership is exposed during that life-span. And at the same time the neshama

endeavours to cleanse away that which has negatively affected it in the course of that last incarnation, and - as is usually the case - also that which it has carried over from previous sojourns. With the death of the individual the pursuit of these purposes has come to an end - whether successfully fulfilled or not. The earthly remnants have no significance for the soul's continued development - which is, after all, its overall purpose.

ASHER - You maintain, if I understood you well, that until it has achieved its ultimate purity, the soul will have to find a resting place in one body after the other ?

AVNER - Possibly in the body of some member of his own family or in that of a jewish neighbour ?

EG_ - You have misunderstood me, it appears. That soul, which had once inhabited the entombed jewish body, may for all I know have now become incorporated into some catholic nun in Rome or some coolie in China or some tribal chief in Africa. Had the soul of a Jew to wait for another Jewish body to enter, it would have to join the endless queue of "unemployed" souls made up of the six million victims of the Nazis.

RABBI - To this endless column will be steadily added the souls of the assimilated and converted Jews of America and elsewhere.

ASHER - Does what you have been saying fundamentally not deny a resurrection ?

RABBI - In general it can be said, that belief in an after-life is common to all ancient religions - including traditional Judaism. But this does not apply to modern religious conceptions including that of modern Judaism.

EG_ - Nowhere have I found resurrection mentioned in the jewish Bible.

ASHER - And, as far as I know, this would also contradict the accepted jewish beliefs of today.

RABBI - Let me, in reply to your question, expand on what I said. It is true, "T'chiath hamethim", the chance for the dead to arise - mainly so that they may receive their due reward or punishment - does not appear in the Bible. There it is clearly stated that man receives all his reward and punishment during his lifetime on earth. As I have already explained, soul and body are stored in Sheol until the time the Messiah comes and everybody has to face the Eternal Judge. For this reason the wise men must in the past have found it unnecessary to introduce the concept of a resurrection into the jewish belief system. However, there is

mention in the Talmud of a resurrection of the dead at a certain point in the future. But in that text it is not expressed in anything like a clear-cut definition or doubt-free interpretation. The belief in Resurrection, as well as that in some kind of a Hereafter, in a Messiah, in Hell, in a Day of Judgement and so on are later additions. It may be taken for granted, that they have been absorbed from surrounding cultures where such a 'post-mortem' future was the accepted theology.

RINAT - Can I conclude from what we heard, that the "Hereafter" and the "After-life" have the same meaning? If not, how would you define each of them?

RABBI - The 'Hereafter' is that metaphysical expanse which comprises all which is supposed to go on after our death. After-life is primarily the specific belief in an existence after death - and secondarily in an ultimate judgement of our life on earth. Both, the specifically described 'Hereafter' and the vaguely circumscribed 'Afterlife' play a greater role in Christianity than in Judaism or Islam.

ASHER - As far as I know, also Judaism promises some kind of an Hereafter. I remember that in our prayers mention is made of God's kingdom on earth...

RABBI - You must not take this prophecy literally. The Prophets meant the establishment of an ethics-dominated life on earth. But it does not mean a reward for the individual survivor. Only the nation as a whole will be the beneficiary.

CAROL - I remember Adam Smith having said: "Jews have a hereditary opposition to life beyond the grave".

RINAT - He may have been right insofar as Jews, no less than other people, repress that which causes them discomfort.

ASHER - All we have heard mentioned just now refers to the immortality of the soul. Is immortality not a priori on the program of every religion present and past?

CAROL - You cannot generalize in this way. Buddhism, and also Hinduism for example, do not preach that, after samsara - the cycle of rebirths - has come to an end, there will be some kind of life after death. Instead they preach that there will be total and final extinction. There is the story of a buddhist intellectual who asked a Christian in disbelief: "...does your christian doctrine mean that you have to live forever?"

RABBI - May I say, that there is some justification for Asher's question? Every religion has its own variation of this theme.

For instance: you will remember that according to the Kabbala people are awarded or punished in series of consecutive "gilgulim", that is in a consecutive series of reincarnations. I want you to take note that next to the principle of incarnation also quite specific explanations are provided in the Kabbala which you will not find in other doctrines of this kind: for instance, a male soul can enter a female body and vice versa. These gilgulim - i.e. the times a soul has to undergo reincarnations - may number three or even up to a thousand.

RINAT - How does this differ from the Purgatory ?

RABBI - Purgatory is a purely christian concept. In general it is not perceived as a place of punishment, but as a place and a time of purification. A soul may even go from there straight into heaven.

RINAT - Let us hear some more about the Hereafter, that is: how in ancient and modern religious views the survival of a human being and its following resurrection is described.

RABBI - It is by far not only a theological concept. There are also philosophers who believed that suffering in this world is balanced by bliss in the Hereafter.

CAROL - While others, like Kant, tell us that Reason regulates all ideas; and that these bring forth and construct ideas in turn; and that it is the ideas which survive.

RABBI - In Kant's philosophy soul, world, God are the ultimate synthetic principles of Reason.

ASHER - I hope you will not think me frivolous when I mention an article I have read only recently. In this article an english scientist proposes to apply advanced laboratory technique to measure or weigh the soul. He hoped also with his method to put some theological ideas to a quantitative test.

CAROL - I hope this scientist does not think he can compete with the antique gods of Egypt, Anubis and Thoth, who balanced the hearts of the dead against feathers.

RINAT - Let us give that english scientist the benefit of the doubt. He may have been serious in proposing his program.

RABBI - Fortunately we are still far from applying scientific standards to religion. The outcome would only shame science as well as religion because our sciences do not yet know to apply scientific exactitudes without mixing in conjectures - not even when they make use of the religions' armoury to turn man into an ethical being.

EG - I feel somehow upset when I witness an attempt to introduce science, or scientific principles, into the realm of religion. I react thus not only when atheists or agnostics do so in order to discredit what religion has to say, but also when well-meaning individuals do so in order to support one or the other episode which clearly is either a metaphor or an unexplainable metaphysical happening. Religion and science do not meet. Science demands a rational explanation for everything; while religion can and will fill in any gaps when necessary.

AVNER - Are you - and is every other unabashed montheist - truly honest with himself? Does the faithful believer in a God and Creator not suppress any or all scientific data which do not agree with his religious persuasion? Mind you, I do not accuse you of dishonesty; I have a subconscious reaction in mind.

EG - An educated, intelligent and truly religious person is not so easily deviated from his faith by scientific discoveries or conclusions. Of course, I can speak only for myself.

RINAT - Take Einstein as an example who was a very religious person.

EG - Science is not the answer to the problems which - without fail - do come to the surface in a religion. The modern sciences, especially physics, are abstract in nature and are difficult to understand. And the more they progress the less they are understood by people outside their own restricted circle. The main obstacle - not only in my personal experience - is the indispensable knowledge of an unusually complicated system of mathematics which very few possess. You may believe me if I say - this is not my own discovery but is based on what I read only very recently - that at the moment the number of the persons who understand this kind of mathematics is less than a hundred in the entire world.

AVNER - Be this as it may, you will in any case have to agree that there is a contradiction between science and revelation, between rationalism and faith?

RABBI - There certainly is. They do not even complete each other. Science is based on facts and observations - not on personal experiences and beliefs. Nor are subconscious sensations.

AVNER - Rightly and with justification science does not and cannot support a belief in a supposedly superior, naturally established scheme of things without looking for proof. Whatever theory you may bring forth - it cannot be tested nor disproved. And therefore such a theory cannot be accepted.

RABBI - The increasing range of scientific knowledge - combined with man's steadily increasing power over nature - is frightening to us. You may tell me, that this is enough to limit the influence of religion in the modern world. I think the contrary is true. I believe this state of affairs makes a return to religion more likely. Why ? Because people look for protection against their fear that the excessive power man is gaining day by day may end in disaster. Possibly some inevitable retaliation of nature or God or anything like this may be the result. Yes, I come more and more to the conviction, that religion will serve more and more as a catalyst against nature's power. Against earthquakes, for instance; or against steadily more terrible weather conditions; or against the fear of an approaching ice age.

CAROL - What you said sounds very much like a return to the times, when the primitive people created religion in their search for protection against powerful natural forces. Or when they searched for help against the hostile gods.

RABBI - Such renewals have been frequent occurrences in mankind's history. In ancient times there was nothing which in the slightest is comparable to what we call science today. All mishaps were believed to be the revenge acts of hostile powers. Whenever and wherever science began to flower - and began to find explanations for what is going on around us - it was considered an enemy by the allmighty Church. This was the case when the Church condemned Copernicus and Gallilei, because their theory that the earth moves around the sun contradicted the word of God in the Bible - and everything written in the Bible was taken as absolutely truth. Gallilei's crime was compounded still further, because he had among other things also raised the possibility, that there could be life on the moon. How could this be reconciled with the unequivocal statement in the Bible that Adam had been the first man, and that all animals now in existence derive from those which had been saved in Noah's Ark ?

T W E N T Y - F O U R

ASHER - In our schooldays we imbibed a healthy respect for the wisdom of Buddha; and especially so for his sensitivity to mankind's spiritual needs. We have also learned to have a deep respect for the knowledge of the exponents of Hinduism; and in particular for that of the Brahmins. Whenever we talked in our actual conversations about what is, for me at least, difficult to fathom - for instance the human soul - some of you have frequently mentioned Hinduism and Buddhism as having provided you with guidelines for a better apprehension of the various topics we touched upon in our talks. Can we spend some time on expounding some basic facts to those among us who confess to have only a minimal knowledge in this specific field ?

EG - I shall gladly do so, and Carol will certainly assist me. However, the vastness of the matter will force us to be very selective and to concentrate on that minimum which will help us along in the discussion of our specific project. Should you after we have done - except for some clarification here and there - still feel the need of a deeper exposition, you will have to turn to the relevant literature.

The original invaders into India, those who around the 17th century BCE penetrated over the Himalayas from Iran, brought with them a belief system which is detailed in the Veda scriptures. These are still available in their entirety. They have been very thoroughly studied in the West.

ASHER - What specifically are the Vedas ?

CAROL - The Vedas comprise the hymns and sacrificial formulas which had developed in the course of the centuries - although Hindu's religious establishment makes the claim that they had been divinely revealed. Although the Vedas - the word means 'knowledge' - had originally not been written down, and for long centuries been only orally transmitted from generation to generation, it has never lost its ancient form, sense and essence.

RABBI - This method of transmitting and preserving a sacred text is not an unusual feature. This was the method of preservation of all which had once been revealed. And this was the method by which all the knowledge which in early times the religions claimed to possess,

was passed on from generation to generation. Apart from some engravings on stones or paintings in caves, nothing was ever written down in the early stages of mankind.

EG - In fact, the content of the Vedas is called the 'Sruti' - which word can be translated as "that which is heard".

CAROL - And now to some specific concepts of the the Vedic religion. It says, that man harbours a soul which survives after his physical death. This belief of the Vedic religion wa expressed during the early stages of its evolvment in the kind of ancestor-worship which is already familiar to us from what we have heard on other occasions, viz:- in the food which had regularly to be offered to the dead and so on. Around the 7th or 3th century BCE - when the Upanishads were written down - we notice the first indications of the belief in a transmigration of the souls. Along with this also the karman principle was for the first time developed. Modern researchers - western and eastern - cannot agree whether this development was caused by a continued or a renewed Iranian influence; or whether it was due to the Greek influence which had begun to penetrate the then known civilized world; or whether it was adopted from the original dravidian population of Northern India which had been steadily displaced and pushed southwards by the invading aryan.

EG - Although it has to be accepted as a fact, that Hinduism incorporates the concept of a soul, it has not created a special word for it. Commonly 'Atman', the Self, is given the meaning we have of the soul. But there are differences between the Hindu's Atman and our view of the soul.

CAROL - If there are indeed differences, they are so very subtle that they should not concern us here. While the human soul is within the human body - Hinduism teaches - it represents the 'Self' in man. While the soul is imprisoned inside the mortal body, it is supposed to be inevitably polluted. In order to be given an opportunity to free itself from its impurities, the soul has to be reincarnated again and again. But by means of ritual purifications it can be saved from this unpleasant fate and be set free. Once purified and free, the soul is brought into harmony with the balanced universe.

EG - Atman, as you heard mentioned, is the Self. Atman is the life-giving breath. Atman has also the meaning of thought and activity. Atman is, according to the Upanishads, the imperishable part of man. The Vedic hymns sing of "the gods (who) live within man..." and "all the gods are within me".

CAROL - Originally and ultimately Atman is a part of Brahman, the Universal Self. And thus the soul is part of, and identical with,

Brahman the Universal Spirit - who ordains and institutes the incarnation of the human Self. It is the human soul - the Atman-Self in man - which migrates, transmigrates and reincarnates. But Brahman himself - of whom Atman is an integral part - never migrates. Both are eternal. They never transmigrate or reincarnate. They are the non-migrating, deathless Etheral Self.

EAG_ - In this concept of the cosmic order, you will have to perceive Atman as the microcosmos and Brahman as the macrocosmos.

ASHER - Can you, please, define for us in a more detailed way the roles played by Brahman and Atman ?

CAROL - Whenever I myself have put this very same question to my teachers I was told, that Brahman-Atman cannot be perceived. Indeed, they cannot be defined.

EG_ - The teaching goes, that they can only be felt by experience. This is expressed in the Upanishads, where Brahman is described as the "one who cannot be spoken of in words, but is one with whom words are spoken" and as "...he is that which cannot be imagined by the mind. But he is one which makes the mind think".

CAROL - And finally: Atman, the eternal Self in man, is neither directly nor indirectly affected by the life of man itself.

RABBI - Exactly what we have heard defined before as the specific role of the human soul !

RINAT - In how far do Brahman and Atman differ ?

CAROL - Brahman is above everything. He is unaffected by all which goes on in the Universe. He is unapproachable to any human quest. Atman, however, is within man himself.

EG_ - We have to mention that a certain part of the Self is provided by the body. It is the 'Jiva', which is made up of the Manas and the Noun. These are parts of the soul which the Self has formed. These two particles are only temporary creations. They do not survive with the soul; nor do they become reincarnated. In other words: Manas and Noun are again destroyed when the individual dies.

RABBI - Where, according to the Hindu scriptures, did the soul originate ? Whereto does it go after death ? Whereto does it ultimately belong ?

CAROL - It was Brahman, the original source who - according to the Upanishads - has created along with the world also the individual souls. On entering an earthly body, the soul gets caught in the world of Maya, the "World of Illusion and of Suffering". The soul is a prisoner within the body. After death it is not set free, but has to be reincarnated, that is to say, it will be imprisoned again. To be

born is, therefore, a misfortune for the soul.

RABBI - MAYA is a very important factor in Hinduism, I remember.

AVNER - What is Maya about ?

EG_ - Maya has a complex meaning. It is generally perceived as an illusion; but it has the ultimate meaning of creation and process. In the Vedas it has the approximate meaning of transforming an idea into a concrete something.

CAROL - The gods, according to the Upanishads, used Maya to create the world.

EG_ - Maya is "an emanation of the phenomenal world by Brahman, the Cosmic Self", as somebody once explained to me. "It is the metaphysical principle which transforms the eternal into something tangible.

CAROL - Hinduism and Buddhism have sharply contrasting ideas about the interpretation of Maya. In Hinduism Maya is the mysterious power of self-transformation. In Buddhism, on the other hand, it is perceived as a maliciously minded destructive power.

RINAT - Can you tell me in clearer words wherefrom the soul comes according to the belief of the Hindus ? And whereto do they think the soul will ultimately go ?

EG_ - It is a basic part of the Hindu doctrine, that the soul is an emanation of Brahman; and that it has existed before the body was formed. When in the course of 'samsara' - the eternally turning wheel of recurring lives and rebirths - the soul is finally purged of all its impurities; and when has been cleansed of all its imperfections - it loses its individuality and merges once more with the Absolute.

RABBI - From your words I learn, that in Hinduism a deity, some divine being - whatever name it may have - reigns supreme. I never realized this.

EG_ - In general terms, Hinduism can definitely be called a theistic religion. Brahman, who is without beginning and without end, is the Supreme Being. Brahman is ineffable, non-conceptual, immutable and eternal. As you have already heard, every human being harbours Brahman as Atman, as the Self, as the soul, within himself. Ultimately and basically it is the Hindu's aim and aspiration in life to establish a union with Brahman.

CAROL - It has, however, to be pointed out that - contrary to most all other religions - Hinduism is not a religion with a positive attitude to life. It teaches that life is filled with misery. It teaches that man has to live with this misery until he achieves his 'Moksa', his spiritual liberation.

AVNER - How can man get his moksa ?

RINAT - Moksa is the release of the soul ?

EG - Moksa - it is also called 'Mukhti - is a person's release from Samsara, and thus from his karman and its burden.

CAROL - Man can achieve his moksa by extinguishing all his earthly aspirations and desires. When he has reached this stage and the soul is liberated, the soul will join Brahman and become Brahman itself.

EG - In the Bhakhti form of Hinduism 'mukhti' is achieved at the time of death.

CAROL - Hinduism had once upon a time, that is in its early stages, a definite gnostic feature when it preached, that salvation is achieved by insight or gnosis.

AVNER - The Hindus must have their kind of Bible too, I suppose. I might in my leisure time try to study. What can you recommend ?

EG - The Hindu religion possesses a number of Scriptures which I am going to mention in passing. The Vedic Aryans, before they migrated from 1700 BCE onwards to the North-West of India, had for a number of centuries been living among the Iranian Aryans. The influence of the latter can be detected in the early teaching of Hinduism. There is the Rigveda. There are the Upanishads. There is plenty to be learned from these. In principle, you can learn very much from the Indians' religious philosophy. It is of a high standard.

CAROL - Allow me to point out again that Indian religious philosophy has been enriched by the influence which Zoroastrianism had on its origin and development.

RABBI - Do you mean by Zoroastrianism's dualism ?

CAROL - By all of Zoroastrianism, but least by its dualism.

RINAT - Does this Zoroastrianism still exist ?

CAROL - Zoroastrianism, the ancient Iranian religion, is still practiced today - though outside modern Moslem Iran - by the Parsis. It is, as you have heard, a so-called dualistic religion which teaches, that two fundamental, causal, opposing principles dominate the world: good and bad; light and darkness; spirit and matter; Ying and Yang.

EG - Zoroastrianism - also called Mazdaism - was founded in Iran some 3000 years ago by Zoroaster. It is next to Judaism perhaps the oldest monotheism. Ahura Mazda is the wise God. Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic as well as a dualistic religion. This is in itself not a contradiction, as in this instance the dualism is not a characteristic of the Divinity, but is made to explain the place which evil occupies in our world. 'Spenta Mainyu', the beneficent spirit and 'Angra Mainyu' the hostile one, are the twin children of Ahura Mazda, the creator of

heaven and earth, of day and night, of light and darknes. Man has to face both the good and the evil - and he will decide which he prefers to follow.

CAROL - A principal iranian teaching is, that the divine spirit - that cosmic part which is imperishable - is made of light. This light is contained in the "human seed". In the process of procreation the light in the seed is transmitted from one body to the other. This doctrine provided a basis for the Hindu principle of samsara, the cycle of births and deaths.

RABBI - After all you have explained, it is more appropriate, I think, to define Zoroastrianism not as a dualistic religion, but as a religion with dualistic features.

EG - Tell us why you think so, please.

RABBI - Fundamentally, dualism has an ethic basis: it explains, as you mentiond, the origin of evil. According to the dualistic principle man is at every moment in his life made to face the problem of evil and of suffering. Dualism, within the frame of a religion, forces man to chose between good and evil.

RINAT - All this sounds so very intriguing. Does this indicate that the Iranians believe in a Divinity and in man's soul.

CAROL - Quite unequivocally so. I agree with you: Zoroastrianism is a most interesting religion. At least this is my personal opinion.

RINAT - It will surely interest us to hear a more detailed description.

CAROL - Zoroastrianism is primarily a monotheistic religion, as you know already. You heard already that Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, created heaven and earth, day and night, light and darkness. The soul which man carries within himself is that part of the organism which survives after death. It is the receiver of - and is responsible for - reward and punishment. The body is only a receptacle for the soul. The dead body is unclean to such a degree, that neither the earth should be offended by burying the body therein, nor the holy fire desecrated by cremating the body. The dead body is instead exposed under the open sky, to be devoured by vultures. There is another interesting feature: at death the soul is believed to become separated from the body. Three days after death, and following its painful separation from the body, the soul of the just will meet their 'Daena', the image of their own Self disguised as a beautiful girl. She invites the soul to cross the 'Chivat Bridge', the knife-edge-thin "Bridge of Separation". The righteous will cross safely and reach Heaven and the Infinite Light. The sinners will drop from the bridge - into hell. Those who are found

not to be very perfect but still not too bad, will have to spend a time in some kind of limbo. At the time of the Last Judgement the soul will be reunited with its body and come back to life.

RABBI - What do the Hindu scriptures say about God, the human soul, and how the world was created ?

CAROL - The Hindu concept of God, of the soul, of the human creation is reflected in the cosmology of their Scriptures.

EG_ - This is indeed the case. The Rigvada tells, that the world originated from the breathing of 'Tad Erom', a name which translates as 'That One'. At a later stage of their religion's development, the Brahamanas - one of Hinduism's scriptures - maintained that it had been Brahman, the Lord of Creation, who had created the world. The Vedas, on the other hand, say that the Cosmos originated from the sacrifice of "Purusa" - who is figured as a primordial superman - whose parts formed the world's sun, moon, stars etc. The Bhagavadgita - which is a part of the Vedanta - tells, that life and all that exists in the Cosmos is the due to the intervention of Krishna, who is the primal spirit. He is also thought to be the original Purusa, the source of all beings, the seed of all. He is the original universal father from whose seed all living beings originated. To him mankind owes also the institution of Samsara, the Wheel of Existence, the series of rebirths.

RABBI - How does the physically orientated Yogi teaching reflect on the concept of a human soul ?

EG_ - Fundamentally there is no difference between their belief and that of the main stream of Hinduism. Only the approach is different. The human soul, Yogi teaches, is made up of Purusa, the indestructible, unchangeable Self; and of Prakarti, the matter, which is changeable and perishable. Moksa, the deliverance from the eternal cycle of rebirths - of which you have already heard - begins as soon as the Self remembers its origin. And with the help of the specific, physically oriented Yoga discipline, the Self will dissociate itself from the world of matter.

RABBI - Can it not be said that most Indian religious philosophy is negatively oriented ?

EG_ - You must be thinking of Maya, the principle of illusion of which has already been mentioned. It is far more influential in buddhist teaching, where it is perceived as a destructive factor. Maya negatively affects mainly the human personality. Within the meaning of Maya all life is an illusion. Nothing is real. Only the non-physical, the spiritual dimension, is reality. Once a person has realized this as the truth, Maya the Illusion loses its effect. The soul of those who

do not realize this, will have to be reincarnated again and again.

ASHER - That is to say, until it reaches Moksa, its liberation and salvation, and its state of bliss ?

CAROL - Not quite. In Indian philosophy this liberation is not considered a state of bliss. It is negatively interpreted as a state of total cessation where all suffering has ceased.

AVNER - Is this all there is to be gained in Nirvana ?

EG - I realize you need a better understanding of what Nirvana means. Nirvana is not perceived in the same way by the various Indian religions. You are right: in Hinduism it means a state of eternal bliss. In Jainism - an important splinter religion of Hinduism - Nirvana is an undecipherable, a passionless state beyond the world, somewhere at the ceiling of the universe. Nirvana will only be reached after many reincarnations - and this in accordance with the individual's karman.

CAROL - Buddhism has a different conception of Nirvana. Our life, our existence on earth, is like a flame from which the other flames of all the following rebirths are kindled. This goes on until the flame is harboured in an enlightened individual. When this blessed individual ceases to exist - when in profane language this individual dies - the flame is extinguished. This is Nirvana.

ASHER - And what about the Hindus' Moksa ?

EG - With Hinduism's Moksa - an individual's final liberation - the Self of the human being reaches its goal, which is Nirvana. The Hindus' Nirvana, the totally unlimited state of bliss, is reached at the end of Samsara, the wheel of birth, of deaths and of rebirths.

CAROL - However, in the main stream of Hinduism Nirvana does not mean the union of the soul, the Atman, with Brahman, the ultimate deity, or any other form of unqualified communion with the Godhead.

EG - Let me add to what has been said before. The buddhist view of Nirvana differs also in this respect. It is the state into which one enters after having overcome all one's cravings. This goal is reached through the extinction of all one's desires.

CAROL - This sounds plain and simple, but every Buddhist will tell you, that Nirvana is far more; that in truth his concept of Nirvana cannot be described in human terms. Nirvana's form or shape cannot be even approximately described, you may be told. It cannot be explained in a discussion nor depicted in examples. Yet it exists. It is a lofty, an exalted state free of passions. It brings joy and spreads light. Each of the various Schools of Buddhism has its own additional conception of Nirvana. In Mahayana Buddhism it is the state of ultimate perfection. But this state at best the monk can achieve.

RABBI - Is the monk that Bhodisattva you mentioned ?

CAROL - A monk can become a Bhodisattva, but the 'Aharant' - as such a monk is designed - who has reached sainthood, strives to enter Nirvana. He differs from the 'Bhodisattvah' who - as you know already - has achieved perfection but refuses to enter Nirvana. Instead he returns to samsara - that is to say he re-enters the earthly life - in order to make it possible for as many persons as possible to also enter Nirvana in due course.

EG_ - Although, in general terms, it is the spiritual aspiration of a Buddhist to achieve enlightenment, it should not be overlooked that - as you know by now - the nirvana of Buddhism has taken on a mainly negative meaning. When reaching nirvana the individual is more or less annihilated. Nothing is left of him or her.

CAROL - It is interesting that, although Buddhism denies the existence of a deity, it accepts within its concept of Nirvana and Dharma the idea of a transcendent enlightened Absolute Being of some kind.

EG_ - Let me add, that the Buddha himself, the Gautama Buddha, the Enlightened One, had been released from Samsara, the series of recurring births. He enjoyed a privileged fate - in some sense like Elyah and Enoch - but he is not viewed and venerated as a godhead.

ASHER - What does Dharma mean ?

CAROL - To the Buddhist Dharma means the truth which underlies and transcends all existence, even though, as already mentioned, Buddhism rejects the principle of an eternal and unchanging soul or Self.

EG_ - Dharma has a somewhat different meaning in Hinduism and its other daughter religions, Jainism and Sikhism. It has a meaning similar to that which religion has for us. It expresses religious beliefs and practices. It expresses the natural order, the cosmos. It is the law according to which samsara, the destiny of the world and of man, proceeds.

CAROL - In other words: Dharma is truth, knowledge, morality and duty. It is the moral law which demands moral behaviour.

RINAT - What about Bhakhti, which you mentioned once, and which I found to my liking ?

CAROL - Bhakhti is a theistic movement which has evolved from traditional Hinduism. It searches for the development of a relationship with the God Vishnu in whatever avatar form he may appear.

ASHER - What about avatar ?

CAROL - The avatar is an enlightened spirit or a god who has returned to earth in human form.

EG_ - He may also be an individual with god-like characteristics and knowledge.

CAROL - Vishnu is the benevolent god who appears as such a avatar. Also Shiva can appear as an avatar. She is the goddess of good and evil, of fertility and abstinence who creates and destroys.

EG_ - In Bhakti the followers approach the godheads with deep devotion. This satisfies the human need of a direct communication with the godhead - for Brahman is far too distant and austere.

CAROL - Also to the buddhist devotee Buddha himself is too distant and too austere, although he is a non-figure. The Bhodisattvah takes on the role of an intermediary with the Buddha.

AVNER - And whereas the Buddha has ceased to exist, the Bhodisattvah acts as intermediary with something which may not even exist ? Please, do not mind if I think this is funny.

T W E N T Y - F I V E

RABBI - Buddhism has enjoyed world-wide attention in the last few decades. Yoga and Zen are today practised by many people in the West. I have noticed, that this is also the case among the Jewish intelligenzia of this country. I was, therefore, not surprised to discover, that I have begun to share your keenness to learn more about this ancient indian religious and philosophical entity.

AVNER - I am not surprised either about my newly evolving interest in Buddhism. However, I must confess that in my case it is more a personal curiosity than an intellectual involvement. The attraction Buddhism has for me and for large sectors of the population is due, in my opinion at least, to the fact that it does not demand a theistic commitment.

RABBI - Let us not go further and accept the fact, that there is a general, world-wide interest, without bothering for the moment what the reason may be. However, as is the case with all intellectual matters - especially with regard to those who belong into the realm of spiritual matters - half-knowledge and insufficient information may do more harm than one might otherwise expect. Let us, therefore, make use of the opportunity offered us here and today, to learn more about the meaning and the content, the spirit and the ideology of Buddhism. In particular and above all we will be interested to learn about the attitude of the Buddhists to a divinity; about their concept of the Divine in general; about their concept of man's life and death; about man's fate after his death; about what they think of man's soul - or better said, what makes them think man is not endowed with a soul.

EG - Buddhism is unique insofar as it is not a scripture-bound faith. Nor can it be called a compacted, clearly confined religion. Instead, it is a religion based on a conglomerate of musings, sayings and preachings which are traditionally attributed to its founder, the Buddha Gautama. Added to the basic doctrine resulting therefrom are the interpretations of these musings, sayings and preachings of The Buddha which other Buddhas - enlightened men who followed the Buddha and are also titled thus - have, in the course of the centuries following the Buddha Gautama's death, pronounced in his name.

CAROL - A Buddhist is also unique insofar, as he does not pray

in the sense we perceive a prayer. Meditations take the place of the usual, the conventional prayers. In his meditations the Buddhist does not approach a Superior Being for help or favours like the adherents to other religions are wont to do. Not only does the Buddhist never address a God in his meditations - he never addresses even the Buddha himself in such a state. However, the Buddhist will explain to you, that by means of his meditations, and by the insight he gains thereby of himself, he feels elevated into a higher state of transcendence.

EG_ - According to Buddhist teaching it is useless to approach any of the gods which exist in the Hindu pantheon, because these gods are by far not in a position to be of help; because they suffer from the same pains, sorrows and vices as the human beings; and because they are affected by the same existential difficulties and psychological problems as the human beings do. They too have to undergo rebirths. They too will disappear. In short: the gods cannot help us.

CAROL - I personally find it regretful, that the original teaching of the Buddha has not been preserved in its purity and simplicity. You will hardly encounter today a Buddhist who adheres to Buddha's original teachings without his having added to them; without having distracted from them; without otherwise having made changes in them.

EG_ - There is also otherwise no more a generally accepted and acknowledged doctrine of Buddhism. In the course of the centuries Buddhism has split into many sects or schools. It would be far too exhausting - and in our group here of little value - should we give a description of even a quarter of them. Let it suffice that I mention two: the HINAYANA direction and the MAHAYANA direction. The uniqueness of the former - which is also called the "Lesser Vehicle" - is the belief that everybody can become an enlightened Buddha by his own efforts; and that everybody has thus the opportunity to gradually institute his own progress to salvation. The Mahayana direction - also called the "Greater Vehicle" - preaches that man can gain his salvation already in his lifetime by means of prayers and good deeds, by self-restraint and by the renunciation of desires.

CAROL - All in all Buddhism offers a vast, an enormous, and a most fascinating field of study. In our circle and within our program we can only touch its fringes. If you want to learn more about Buddhism than the inevitably superficial description you are going to hear from us here, you will on your own have to study its history along with its precepts. Believe me, both of these are worth a deeper study. But now, and in our actual environment, I want to deal only with that part of Buddhism, which I estimate will here and today be of specific interest

to us all.

One of the main features of Buddhism is its philosophy which offers existential guidelines without making use of metaphysical answers. It does not feel the need to come to a conclusion or decision whether the Universe is eternal. Nor is it interested to investigate or discuss whether the world had at all been created or not. It does not even bother to clarify the absolutely fundamental question whether the world in which we live really exists. Nor does it waste time on investigating whether the universe is at all something real. Buddhism does not care to define whether the Universe is a final, a definite, a real fact. It should not surprise us, therefore, that Buddhism does not care to pronounce an opinion whether man's body is inhabited by a soul or a spirit or anything else of this nature. It is even beyond Buddhism's concern to define whether - and if so in what form or shape -- Buddha has continued to exist after his death or on his entrance into nirvana.

EG_ - Above all, Buddhism does not accept that there is a God.

AVNER - How can Buddhism rate as a religion if it does not accept the existence of a God ?

EG_ - Buddhism has undoubtedly to be ranked as a religion even though it does not centre on a godhead. In addition, it is also a philosophy, a culture, and an ideology.

RINAT - In what way do they think of - make an approach to - what they surely must acknowledge as something undefinably Infinite ?

EG_ - The Buddhist has no problem in this regard. The Bhodisattva is to him the mediator between mankind and whatever he may accept as the Absolute.

CAROL - You must understand, that the basic philosophy of Buddhism makes the demand for a guideline form outside or from above unnecessary. It is totally inward directed. It preaches, that the ultimate objective of man's existence is for him to suppress all the useless desires he nourishes; for him to eliminate all the sources of his suffering; and for him to eradicate the causes of his ignorance.

EG_ - All this is contained in the saying of Buddha Gautama that "...all things are impermanent; all things are suffering and sorrow; all elements of being are non-self, are 'anatma'."

CAROL - Buddha, the Enlightened One, preached that we live in a world of suffering and illusion. Only Dharma, 'the right way of living' can free us from pain and suffering.

EG_ - And Buddhism, like Hinduism, is above all concerned with the effort required to have the eternally ongoing cycle of death and rebirth stopped. For - they both teach - once man has succeeded in

halting his further rebirths, he is assured of his final rebirth into the eternal bliss of nirvana.

CAROL - "Human existence is impermanent", warned the Buddha. For guidance he has offered his disciples the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Eightfold Path" which are rather complex and too time-consuming to recite here. I am sorry to disappoint you, should you have expected that I go into greater detail about these two sets of guidelines. To do so would require far too many evenings. In case you want to know more, study the relevant literature.

EG_ - There is also the complication, that every school of Buddhism has developed its own interpretations of both the 'Truths' and the 'Paths'.

CAROL - But still ! They explain the fundamentals of Buddhism. They are supposed to lead mankind to an indispensable and all-resolving insight, and finally to the cessation of all suffering. It will be of great interest for you to study them on your own.

EG_ - Another fundamental, specific and unique characteristic of Buddhism is their concept, that everything, but everything which exists, undergoes a constant change. What appears to us as a reality is in truth only a moment in a constantly changing process.

CAROL - "Even the 'I' which senses fear for not having a soul, is illusionary", said Buddha. Once they have finally and truly realized this fact, Buddha assured his followers, they will be relieved of fear, doubt, insecurity and pain. And the consequence will be, he promised them, "that all desires will be eliminated - and this, in its turn, will bring them enlightenment".

EG_ - Buddhism teaches, that birth and death are successive stages of the same enduring process. The humans' and all else's existences are an ongoing process of creation and destruction, of birth and death. The entire universe and all which exists therein, are constantly destroyed and reformd. Nothing remains the same from one moment to the other, be it a virus or the entire cosmos.

ASHER - This philosophy is very difficult to digest at the first swallow, I must confess. You are justified to say that a personal and prolonged study is necessary to gain even the beginning of a true understanding. I hope, the Buddha's teaching about morals and morality is less complicated.

CAROL - His teaching about morals can be expressed in simple terms. Whether an action is moral or not depends on the intention with which an action is undertaken, says the Buddha. An action undertaken with good intention leads to beneficial results. An action undertaken with

bad intention leads to bad results. Ergo: man should undertake everything he does with good intentions.

EG_ - You will find it easier to gain an insight in what we are telling you, if you realize that much of what the Buddha taught arose from his absolute refusal to accept all and everything which is based on, and is the outcome of, speculative thinking. A priori he mistrusted all ideas and arguments, all statements and rulings which are not based on experience. One's own Self is the best teacher, he preached. "Make your Self your refuge..", he once said.

CAROL - I must warn you, however, not to conclude from the words of Buddha you just now heard, that by speaking of the 'Self' he wanted to convey to his disciples that they possess a soul. When he spoke of 'The Self' he meant nothing more than a person's functioning being.

RABBI - In which way then does, in the buddhist view, this Self differ from a soul ?

EG_ - There is a subtle difference, even though on first sight the two may appear to hardly differ in substance and meaning. Let me simply say that in Buddhism the Self is not given the same metaphysical meaning as we do in our definition of the soul. I am sorry ! I know this sounds obscure. Perhaps you will understand what I want to say, if I define the Self in Buddhism's conception as part of the human being; as the innermost part of the human being. It is the centre of his intellectual activities. These activities of the Self are directed towards the human's perfection. But is not a characteristic which is common to all. It is not one which fits automatically every human being. In each person the Self possesses and retains its own identity, Buddhism maintains. That is to say, that the Self of one person is different from that of any other person.

RINAT - I remember having heard here from one of you, that the divine entity called Atman is this Self; is to be understood as the human soul; and that Brahman is to be taken as representing the 'world soul'. Am I right ?

EG_ - This is the view Hinduism has of the Self. Buddhism does not accept an autonomous Self in the sense of an eternally existing, unperishable, knowable, unchanging soul. Nowhere in Buddhist theology are Atman or Brahman understood in such a sense. Whenever Atman is mentioned, it is in the sense of illusion, of non-permanency.

CAROL - Still ! In a certain sense it is true that Atman is the Self. But in Buddhism the Self is viewed as being always in a transitory state. This means, it is impermanent and therefore not real. Atman disappears with every change in and of the personality. Logically all

this has in the end to mean, that Buddhism denies a permanently existing or surviving soul or Self.

EG_ - This is expressed in the buddhist concept of 'Anatman'. It means "no Atman". It is a specifically buddhist concept. Anatman is a basic factor in the Buddhist doctrine. It means in other words, that an Atman does not exist. Once an individual has completely and truly understood this to be the absolute truth - thus a Buddhist is taught - he is brought near the state of enlightenment.

CAROL - The teaching goes, that the fundamental knowledge of the Buddha's, the Enlightened One's, teaching is available in pure and untarnished form in and to all beings.

EG_ - The task is to discover it.

CAROL - It seems to me, that the Chinese and Japanese Buddhists who speak of a 'Buddha Mind' and of a 'Buddha Nature' - both of which play such an important part in China and Japan - have this doctrine in mind.

RINAT - I do not know to what you allude. What plays such an important part in Buddhist China? Is it their concept of the human soul? Could you, please, say a few words about the role the soul plays in the belief system of the Chinese?

CAROL - The soul, according to Chinese tradition, is formed the moment human life begins inside the uterus. At a later stage a celestial factor is added. Thus the soul is made up of two parts: the "Yin" and the "Yang". Yin is the receptive, consolidating female factor. Yang is the creative, active, expanding, constructive male factor. Another aspect of this concept which is particular to Chinese philosophy, is represented by "Ch'i": it is the cosmic energy which manages and animates the world.

EG_ - This sounds similar to what Jainism teaches: everything in nature - humans, animals, minerals, plants and trees - has a soul.

CAROL - There is, however, in Chinese doctrine an otherwise and elsewhere not known qualitative difference between one soul and another: the emperor's soul, for instance, is superior to that of a labourer; and the soul of a jade is better than that of a plain stone. Even political acts, books and artistic creations have souls, also in their case according to a value scale.

EG_ - I am sorry to interrupt you. Let us go back to what we discussed before. I am afraid you may have gained a wrong impression of what we said before. I want you to be clear in your mind, that the various principles I have described have not to make you conclude, that they contradict the basic doctrine of Buddhism which states that man

is **not** endowed with a soul. All and everything else derives from this fundamental doctrine. On one occasion Buddha made this very clear: "Whether Buddhas arise in this world or not, it always remains a fact that the constituent parts of a being are lacking a soul", he said.

RINAT - What then makes a person act and do, plan and fear? What, in other words, is making the individual tick?

CAROL - That a human being and his various parts are alive and functioning is due to their being activated by a 'Jiva'. But this Jiva should not be taken to mean a soul in the way we understand the soul. It is only thought of as an activating element. And in any case, it is not something permanent. It is not something which survives.

ASHER - What else, according to Buddhist creed, makes up the human being if not a soul? And if there is no soul, what else is transmitted after death? What else transmigrates in the course of the series of transmigrations? What else ends finally in Nirvana?

EG - I agree, that it is difficult to understand Buddha's saying that "there is nothing which transmigrates and yet there is rebirth". When Buddhism speaks of 'anatman' - that is to say that a permanent soul or Self does not exist - it means to convey, that what is visualized as the Self is nothing but a chain of sensations.

CAROL - There is another explanation for the 'substance' which survives; which is "left over"; and which is transmitted: it is man's karman. Karman may be called man's Self. It is loaded with man's thoughts and deeds. Karman is visualized as the moral aspect of one's being. It is the karman which is subjected to rebirths. No God and no gods have an influence on the decourse of man's fate.

RANIT - Let me repeat Asher's question: if there is no immortal soul; and if it is man's karman which represents the soul - in what shape and form then is the karman-soul transferred in the process of a reincarnation?

EG - In Buddhism rebirth does not imply that a substance-like soul is passed on. You may have less difficulty to comprehend this complex matter if you compare - as I have mentioned sometime before - that which is transferred in the reincarnation to an unsubstantial flame which is transmitted from one source to the other. This is a metaphor which Buddha himself has once used: when a person dies only a flame-like something is left, which lightens a flame in the next body it inhabits and so on - and when the flame reaches at last Nirvana it is extinguished forever.

CAROL - Or you may see one's karman, the moral aspect of one's being, as that which is reborn carrying in itself all the irregularities

and impurities it has acquired in the previous existences. And which, after having become totally cleansed from all the acquired irregularities - call them sins, if you like - is finally merged into Nirvana where it disappears for ever.

RINAT - Is it predestined how and where this equivalent of a soul is reborn ?

EG_ - I am not sure. Nor have I ever come across an explanation in my study of the relevant literature. However, I do not think the localization of the next rebirth is predestined. I could imagine that this process is regulated by one's karman itself. But it seems to me, that the process and localization of every reincarnation are somehow well organized. It is not an automatic, an eo ipso process. A "karmic soul" - Buddhist theology says - is exposed to the chance of having to pass - in descending order - through "gods, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and denizens of hell".

ASHER - I cannot understand how something like this can be taught. There must be a difference between being reborn in an animal or as a human being.

EG_ - Of course ! In Hinduism this is graduated according to merits; or better said, according to the degree of maturation and cleansing which the karman has reached. In buddhist thinking, on the other hand, the human soul is never reincarnated in an animal. Or let us better say, a human's soul is never **again** reincarnated in an animal. For only after that which counts as soul has reached a higher status of existence, has it been incarnated into a human being, and will henceforth be always reincarnated in a human being. That is to say, when a soul is reborn in a human being, it has already reached the highest possible stage of advancement, and is more or less ready to aim for the ultimate stage of enlightenment.

CAROL - However, there is still a very long way to go for that soul to advance from its incarnation in a human being to the final and sublime state of enlightenment. A person involved in the exigencies of a regular daily life has in his or her lifetime hardly a chance to achieve the stage where enlightenment is near. Only those who withdraw from life and avoid its temptations - and dedicate themselves exclusively to the observance of the Buddha dharma - can achieve enlightenment already in actual life. This kind of life is only possible to monks and nuns.

Six
~~Five~~
 TWENTY - ~~FOUR~~

AVNER - According to what we have learned last week of Hinduism and Buddhism - and what dawns on me is in the final analysis also applicable to us mortal beings here in this room - everything in the human existence, past, present and future depends on our karman.

RABBI - Based on my Seminar-Yeshiva studies I think I can reply to this in the affirmative. Belief in karman in one form or other has always been common to all religions in South Asia. It has undeniably had an impact also on most other religions. Karman is fundamentally a principle of justice: it provides man's soul with the opportunity to experience the inevitability of divine justice and judgement.

ASHER - Of course, most of us have heard of - and to some degree also read about - karman; but - speaking entirely for myself now - I have only a very vague idea what it is all about. What does karman exactly mean ?

EG - It means that one's actual situation on earth - and in life in general - is the outcome of the seeds planted by one's behaviour and disposition in past existences. It means also, that one's actual behaviour and disposition - that is all one does and does not do - will influence one's situation and position in future existences.

CAROL - Karman represents the principle, that a person's behaviour will inevitably bring about the appropriate reward or punishment.

RABBI - This, by the way, is not a principle which is underlined and accepted only in and by the religions of India and Asia. It is a world-wide accepted and understood concept.

EG - The word Karman, by the way, derives from the Sanskrit 'Kr', which means to act, to bring about, to create. Karman had originally a different meaning, namely the perfect execution of the rituals and sacrifices which the Brahmin priests had to perform every day in order to placate the gods. The gods would see in the slightest deviation from, or mistake in, the performance of the ritual an offense for themselves. And in punishment they would heap one disaster after the other on the community.

RINAT - How can a Hindu or Buddhist free himself from the load of his karman ?

EG - Many methods are available to them. The one taught originally

in the Upanishads advised, that one can free himself from one's karmanic oppression by breaking the chain reaction of one's samsara - of one's "Wheel of Life and Death" - with the help of certain clearly described rituals which only a Brahmin priest was allowed to perform. Another opportunity was the assiduous practice of Yoga. Another approach still was one's success in achieving a supreme degree of personal purity and perfection. But with the passing of the times these old precepts have been overtaken by modern ones. Nowadays karman has acquired the meaning of which you have already heard, viz:- that one's actual position in this world is due to the acts, deeds and dispositions which happened in past existences - and that all one's deeds, acts and dispositions in the present existence will determine one's status and position, one's pains or pleasures in future existences. In short: all the deeds and actions one performs, also the good ones, make up one's karman and will inevitably lead to rebirths.

CAROL - Each and everyone of a person's activities in life, as you may have understood by now, are liable to place a further load on his or her karman. But one has to appreciate that - according to the rules of the Hindu religion - this unmerciful scrutiny of one's deeds does not apply to the activities and deeds which one performs in the execution of one's profession, nor in line with the work and duty imposed by one's caste.

RINAT - Why not the latter ?

CAROL - Because the caste system is supposed to have been prescribed by the gods.

RABBI - Karman represents, in other words, cause and effect.

EQ - This is right. And it means, that in the end everything will inexorably and inevitable have an appropriate outcome.

RINT -and it means - thus I sincerely hope -that what is going on in the present will have an effect in the future.

AVNER - Am I entitled to interpret this to mean, that one has to be careful and, as much as one possibly can, avoid everything which appears risky - even to the degree of abstaining also from performing good works ?

RABBI - On the contrary ! This can impossibly be meant by either Hinduism or Buddhism, nor by any ethical religion whatsoever !

CAROL - And above all not in Buddhism, where it is clearly pointed out, that Moksa - liberation and access to Nirvana - can impossibly be achieved when one ceases all one's activities.

RINAT - Why so ?

CAROL - Moksa is only possible when one lives a life directed to

be an ethical individual; when one lives without desires; when one always acts with compassion; and when one does not wish to profit from one's good deeds. And, mark you well, good deeds are certain to improve one's karman in the course of one's lifetime by erasing whatever imperfections it harbours.

EG_ - Also in this respect does Buddhism differ from Hinduism. In the latter it is the status and prognosis of the Self which are determined by karmic factors. Life is seen as an unending, eternal, difficult series of sufferings. The degree of these sufferings is regulated by karman. It is on this basis that the soul is led from one existence to the other.

CAROL - In Buddhist view everything which happens - fate, fortune, luck - happens accidentally. Nothing of this is predestined. Nothing of this can be attributed to direct or indirect causes or conditions. The effect of a deed, of a thought, of what we call sin or guilt, on one's Karman depends on the intention or on the purpose with which one initiates an act; on the good or bad way in which one acts; on whether the deeds are performed by the body, or by the mind or by speech.

ASHER - All this sounds so very complicated. How and in which form or shape does the educated Indian - be he a Hindu or a Buddhist - view his Karman? As a spirit? Or does he visualizes it as an energy reaching him from outside?

EG_ - Karman is to the Hindu very real as a substantive, as an undestructable load. He is always conscious of this load which he carries in and on his Self. To the Buddhist, however, karman is not an undestructable, nor an independently existing, life form which determines his rebirth. It is the life process itself. It is the product and the outcome of all the life processes of all his past lives combined. Birth and death are intermezzos in an unendingly ongoing life process. A new life does not contain a past life; it is the seed, the fertilized ovum, in which already at the conception the totality of all the experiences of the cosmic past is contained.

CAROL - I would like to mention one more characteristic of karman. In Buddhism it is defined on moral grounds: that is to say by the way and in the manner one behaves.

EG_ - And in addition, one is not given the possibility to correct one's karmanic fate until all its acquired improprieties are removed.

RINAT - This can in no way be changed and corrected?

CAROL - One may alter the negative load carried by one's karman by repenting one's unethical deeds; by making it a habit to preach ethic principles at every opportunity; by endeavouring to do as many good

deeds as one possibly can; by having a monk or a nun or a relative chant holy verses on one's behalf; by a priest or a relative chanting holy verses after one's death.

EG - Let me again explain, that although each of a number of buddhist schools has defined for itself various and individual forms and outlines of Karman, they have all in common, that the inevitable effect one's actions and thoughts will have on one's karman may be altered by repentance and by the performance of good deeds - and this is easiest and most successfully achieved by turning into a monk or a nun.

RABBI - I have carefully listened to what you had to say about the view a Buddhist has of his rebirth and his karman. But I still think that his denial of a soul stands in contradiction to his view that nothing is stationary; that nothing remains unchanged in himself and in the world.

EG - On the contrary ! I do not find such a viewpoint incongruous. You must realize that a Buddhist sees the human being as a conglomerate of karmically determined factors. Although rebirth is to a Buddhist a reality, he does not see the need to associate this fact and such an event with the involvement of a soul.

CAROL - I must concede, that without a deeper study of the entire complex it is indeed difficult to accept such a principle. It is for this reason that karman is often described as some kind of a substance which can be transferred from one person to the other, or from one generation to the other.

EG - Something of this kind is taught by Jainism, a splinter religion of Hinduism which was formed some 2500 years ago. I had the good fortune to have a learned Jain explain his religion to me. Jainism teaches that man possesses a soul. The soul of man is by nature eternal, perfect, omniscient. The soul has to undergo endless trans-migrations during which the karmic load is constantly and inevitably increased by the human's desires, which are bound to constantly and inevitably corrupt the soul. The cosmic space is full of invisible karmic material - Jainism describes it as a kind of dust or liquid - and all the desires of a human being, his misdeeds and character faults, attract this 'karmic dust' to the soul. The karmic layers steadily grow and more and more imprison the soul within the body. And this soul, so heavily loaded with karman, makes a series of eternal incarnations necessary. The main, possibly only, chance to liberate the soul from all this load is by intense asceticism.

RABBI - How does a Jain imagine his soul to look ?

EG_ - To the Jain the soul is "Jiva", which means life. It is a pure, colourless, transparent energy. Everything in nature has a Jiva - humans, animals, stones, trees etc. Since eternity the universe has been filled with the karmic matter I have described. This matter tends to stick to one's jiva in relation to one's misdeeds, hatreds and so on. The amount and the density of the colour which the karman has in the course of time acquired, determine the conditions of the next rebirth. Everything can burden one's karman, even an unintentional act. Only by preventing and avoiding the dust-like ethereal additions to one's karman, and by reducing the existing one, can the soul be freed from further rebirths.

RABBI - This, to my mind, has been a very profitable evening - at least for me. For I have learned very much.

AVNER - Also for me it has been a elevating evening, for I learned that Buddhism - for all I know a large and spiritually respectable religious institution - does not accept the existence of a God.

RABBI - Is this the only affinity you have with Buddhism ?

AVNER - This is the point where my and their circles cross.

ASHER - You could have found a greater and nearer satisfaction in the verdict of the philosophers that God is dead. You could even have joined the raucous masses which clamour their right to destroy all belief in a Supreme Being.

RINAT - We have heard what in times past monotheistic scriptures had to say about God; what the philosophers think about God; and what the atheists miss in God. What about today ? Is God still there ? Does this mean - if he had existed in the past but is nowhere to be seen today - that he is dead now as I hear it claimed by so many enlightened people ?

RABBI - It is true that since Enlightenment, and more so in the last hundred years, this belief - or let us better call it this slogan - has greatly flourished.

AVNER - Has only Nietzsche had the courage to proclaim the demise of God ?

EG_ - As far as I know no other among the modern philosophers - and certainly none of the philosophers of past centuries - has lost his mind. I can only see a man's loss of mind and reason as the explanation for his making such an insane statement.

AVNER - I am not insane. I can certify that God died in Auschwitz. I, Avner standing before you, declare that I saw God die in Auschwitz. But I have to correct myself: in Auschwitz I thought I knew that God had died - and only later did I realize my mistake: there had never

been a God.

CAROL - You have become aware in Auschwitz of something which has been known since long. Atheism was born at the onset of the scientific age.

AVNER - Uninfluenced by scientific considerations I can state, that whatever ideas mankind had about God in the past, these have no place anymore in our times.

RABBI - I know that such negative ideas are fashionable today. I equally know, that they will pass in the same way as the Cult of Reason, which Enlightenment has born, has passed into oblivion. This cult as well your atheism are defective in their logic; and this makes it certain that they have to die themselves.

EG - I agree. They had no substance in truth and fact.

RABBI - The movement declaring God's demise has had less impact on Judaism, because those who doubt God, and those who do not mind seeing God killed, have since long detached themselves from Judaism and have merged into the current of assimilation.

AVNER - Not exactly, Rabbi. I realized in the Concentration Camp that God is dead or better said - as I have already mentioned - that there was no God, because I saw what God's creatures did to other God's creatures.

RABBI - I am surprised that this issue has induced someone like you to lose his usual coolness. I propose that we dedicate the coming meeting to check on the company and the followers Nietzsche may have created for himself.

CAROL - Let us not restrict the theme. Let us also discuss what the philosophers of modern age had to say about the issues we have talked about today. And let us not rigidly exclude other matters which may crop up - even those we have from time to time already discussed here.

T W E N T Y - S E V E N

RABBI - We have agreed to talk this evening about the position the philosophers have taken on the issues we have so far discussed among ourselves. With your agreement I shall endeavour in my review to stick only to the essentials. I promise you - as far as in my power - not to allow this evening's proceedings to turn into a colloquium with an ambitious program worthy of an assembly composed of weighty philosophers.

CAROL - You may remember, that we were led to this exercise by Nietzsche's grandiloquent statement that God is dead.

AVNER - What precisely did Nietzsche say ?

CAROL - Here is the way Nietzsche expressed himself on this matter: "God is dead. We have killed him, you and I. We are his murderers". And he continued to say that our scientific advances make "the idea of a great Overseer impracticable". People themselves will have to become God, he opined. A new Superman will arise, he predicted, who will destroy old values of Christianity and will bring about a new humanity.

AVNER - This does not sound too embarrassing !

RABBI - I am inclined to agree. Let us make now a quick survey of still less embarrassing pronouncements of the philosophical genre. We have at length already heard about Maimonides, Sa'dya, Yehuda Levi, Ibn Gabirol and others, whose ideas continue to be respected, although they are not always followed. Let us go back still further, far beyond the Renaissance Period to the cradle of philosophy, to Greece. From there we shall "work ourselves forward" into modern times. Doing so we shall spend some energy on an attempt to understand the influence the Enlightenment had on the philosophical world. We shall learn what some of the representative philosophers of this period - under the impact of both, the cultural and the social revolutions - have had to say.

CAROL - Of course, first of all Plato comes to mind. Rightly he may be called the leader among the early Greek philosophers. He expressed his philosophy in terms of reason. This made it possible for him to allow his ideas to be argued about - or to be confirmed - by bringing forth proof for or against his theses.

EG - I do not know if your statement fits the situation. The mythology he made use of may have been useful as a teaching approach; but it could not have been used as a reason, as a scientific proof.

CAROL - You are wrong. Mythology could in his times be used in reasoned arguments. Only later on, when the sciences had established themselves, Plato's arguments were accepted - I may go even further and say they were tolerated - with the proverbial grain of salt. Do not forget that he developed his philosophy for his own times and for his own people and for his own world. It is Plato's great merit - though it had not been his primary aim - that to this day his philosophy is honoured and admired. One of the reasons for the respect he enjoyed then and the admiration he continues to enjoy still, is in my opinion his success in making his world believe, that the individual who lives a virtuous life can become divine.

RABBI - He was not unique in this respect, for also the Stoics believed this.

EG_ - I would not be surprised, should it turn out that the Stoics have loaned this concept from Buddhism.

CAROL - I do not consider this impossible. They lived around the same time and such kind of reciprocal influence is an established fact.

RINAT - Does also the Bible show such an influence ?

CAROL - If you try, look and search you may find evidence of such an influence. But do not overlook that fundamentally there was a profound difference between the biblical and hellenistic worlds. In principle we can say, that in the Bible man is the image of God, while in greek philosophy man is the microcosm.

RABBI - Indeed, the God of the greek philosophers differs greatly from the revealed God of the monotheisms. According to Aristotle and Plotinus God does not interfere in what goes on in the world. God does not even play a role on Judgement Day.

AVNER - But you taught us, that also the jewish God does not get involved in the goings-on of the world; and that our free will reigns supreme.

RABBI - What I stated does not contradict what you said. This is clearly stated in the 'Ethics of the Fathers': "Everything is foreseen, yet free will is granted. The world is ruled with divine goodness. Yet all is according to a person's performance".

CAROL - It is of interest to us, that Plato pronounced himself also about our souls. There is a rational and immortal part of the soul, he maintained, along with an irrational and mortal part. The rational and immortal part is undividable, while the irrational and mortal part of the soul is divided into the noble part of the passions and the less noble one of the evil thoughts.

EG_ - And he claimed for himself and his colleagues a preferential

position: philosophers - he judged - belong to a privileged class and have not to undergo reincarnations. They go straight to the Absolute.

RABBI - Great though the influence of Plato's teaching may have been on the religious developments of the West - mainly due to the Neo-Platonians - Aristotle has, in my judgement, left a deeper footprint on the development of the monotheisms.

CAROL - Your evaluation may be justified. Aristotle too came to the conclusion, that God is not involved in anything which goes on here on earth. Whereas God is the prime reason, he reasoned, God's acts of reason could only be directed on himself; and he alone could be the subject and object of his thoughts. He could certainly not care for lesser realities - which means that God could not be involved in anything which goes on in this world of ours.

RABBI - And he further concluded, that whereas man's soul is pure intellect, he is akin to God.

CAROL - And he said that man's body in association with his soul represent a microcosm of the universe.

RABBI - But Aristotle did not ask, how the cosmos, the universe, was created. He only cared to discuss how it functions.

EGO - Aristotle had no doubt - as he clearly stated - that God exists. And he concluded, that this is all we know and need to know.

RABBI - The greek philosophers had the great advantage, that their God - the God of their philosophy - could be understood by reason and could be approached by reason. The jewish God, on the other hand, who had revealed himself on occasion, could not be approached with reason or logic. He could only be met through faith.

EG - I have recently studied some of the philosophers, and I must gratefully acknowledge, that what I have learned here in our conversation evenings has greatly increased my knowledge and understanding. I could discover and realize in these last few weeks, that in the past - and throughout all the ages - greek, hindu, buddhist and western theologians and philosophers have pursued the study of these very same problems we have aired here among us. And I was greatly surprised - nay I must confess that I was pleased - to find that they have brought forth in me ideas and concepts which coincide with my own philosophy of life - that is to say, those ideas which I have presented to you in the course of the weeks as my hypotheses. While I am in myself certain, that my hypotheses, my theories, my ideas are children of my own mind, I cannot, of course, exclude that I may have harboured in my subconscious some memory of what I have read in the works of these ancient thinkers.

RABBI - The glimpse we have gained so far of the greek philosophies

should suffice, I think. This will compliment what we have learned on previous occasions when we discussed other issues. We have also heard already what the medieval thinkers - Maimonides, Sa'adya, Ibn Gabirol etc - had to offer. I propose, therefore, we turn now to the men of the Renaissance period and hear what they have to tell us.

CAROL - I have prepared some notes. The effect of the 15th century Renaissance was, that the West took up now - more or less for the first time in its history, if you exclude the effect the Roman Empire had on the cultural life of its time - an important place in the cultural life of the then known world. However, it was only with the evolution of the Enlightenment Period that the western civilization gained its proper place in the cultural and scientific arena which until then had been dominated by Islam. Great changes took place in the role which religion was to play, especially in the christian perception of God and man. Also science and technique influenced man's perception of the position of religion and God. For the first time in history, I may say, had secularism become an acceptable attitude to religion.

RABBI - And it was now no more heretical - even though not accepted in all circumstances and in every place - to make one's own divergent opinion publicly known.

EG_ - I think, Baruch Spinoza is in this respect a suitable example, as he had to confront a rigidified orthodox jewish world which was in constant fear that the slightest deviation from traditional Judaism might endanger what they had, under great dangers and deprivations, until then and so strenuously preserved.

AVNER - What about Spinoza ?

EG_ - Baruch Spinoza, who lived in the 17th century and died at the early age of 45, discontinued his Talmud studies and turned into what is today called a 'Freethinker'. He published his thoughts and ideas - with the result that the jewish-religious leadership excluded him from the jewish community and pronounced a ban on him.

AVNER - What, in a sentence, did Spinoza say ?

EG_ - Spinoza wrote, that the name of God is given to a multiplicity of things; that God is the universe - and the universe is God.

RABBI - He did not believe in the God of the Bible. There is no God of the kind and nature as described in scriptures or by philosophers, he wrote. The world is ruled by immutable laws. All which exists is governed by these laws.

EG_ - God is a material being, identical with the order which governs the Universe, Spinoza maintained. God is inherent and immanent in all things. There is no need of Torah or Nature.

CAROL - The only modern-age philosopher of whom I know to have followed Spinoza's line regarding the Bible, was Moses Mendelsohn. True understanding of what religion represents, he preached, develops in the mind of man. It is not due to a revelation. The belief in One God is the natural effect of reasoning. It is not the result of a revelation. These ideas led Mendelsohn to the conclusion, that Judaism is not a revealed religion but a revealed series of laws.

RABBI - Who wants to continue this thread, by telling us something of the philosophers who lived and wrote around the Enlightenment ? What about Descartes ?

ASHER - Of "cogito ergo sum" fame ?

CAROL - Yes, the one who preferred to call himself Cartesius, and of whom every school boy knows. He was more positively inclined than Spinoza. He said that the doubter's doubt proves his own existence - and human consciousness is, therefore, proof of God's existence. In other words: the experience we gain by our doubting can also be adduced as proof for God's existence. God has to be a perfect being, he wrote. Religion can be of value without the addition of mysticism and without a belief in miracles.

EG - Cartesius was a deist. He maintained that God does not take any interest in what goes on here on earth.

CAROL - He also tried to prove the events described in the Bible by scientific means.

RABBI - The period we have just now talked about - the end of the 18th century - saw the Deists come to the surface. They were particularly strong in England.

CAROL - And they were also strong in antisemitism.

RABBI - The Deists attacked the monotheism born of revealed religion on which the ruling religion in England was based. This made them not only turn against the established Church, but this was also one of the arguments in their antisemitic weaponry. They propagated a natural religion without any form of mysticism or any kind of miracles.

EG - I read in the Encyclopedia Britannica that the Deists saw themselves as followers of the Cartesian logic.

RABBI - It is impressive to see to what degree the Deists were impelled to prove their ideas by attacking the Jews. The notes I have in front of me will serve as an example: the english scientist-theologian John Spencer - of whom mention has once been made here - wrote around 1685, that 'the 'Hebrei are a populus barbarus'. Monotheism is not the result of a revelation the Jews had been granted, but is the natural religion of primitive people. Whatever there is of morality in the jewish

religion, has been copied from the Greeks. Whatever sophistication the Jewish people may have possessed, they had acquired during their sojourn in Egypt. Their brutal and restrictive religion has been imposed on them for their disobedience to the laws of morality.

CAROL - You may in general and without exaggeration say, that in the 18th century the Jews were accused of the most atrocious crimes. They were accused of being an amoral people; of having in their Temple sacrificed in biblical times not only animals but also human beings; of hating all non-Jews; of thinking themselves superior to all other peoples. They accused Jewish morality of being dishonest in nature. The only possibility the Jews have to be accepted in decent society is by totally renouncing their religion and all its stands for.

EG - And indeed many among the assimilating Jewish intelligentsia followed their advice. They called themselves followers of the 'mosaic religion' and ostentatiously acted against all possible Jewish ritual and dietary laws.

RABBI - They were soon to be disappointed. When this atrocious anti-Jewish campaign of the Deists in England began to die down, their colleagues in France, and especially those in Germany, took over. I have the impression that these used the Jewish religion - and inevitably also the Jewish people - mainly to attack the Christian religion. In France Voltaire played a leading role. He finally was impelled to resign because it was in his opinion impossible to change the Jewish 'bad traits'. It would be best, he concluded, to suffer them in the way one has to suffer any of the other existing religious groups.

RABBI - Such a discussion as ours today will not be complete were we not to include G.W.Hegel who lived at the turn of the 18th century - and philosophized under the impact of the Enlightenment. He and Kant blamed Judaism for all which is wrong with religion. The religious philosophy Hegel created was greatly influenced by the Kabbala. However, this did not prevent him from being an outspoken antisemite. He labelled the Jewish God a tyrant. Jesus had set out to liberate the world from this tyrant, but he failed. Christianity adopted instead this tyrant God of the Bible. Hegel rounded up his philosophy with the declaration that Spirit and not God rules our world.

RINAT - Why had the German philosophers to be antisemites ?

RABBI - They were not isolated in this respect. They had the company of English and French philosophers and Deists.

EG - Allow me to complete the list of the German philosophers who supported their philosophies with attacks against Judaism. The German Schopenhauer was no less an enemy of the Jews. There is no God, he

proclaimed, no Absolute Being; there is only man's brute, crude and instinctive will to live. He agreed with Solomon's verdict of "vanitas vanitatum". He agreed also with the Buddhists, that everything is nothing but an illusion.

EG_ - And what about Blake who was a contemporary of the philosophers you have mentioned ?

RABBI - Blake followed the gnostic-kabbalistic line with which you are already familiar. The human race has fallen from grace, he wrote. God has been made to fall into this world and has become incarnate in this world of ours. God died for man. He died in the person of Jesus. God turned also into an enemy of mankind in the shape of Satan. Had God not died for man, mankind could not have continued to exist.

CAROL - You can well imagine that this kind of writing made him unacceptable to the Church establishment with whom he lived in a constant feud.

EG_ - Similar to Blake the German philosopher Schleiermacher's ideas leaned very much on the Kabbala. 'God-Spirit the Infinite' and mankind are two halves of the same Absolute Being. I like his insistence that dogmas should never have been promulgated, because they are in no way divinely established facts. Religion, Schleiermacher wrote, is in essence the dependence we feel, and the awe and reverence we experience, when we contemplate the mysteries of life. And, in his view, our religious emotions are of course not compatible with reason.

RABBI - Newton, the famous physicist, was to a no less degree also a philosopher. When he was asked, why the planets and other celestial bodies are kept at a distance and do not collapse into each other, he agreed with the questioners that this was due to the law of gravity. "But", he added, "the gravity principle presupposes a Great Spirit, a Divine Overseer, and Intelligent Agent".

EG_ - Excellent ! I hear this for the first time. Newton's words fully agree with what I am thinking !

AVNER - Would you admit Karl Marx among the philosophers of our time ?

RABBI - I would hardly accept him as such - but there are many who think that Marxism has to be counted as a religion. I am not impressed by Marx's dictum that religion is "the sigh of the oppressed people....is the opium of the people by which their suffering is made tolerable".

RINAT - And what about Freud ?

RABBI - Allright, my friends, let us make a big jump of a century or two. Nobody will deny that Freud was an important innovator in his own field. But he has also been called a very complex neurotic - and

I cannot but agree with this label. Still, we have to acknowledge that his theories have made a great impact on our times. God does not exist, Freud said. God is a trick of the subconscious, he said. With his deep furrowing psychology he aimed to explain, that a personal God is nothing more than a father figure - and that God exists only in man's psychopathological world of thoughts. God had been a necessary institution at the time mankind developed, but is superfluous today. Freud's own unresolved complex was, that he searched to place science ahead of everything, using as an excuse, that science does not deal in illusions.

ASHER - And what about Jung ?

RABBI - C.G.Jung had the opposite opinion: God is the personally experienced truth of every individual. God is a reality, he wrote.

CAROL - I have read some of the works of the Jesuit P.Tailhardt de Chardin, and was impressed. He had concluded from his studies of pre-historic life, that the world's and mankind's ongoing evolution to ever higher levels cannot but have been caused by a directing divine force. The universe is proof of God who is immanent and incarnate in the world. God is love, he wrote. Evolution is evidence of God's love.

RABBI - What a contrast with his countryman Jean-Paul Sartre, who called religion "the ability to think of what is not". Only humans, he discovered, have the ability to imagine as possible something which does not exist.

CAROL - Have you an opinion about Herman Cohen who lived into our century ?

RABBI - He is generally not considered an important philosopher of Judaism.

CAROL - I have formed quite a good opinion of this man though I do not the in the slightest agree with him. He thought, that God was nothing more than an idea which the human mind had formed; that God was nothing more than an ethical ideal.

EG - A discussion as ours today is not complete without paying due respect to Martin Buber. He has left a deep impression on the mind of people - and not only on that of Jews. I was especially and deeply impressed when I discovered, that his teaching can serve as confirmation of my hypothesis that we are constantly tested. Religion is essentially an encounter of man with the personal God, he taught. God was never a lawgiver. God never tells us what to do. We have to find out on our own and by ourselves what God wants us to do. God is always present. In the I-thou encounter with God we have the freedom to act. The mitzvot are important for our own equilibrium and felicity.

RABBI - You should also mention that, though a rationalist, Buber

found Luria's - that is the Zohar's - myth of the sparks acceptable and illuminating.

EG_ - I was impressed by Buber's dictum that, though it is true that man has spoiled, even defaced God, we can in this fact visualize that which we wish to think of God.

RABBI - We should not omit to mention Franz Rosenzweig, who would have been one of our leading minds had he not died at a young age. He started life as an agnostic and turned later to orthodoxy. Religion offers a meeting with the divine, he wrote. Each of us should consider himself an isolated being without contact with the world. Only when God takes us into his care shall we become valuable beings - and conscious of our being. Through obedience to the Commandments - which are obviously to be taken as symbolic - we shall in time become conscious of the Absolute.

EG_ - I cannot help my impression, that the philosophers of religion of the 20th century try to find a form which has no form; that they try to give God a place in our world only with the intention to prove, that God has no place therein. Our modern philosophers of religion paint a world in which God has at the most a place in the ongoing evolutionary process. At best they grant that God is somehow present everywhere - but by no means do they mean pantheism with this.

RABBI - Allow me to enlarge on this. The trend prevails today to exclude a personal God. An exception are the mystics who describe a God they know by their mystic experience.

RINAT - This means that everybody has to find his own way how to form for himself the God he understands - and who understands him ?

RABBI - But you must beware of illusion and imagination and fantasy. Wait for that necessary resonance within yourself which will confirm that you have found the right approach.

EG_ - And beware also of the mystic approach. In order too reach God by the mystic path, you must have the right knowledge, much patience, enough experience and the proper guidance. The mystic approach - more than any other - demands intelligence, diligence and patience.

RABBI - And finally let me say that modern Jews should endeavour to have a higher, a more sophisticated view of God. Don't look for God in nature but beyond nature. Once you have succeeded in this, you will surely find satisfaction in the realization that Judaism is an ethical religion. Do not worry about revelation from above, but seek revelation to be born within yourself.

EG_ -and you will find God as an ethical God within yourself.

T W E N T Y - E I G H T

AVNER - May we, in order to complete the review of last week, also hear about the way the Christians see their God ? How they perceive their duties towards their God ? And what they consider their christian duties towards mankind ? This may at last enlighten me, how they could behave as they did in the Concentration Camps.

RABBI - I shall try to give you a compacted picture. Christianity started with the same view of God as Judaism, viz:- that he was the father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that he had entered a covenant with the Patriarchs and their descendants. You must take into account that the early Christians were Jews; that Jesus was a Jew; that he felt, acted and behaved like a Jew; that his followers considered themselves Jews, even though they may have agreed to be seen as a newly formed sect in Judaism.

CAROL - Modern research believes to have proof that Jesus belonged to the sect of Essenes.

RABBI - I read about this, but the deductions of these researchers are not based on sound facts. It is far more acceptable that Jesus had been a Pharisee.

ASHER - Even this is most unlikely, because a Pharisee could not have said the things Jesus said and which are reported in the New Testament as having been said by him.

RABBI - You better say "...which he is supposed to have said". The first of the Gospels were written a generation or more after Jesus' death; the other two even much later. They report what Jesus is supposed to have said. But nobody wrote down what Jesus said at the time he lived and spoke. And it can be safely presumed, that what the Gospels tell Jesus to have said, Jesus could impossibly have said. However, all becomes clear if we realize, that the New Testament - which by the way came into being only some 300 years after Jesus' death - are meant as a study, as propaganda material, as a teaching basis and as instructive material in the pursuance of the ensuing christian missionary activities.

RINAT - The Christians claim that Jesus is the son of God, that he is the Messiah and so on. And, what is impressive - and which has persuaded many Jews - is their proclaimed assurance, that Jesus' claims are clearly predicted in jewish Scriptures.

RABBI - Of course, all the Christians' claims would fail, were

they not loaded with proof from passages in our Scriptures. But what are these scriptural texts ? Most often cited is Isaya 53, which is certainly meant as a symbolic picture of Israel's suffering. And another passage where a young woman is mentioned as bearing a child. But such vague wordings and their wrong translations well suit the Church's argumentation. Also Jeremiah's prediction that "...the days are coming - it is God who speaks - when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel...." has been enrolled as proof, although it has a totally symbolic meaning only.

EG_ - It is possible to see that over the decades the propagandists - and every member of the jewish-christian sect, while endeavouring to defend his belief was bent on proselytizing - added more and more material and ever new episodes which in retrospect were made to appear as mystical explanations of natural events.

RABBI - There came the time when a clear separation between Jews of Jerusalem and the early Christian became inevitable, mainly because the Christians wanted to avoid being further identified with the Jews. The main reason for this more political than ideological step was the fact, that the Jews were in ever greater trouble with the Roman Empire.

This was the time, when the Christian doctrine was born that God had decided to write a New Covenant through the mission Jesus had been made to undertake in the world. May this suffice. I do not want at this stage to go further into details about the scission between the new Christians, the jewish Christians and the Jews.

EG_ - A very important point to be stressed is the Church's stand, that whatever Jesus did or said has been done and said in the name of God - nay, that it was God himself who had done or said it.

AVNER - God is the father and Jesus his son, they say.

RABBI - They say even more. The christian God is the father not only of mankind but specifically and literally also of Jesus. God is practically and technically the father who has "begotten" Jesus. From the moment God raised Jesus from the dead, God and Jesus became one. But it would be wrong of you to conclude, that Jesus has replaced God. He has not. God retains his power and glory - but he may share his power and glory with Jesus. It is the accepted christian belief, that in this association Jesus is easier approachable than God.

RINAT - What of God himself ? What of his relation to man ?

RABBI - God was in Jesus, acted through Jesus, spoke through Jesus. It is a basic principle in Christianity, that God can enter a living person. This is unknown in Judaism. We believe that God is always near - but also at the same time distant; that he is separate from - but never

in man.

AVNER - It was interesting to hear, that the christian God is easier approached than the jewish God. But would you maintain that this fact has had any effect on the Christians' morals ?

RABBI - It is not right for you and me to generalize.

AVNER - Then let me formulate my question differently: do you want to say, that the moral state of society has improved since Christianity ruled the stage ?

RABBI - In my wildest optimism and in my most courageous optimism would I ever dare to say something like this.

RINAT - Let me formulate this very same question in a still more different shape: how do you explain the Church's ages-old hostility to the Jews ? And what do you see as the reason for her actual negative attitude to the State of Israel ?

RABBI - It is impossible to explain this hostility with logic or reason.

AVNER - It has shaken me to the roots of my newly-born optimism; and it has shaken the totality of my newly acquired Jewishness, when soon after my liberation from the Camp I was made to read what the Pope had said to Theodor Herzl about the Jews return to Jerusalem.

RABBI - Let me recite to the others what Pope Pius X said to Theodor Herzl in 1904: "We cannot prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem, but we can never encourage them....**The Jews have not recognized our Lord; therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish People**".

AVNER - The Pope, the Cardinals and the Bishops must have had the same explanation ready when they kept silent at the time Hitler tried to destroy the jewish people.

CAROL - The christian leadership - and through them the masses - may well have done so in their hearts, in order to silence whatever feeling of remorse might have arisen in them.....

RINAT - Will the Pope and his people be made to repent one day ? And if they do, will they say so aloud ?

RABBI - Let us pray and hope that this will come to pass.

AVNER - In the meantime they go on unconcertedly with their chants and prayers, their genuflexions and their sermonizing.

CAROL - This is what Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran Minister, preached at the time the Nazis were in power: "Only if you cry for the Jews are you permitted to sing Georgian chants".

RABBI - Let us not deviate from our main theme. We may at a later time talk about the Church's antisemitic involvement.

CAROL - I agree. We had been talking of the concept the Christians

have of God. I remember that in my schooldays children had to declare in their recitation of the catholic catechism, that "God is the Supreme Spirit who alone exists as of himself and is infinite in all perfections".

EG_ - But Christians see more of a God in Jesus than in God himself.

RABBI - This is true.

RINAT - This is a dogma, I suppose. But what in reality is a dogma, and what a kerigma ?

RABBI - A dogma - I once memorized this definition - is "the deeper meaning of a biblical truth which can only be expressed by symbols, and understood in form of a religious experience". A kerygma represents the Church's teaching based on the Bible.

EG_ - About the god-being of Jesus: I have read the gospels and did not in any of them learn that Jesus has claimed to be divine.

RABBI - Your are right. In Jesus' time, nor in the generation following his death, did anybody ever think or speak of his divinity. This is the reason, why nothing regarding Jesus representing a divine figure can have been mentioned in the earliest gospel, that of Mark, which was written around the year 70, which is about 40 years after Jesus' death. It was the Apostle John, the author of the 4th Gospel, who was the first to imply this. "In the beginning was the word - the logos", he wrote, "and the word was with God and the word was God".

RINAT - What about "logos" ?

RABBI - In greek it means "word", but in the context of John's writing it has not to be taken in its literal sense. Here it has the meaning of wisdom and intellect - and these two appellates represented in greek thinking the supreme characteristics of the divine. In the context of what I have just now quoted, Jesus is the logos, and the quotation has to be understood - as John certainly intended it to be understood - as meaning, that Jesus is God's incarnation.

EG_ - What John, and after him the Official Church, have made of Jesus would certainly have been against Jesus' will. For at no time has he ever claimed to be God's son or to be otherwise divine. This must have been a distortion of the true Jesus figure.

RABBI - I agree. It does not fit the historical figure of Jesus. He was a Pharisee - if not an Essene, as you have already heard - and as such he could not even have thought of figuring as a divine entity.

EG_ - How come that in the Matthew gospel Jesus is cited as having cursed the Pharisees ?

RABBI - This cannot but have been a purposeful distortion. Jesus could impossibly have cursed the Pharisees. But in the days when Matthew composed his gospel - most likely in or around the year the 80 - the

political differences to which I have already hinted, had greatly grown between Jews and Christians. In addition, by that time the Second Temple had already been destroyed; the Romans ruled the country with an iron hand; and the Christians strove to distantiate themselves from the Jews who had been branded the enemies of the Roman Empire.

EG - All this must have been the work of Paulus.

RABBI - He did indeed contribute his share. You are not going wrong if you maintain, that it had been Saint Paul who laid the foundations of Christendom. However, although to all practical purposes it had been Paulus who laid the foundation stones of the Church; and although it is he who made Jesus into a divine person - he thought, reasoned and acted in this and all other respects as a Jew. He never forgot, I mean to say, that he was a Jew. He never acted against the basics of Judaism. Nowhere in his writings will you find that he ever called the Jews 'a devil's breed', as John enjoyed doing. Nor did he - nor could he - ever curse the Pharisees. I cannot avoid the impression that he himself must have been one of these.

EG - Neither is mention made, anywhere in the gospels, of Jesus' supposed claim, that he had come to atone for mankind's sin. It must have been Paulus too, who was responsible for the introduction of such a statement.

RABBI - You cannot win an argument with Paulus. He too thought himself entitled to talk in the name of God when he said - and whenever he acted - that "...God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom; and God's weakness is stronger than man's strength".

EG - The Church succeeded in making well and firmly stick the dogma of Jesus representing a divine figure.

RABBI - This is a fact, although it took centuries before it had become an ingrained fact. But it had not been plain sailing all the time. Again and again voices were raised in contradiction. For instance, there is the famous case of Bishop Arius of Alexandria, who lived in the 4th century. He was condemned as a heretic, because he maintained, that without the slightest doubt God was the only unbegotten God; the only eternal God; the only God without a beginning; the only true God; the only immortal God; the only wise God; the only good God; the only powerful God - but that Jesus himself was none of this. Jesus was only a human being, Arius preached. It is true, he conceded, that Jesus was the "logos"; and whereas God had created the logos, Jesus must have been different from other creatures - but he still was not a God. In all he said Arius contradicted John, who had taken it upon himself to determine that the "logos is God". God may have made Jesus divine, Arius

later on made a further concession, but Jesus was still not God.

EG_ - Is it not strange that Luther did not entirely agree with Arius' view ?

CAROL - Luther had his own definite views about God. It was his conviction that God can only be found in the Jesus who had suffered on the Cross. It appears, that Luther has never changed his opinion about the biblical God, whom he had once called an angry God. Neither did Luther ever change his view that only God could save man - and never man himself by his own efforts.

ASHER - The Church speaks of God's "only-born-son". When was the later supposed to have been begotten and born ?

RABBI - I do not know how the Church would answer your question. I suppose the "son" is supposed to have existed since ever.

EG_ - He may possibly have been created - that is begotten and born - at the time the world was created.

AVNER - Let me confess, that all you have told us so far has not given me any better understanding of what the Christians believe to mean with their God in form of a Trinity.

EG_ - With 'Trinty' is meant the belief, that the Godhead is made up of three persons or personalities.

CAROL - The principle of a trinitarian Godhead is also elsewhere known apart from Christianity. In Hinduism it is perceived as the Brahman-Shiva-Vishnu group; and in ancient Egypt it was the trio Osiris-Isis-Horus.

RABBI - Let me correct both of you. You have gained the wrong impression. Trinity is not meant to represent three separate persons or personalities. Nor does it mean three separate gods. The Trinity - although made up of God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit - is not meant to represent God as a tripartite Being. In christian doctrine it is God's intention to make his essence comprehensible to mankind by making himself known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

RINAT - What about the Holy Spirit.

RABBI - You will easier comprehend the significance and meaning of the 'Holy Ghost' if you compare it to the Shekhina.

EG_ - Or better, in the way Judaism perceives the Shekhina as God's glory.

RABBI - Paulus perceived the Holy Spirit as the manifestation of God's activities. However, it must be said that the Holy Ghost has never occupied the same rung on the divinity-value-scale as the other two parts of the Trinity.

CAROL - St. Augustine's definition may possibly make this question

easier understandable to you. He said, that the Holy Spirit is the "principle of unity" between Fater and Son.

CAROL - Something similar I read the other day in an essay which maintains, that in the 9th century - that is at the time of Charlemagne - God and Son were granted equal status while the Holy Spirit was said to emanate from both of them.

EG_ - I remember having heard somewhere of suggestion - partly in form of an accusation - that the Zohar's three highest Sephiroth Keter and Bina and Chochma, which represent the Logos, the Intellect and the Wisdom - are equally meant to be taken as a divine Trinity.

RABBI - This is nonsense. Alas, nobody likes to speculate - and fantasize - more than our theologians. In addition you must remember, that the number 'three' is much beloved in theology, mythology and psychology.

ASHER - I must say, I admire the Christians who not only can understand such a complicated theology; who can comprehend all which this implies; and who can also in full faith accept all this.

CAROL - It is and was never an easy sailing. It is a fact, that the concept of the Trinity has not only in our modern "enlightened" times made many Christians uneasy, but also in times past.

EG_ - However, only since the 18th century - that is to say since society has come under the impact of the Enlightenment - could Christians dare to refute as inappropriate the concept of the Trinity; could they reject mysticism in general; could they declare 'Rationality' their guideline; could they pronounce themselves atheists. They could dare to do all this without endangering their life, or at least without having to face the punishment which the Church and the State had in the past thought appropriate for such heresy.

RABBI - Since then, and under the influence of the newly arisen reformatory trends in Christianity, the Unitarians, the Quakers, the Methodists began to address God directly as a single God, as the One God.

ASHHER - Apropos the Holy Spirit ! Apropos the holiness of the Shekhina ! We have already learned from you about the Shekhina itself. What now about the principle of "Holiness" itself, as Judaism perceives it ?

RABBI - Holiness means an exclusive otherness with relation to man's perception of God.

EG_ - It is the total otherness of God. It is the separation of the divine from the profane.

RABBI - For example: the Shabath is different from other days. It

is set apart from other days. It is holy. In the Kiddush, sanctifying the Shabath with wine, we declare the day different from, and set apart from, all the other days of the week.

RINAT - To my mind the holiness of the Shabath is most impressive from a sociological point of view. It was made holy, different from the other days in the week, at a time when the farmers and artisans had not the leisure during the week to collect themselves; to think of anything else than their animals and their land, their tools and their daily bread. In this sense it was an ideal arrangement to make the Shabath a holy day.

ASHER - But, "in this sense", the Shabath has no meaning anymore today for the majority of Jews and for mankind in general. However, for independently thinking people - for those of us who view tradition with a rational mind - the Shabath is today a day of relaxation or contemplation according to the individual Jew's taste and inclination.

RABBI - I shall go further and point out, that not only God and the Shabath are holy, but the entire Jewish nation. "...you shall be to me a holy people", said God. I wish we Jews in our actions and in our behaviour will never forget the implication of this appointment to holiness.

AVNER - Also Jerusalem is holy - and not only to religious people. And not only to Jews. I hope the Jews and the world will never forget this either.

RABBI - Let me add a wise word of Rudolph Otto: "when man is faced with the Holy, the Transcendence, he realizes that he is not the kingpin of the Creation".

RINAT - The evening has not yet too far advanced. This gives me the courage to ask a question. A short while ago the words "mysticism" and "Sephiroth" were mentioned by someone. May I ask you, Rabbi, for some additional explanatory words about mysticism in Judaism, and possibly also about the Kabbala and the Zohar ?

RABBI - I confess that I have no deeper knowledge in this respect. I tried once, and over an extended time, to take up the study of the Kabbala - but had to give up, because I realized that the warning of the Rabbis against studying the mystic writings without the guidance of a master properly initiated and well versed in this matter, was a possible danger to the mental health of the student.

RINAT - We do not want to hear from you more than some introductory remarks.

RABBI - The Kabbala was brought about by a growing longing for a

mystic involvement which had made itself manifest in the 12th century. The Kabbala is principally a theosophical understanding of God as he appears in our actual world. A number of schools developed out of this original mystic institution. Each of these made its own contribution. One of these schools, established in Spain, produced the Zohar. The Zohar, "The Book of Splendour", is the most important part of the Kabbala. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, the spanish kabbalists settled in various other places. In nearby Safed they established one such school. This school developed into the most important kabbalistic centre.

RINAT - I thought the Zohar was much older; that it had been revealed to and by Shimon ben Yochai.

CAROL - The Zohar was not composed by Rabbi Shimeon ben Yochai in the second century.

RABBI - The Zohar was and is accepted and granted great respect by the Kabbalists. It is written in aramaic. The Zohar is mainly made up of interpretations of the T'nach. It tries, with the help of mostly anthropomorphic images and sexual symbols to create a picture of God. It tries also to produce in the devotee a mystic experience of God through a continued recitation of God's name.

CAROL - You must add, that Sufism and Yoga had a great influence on the formation of the Kabbala.

RABBI - The Zohar makes a distinction between God as he is in himself, and God as he manifests himself. God is the Ein Sof - the Unlimited, the Endless One - from whom ten emanations emit. These are the "Sephiroth". They are the aspects and potentialities of the Godhead. No definition of the Ein Sof is possible. In the ten Sephiroth male and female principles are represented, For instance Tifereth, the beauty, and Malkuth, the power, are female principles. The latter may possibly also mean the Shekhina.

EG_ - The Kabbala applied gnostic and neo-platonic principles to its perception of God. Although God appears in his Creation, God in his essence is unknown, incomprehensible. He is unknown to such a degree, that he is not even mentioned in the T'nach and the Talmud. He has no name. The biblical God is not a person.

CAROL - This is not far from the belief of the Sufis.

EG_ - God made himself known to the Jewish people in the Sephiroth, the Kabbala says. Every verse in the Torah - every word even - refers to one of the Sephiroth.

RABBI - A new wave of mysticism became manifest in the 16th century. It was brought on - as has already been mentioned - by the disastrous

persecutions the Jews of Europe had to suffer, especially in Spain, at the hand of the Church. The Spanish mystics Joself Karo, Solomon Alkabez and Isaac Luria settled in Safed and brought on a revival of mystic Judaism. Luria - he lived from 1534 till 1572 - collected the various commentaries, reinterpreted them, and filled with his writing the vacuum in the knowledge of the Kabbala which the persecutions had left. In particular he explained, how it was possible for a perfect and infinite God to create a world full of evil. By shrinking, he explained, and by withdrawing in himself, God went into exile, The empty space this withdrawal had created within Ein Sof, became the world. This our world is created by the shrinking of the primordial space around God. In the course of this primordial catastrophe the Zum- Zum took place; that is to say the "vessels broke"; the sephiroth separated; and evil came about. The primordial man, Adam Kadmon, was created. And above all: when the vessels broke the sparks of divinity fell onto the earth. These sparks are the human souls. The aim of all existence is now "Tikkun", the collection of these sparks and their return to Ein Sof.

CAROL - It was of interest to me to read, that one of the mystics of the 13th century, a Kabbalist with the name Abulafar, introduced a kabbalistic discipline consisting of concentration, breathing control, positioning, meditation, recitation of mantras - in short in the way Yoga is practised.

RABBI - And finally Kabbalism entered also christian thinking. Especially so during the Renaissance, but greatly so also in the 17th century, when it influenced Freemasonry, the Theosophists, Leibniz, Swedenborg. Also Shabtai Zvi, the false Messiah, has to be mentioned in this respect.

EG - And do not forget Franz Kafka.

CAROL - And above all, do not forget the Bal-Shem-Tov and the hassidic movement.

RABBI - And I will finally also include - the art of ?, the knowledge of ?, the play with ? - Gamatria, in which conclusions are drawn from the numeric values of hebrew aleph-beth making up the words in the T'nach.

T W E N T Y - N I N E

ASHER - We have learned from our talks here in this circle, that there are many sub-divisions of the religions of India, in particular of Buddhism. I suppose these are often specific for the various countries in Asia which have been converted to Hinduism or Buddhism. I must say all in all it had been for me - and I am sure for some of you too - a most interesting excursion into regions unknown. Again daring to speak also on your behalf, we have gained a satisfying overview of the religious systems, principles and philosophies of the Indian sub-continent. But although, with the exception of the Rabbi, we are not directly involved in - and therefore neither sufficiently acquainted with - any of the various religious ideologies within Judaism, we are definitely interested to know more details about the concepts which prevail in Judaism regarding the various 'subdivisions' of the soul. And whereas we are interested in the doctrines which prevail in Judaism about life and death, about immortality and reincarnation; and whereas it appears proved, that there has been a reciprocal cultural and religious fertilization between the East and the West - I think I have reason to suppose, that our talks about the religious beliefs prevailing in India have very well prepared us for a better understanding of what Judaism has to offer from a spiritual and theological, from an intellectual and ethical angle.

AVNER - As far as I can remember from my private readings - I had, unfortunately, not the benefit of a pleasant sojourn on an ascending row of school benches - the philosophers of Greece have not only immersed themselves in these questions, but by what they wrote and taught they had a deep impact on the cultural and religious currents of their times. From what I still remember from my undisciplined reading, they have greatly influenced - for all I know they may even have formed - not only a number of ancient religions, but also Judaism and her two daughter religions, Christianity and Islam.

ASHER - Having heard what Avner and I had to say, would you all agree that we should, with the Rabbi's help and under his guidance, learn first of all something about the religious-philosophical currents in ancient Greece ?

RABBI - I fully agree with what Asher and Avner have remarked just now. I will even go further and confess, that I am not surprised that

they brought up this subject, for I myself had already planned to do so, that is to introduce - as soon as we have reached this stage in our talks - this very same subject, namely the philosophical concepts which the greek schools had developed of man's soul, of man's life and death, and of man's survival after death.

RINAT - I very much welcome your decision. I have since long been looking forward to your guidance through what has been to me until now the minefield of greek pilosophy.

RABBI - Let us agree - as we have agreed, and successfully adhered to, with regard to what we have discussed so far, viz:- that we will restrict our talk mainly to the basic principles. It will be left to each of us to enlarge on what he or she hears - or to refreshen what we have once learned, whatever might be the case - by a personal perusal of the relative literature of whatever arouses his or her interest in the course of our discussions.

ASHER - I fully agree. It would spoil our evenings should we be restricted by elementaries.

AVNER - ...and should we also get off into tangential directions.

RABBI - I am sure Carol will be in a better position than I to give you a short survey of the concepts the ancient greek philosophers and historians have developed over the centuries.

CAROL - I shall try my best, and I am grateful that I am not expected to go beyond general terms. I hope, that what I can offer without great preparations, will suffice to give you an instructive overview of greek philosophy.

ASHER - From what I have learned once upon a time there is no doubt, that the Greeks believed man to possess a soul ?

CAROL - From the knowledge we have of the Greeks' earliest history - that is of the time they still incinerated their dead - we can conclude that they have always believed in the existence of a soul.

RINAT - How could this have led modern thinkers to come to such a conclusion ?

CAROL - They concluded this from the fear the ancient Greeks had of roaming spirits. They saw proof of this in the fact, that the Greeks made offerings to the memory of the dead. Other and similar customs prevailed in those years, and these supported such a conclusion. Later on, when burying the dead underground became the custom, personal items and valuables - like arms and ornaments, as well as food - were entombed with them.

RABBI - But, as far as I know, there is no persistent religious tradition of what the Greeks thought was going to happen to the soul

after death.

CAROL - I agree. One can say that there had not been an established religious tradition; and that, whatever concept evolved from time to time, it always underwent changes of some kind or other.

RABBI - But it is a fact, that the earliest Greek philosophers did not teach the existence of an immortal soul.

CAROL - This is true. We can come to understand the Greeks' concept of the soul if we associate it with that of immortality. Immortality is not granted to common man, the philosophers taught. Only to the gods who are immortal because they have an immortal body.

RABBI - Contrary to what modern researchers appear to think, I did not gain from Homer's writings a clear-cut idea about this issue, namely whether man owns a soul or not. In a way similar to what we heard about Jewish thought of kabbalistic origin, also Homer speaks of 'Psuche'- by which he meant the personality of a man; of 'Thumos'- which are man's emotions; and of 'Nous'- with which he meant man's intellect. A soul may wander around outside the living body, he says, but after death body and soul together will be confined to the Underworld of Hades. Only the blessed will be allowed to enter Elysium, a pleasant - but also underground placed - ambience full of pleasures.

CAROL - Pythagoras was the leading philosopher of his time. He lived around the 6th century BCE. It was he who popularized the Indo-Iranian concept of metempsychosis, of the soul's transmigration. Although in the 6th century BCE the principle of metempsychosis had already been part of the religious belief system of the Orphics, it was Pythagoras who turned the concept of the human soul's transmigration after death into a popularly accepted discipline of greek philosophy. That is to say, he taught that the soul pre-existed; that the soul transmigrates from one body to the other; that the soul will be given reward or punishment after death; that the soul of the pious will go to Elysium, there to enjoy a continued blissful existence; and that the soul of the sinners will be sent to Hades, there to be tortured by Tartarus. He was quite precise in his views of the soul's fate after death. For instance he taught, that the soul of a murderer will enter a dog.

AVNER - What is or was Orphism ?

EG - May I explain this, for I have made an effort to learn about the so-called 'mystery religions' ? Orphism is one of these. It celebrates the life, the death and the resurrection of the god Orpheus. The followers of this cult formed a secret brotherhood. It was the earliest of the mystery religions which had been introduced from the East. Other mystery religions were based on the life and death of

Dionysos, Cybele-Attis, Isis-Osiris, Mithras, Sabazius and so on. These mystery religions were to dominate the cultural life of ancient Greece. Orphism, in particular, introduced the doctrine that the soul is divine, immortal, incorporeal. Since it had been imprisoned in the body, the originally pure soul has become polluted by sins and errors. By an initiate's participation in the sacred ceremonies of the mystery religion, his soul can be purified and finally released from further reincarnations.

CAROL - It is important that we mention Socrates in this context. To him 'Psyche', the soul, is the centre of man's life. According to him all of man's intellectual activities originate in psyche. It is man's duty to take great care of his soul, to keep it unpolluted.

RABBI - Plato taught the same principles as Socrates; but Aristotle denied psyche this very significance which Pythagoras, Plato - and the other philosophers who preceded them - had attributed to it.

CAROL - On the other hand psyche is given great importance by the Epicureans and the Stoics.

RABBI - However - as far as I know - the idea that man possesses a divine, an immortal soul, had first become popularized by the Dionysian cult.

EG - I have something to add to what I have said about the the Mystery Religions: they had started to play an important role in Greece long before the philosophers you mentioned appeared on the scene. And in the course of time they gained more and more in importance. In the last 3-4 centuries before our era they more or less dominated the religious-cultural life of the countries around the mediterranean basin.

ASHER - What was the particular advantage which gave them so much power and influence ?

EG - They provided the people with the assurance, that the immortal soul of the initiates will become god-like; that it will enjoy all the pleasures of Elysium, while the uninitiated will be condemned to a shadowy existence in Hades. This basic mystic-religious doctrine had been greatly strengthened by Orphism which had added to the other very detailed rules of conduct imposed on his life also the injunction, that the initiate has to keep his soul morally pure.

CAROL - The unusual teaching, the impressive ceremonial and the often frightening ritual of the mystery religions have greatly contributed to the acceptance of the metempsychosis concept, i.e. that the divine and immortal soul is independent of the body; and that by virtue of man's moral conduct - and in the course of many incarnations - the soul can be cleansed, freed from the body and finally enter Elysium.

EG - It is interesting to point out, that the Mystery Religions

- which had such a profound influence on religious doctrine in ancient Greece - came in vogue in nearly every then civilized country sometime in the 6th-7th century before our era, at a time when all over the then civilized world revolutionary changes occurred in the various religious philosophies, practices and perceptions. We have already heard, that in the period I mentioned Buddhism and Jainism were founded. I can further add, that in the Jewish world prophets like Jesaya came forward in that epoch; that in Egypt profound, though only temporary, changes occurred and so on.

CAROL - It should not surprise us, that the mystery religions brought on a profound change in the popular thinking in Greece. There is a fundamental reason why this was possible: this form of religion could not fail to prove very attractive, for it assured those who were for instance initiated into the Mysteries of Eleusis - a process, a mythos, a ritual and a philosophy, which I heard is to a great extent reflected in today's Masonic rituals - that they would be granted the same benefits as the heroes, namely the right to enjoy the eternal pleasures and the ongoing feasts which are offered in the Elysium, while the uninitiated have to continue for eternity a shadowy existence in Hades.

RINAT - We have so far been given a comprehensive and instructive survey of the ideas which the Greek philosophers had to offer. But I have to confess, that for a true understanding of what has been going on in ancient Greece I need a more detailed description and exposition. For instance: I did not know that Pythagoras figures in addition to his mathematical genius also as a leading philosopher.

CAROL - You are not the only one to be surprised. His influence on Greek thought was in his time very considerable. But this impact did not persist. I am entitled to say, that the concepts which the Greek philosophers had evolved with regard to man's soul, and of the soul's fate after death, have in the course of the centuries undergone many changes. Greece's ancient philosophers speak of the dual nature of man: his true nature, his imperishable soul, is manifested in the life of his mortal body. After death the body dissolves, but the soul flies away into the realm of the spiritual or noumenal existence whence it derives. The soul is the thinking part of the body. It wills its movements. It is responsible for man's passions and for his character in general.

RINAT - What happens to the soul 'after it flies away' ?

CAROL - This depends on the deeds it had done while in the body. Those who have done good deed are happy; the bad ones are miserable.

RABBI - You must, however, take in consideration that the Greeks

did not define the wicked and sinners in the way the Jewish laws did.

AVNER - Does this not contradict what you told us before, namely that the average, non-heroic souls of the individual will after death land in Hades ?

EG - It appears - from what I have learned - that the popular masses of classical Greece had refused to accept the belief which at that time was prevalent among the educated class, viz:- that after death the soul was freed from the body; that there was an after-life; that there was going to be a resurrection of the body. The uneducated among the people continued to believe in a Hades as an after-death "storing place" for the body. And they persisted in their belief, that after death the body has to remain united with its soul.

RABBI - I learned from my studies of Homer, that this very same concept prevailed in his time, viz:- that after death the soul, the *Psyche*, continues to exist in its union with the body; and that it goes along with its body into the underworld of Hades, the "Land of No Return", where all the dead are assembled. Hades - as you will remember - was thought to be similar in character to the Sheol of our Bible. This, it was accepted, had to be the fate of the soul of the average individual. According to Homer, also heroes like Achilles had to proceed to the underworld - but once there, they were allotted a residence in the 'Isle of the Bliss', in the Elysium of the Blessed.

CAROL - I have, however, to point out, that it is nowhere made clear whether the entire person - soul and body - is transported to the Elysium or only the soul.

RABBI - One may conclude from Homer's description of the soul as the "breath of life", that it is immortal as well as ethereal. This has to mean, that after death the soul cannot anymore perform any physical activities and has, therefore, to have been freed from the body on reaching Hades or Elysium.

CAROL - This may also be implied in the "shadowy shape" the dead are said to adopt after death.

RABBI - The great influence Plato had and has on mankind's culture embraces also his concept of the human soul. He calls it "*Psyche*", as we have already heard. He describes the soul, which will separate from the mortal body after death, as representing the divine aspect of man. He calls it the seat of intelligence and morality.

EG - I realize now, that Plato's philosophy is similar to that of Hinduism. And also to that of certain currents in Buddhism which teach, that the soul is immortal and that it is trapped in a mortal body.

RABBI - Plato - it is worth mentioning - too had originally thought,

that the soul is firmly trapped in the body; but he also thought, that the soul will perish along with body at the time of death. He made, however, an exception for the souls of the philosophers because they are enlightened beings: their souls will be freed from the mortal body and survive. Later on he changed his philosophy to what has been described before. In his 'Phaedrus' he explains, that the soul is a totally separate part in the human being; that it attaches itself periodically to living beings; and that each soul's selection of a body for its reincarnation is determined by the soul's former life.

RINAT - This means he did believe in reincarnation ?

CAROL - Reincarnation appears to have been the accepted doctrine in all ancient cultures.

ASHER - What, in general, happens in the view of these ancient philosophies to the human soul after it is set free ?

RABBI - Originally all souls were thought to have been stored in the stars. At the beginning all souls were considered equal; they were believed to have the same potentialities. After death the soul which has remained pure and just will return to its star, while the others are subject to reincarnation - first into the body of a woman; and if it is not cleansed and corrected during that lifetime, the soul will be next incarnated in an animal.

RINAT - I am surprised ! Also the Greeks believed, that we may be punished and our souls made to reincarnate in an animal ?

CAROL - The transportation of the human soul into various bodies was based on - and can be explained by - the concept of an eternally and universally prevailing justice. This was the inducement for Plato - and before him Pythagoras - to teach, that a human soul can also enter an animal body. Plotonius, however, who was a later leading spirit, denied such a possibility.

RABBI - Since Augustinus also Christianity has denied that a human soul can ever enter an animal body.

AVNER - What meaning, function, sense does Plato give to the human soul ?

RABBI - Plato's concept of the soul is not consistent, as has been mentioned before in another aspect. While he says that the soul is something immaterial, he declares that it contains in addition also an irascible, rational and 'appetitive' part. In his opus Timetho he says, that like the soul of the gods also the human soul is made from the same material as the world soul - and yet it is part of the world of change and becoming.

CAROL - In general terms it can be said, that from the 5th cent.

BCE onward all hellenistic religions have adopted the platonic concept which says, that the human body remains on earth and decays, while the soul flies upwards to its original abode above the earth. Plutarch, who lived in the first century of our era, opined that the moon is the ultimate abode of the souls.

EG - I found it interesting, that Plato describes the soul in the way the Upanishads do: that it is like a chariot drawn by two fierce horses: one pulls the charioteer towards sensuality and low-grade desires, the other towards spirituality.

AVNER - What does Plato say about God ?

RABBI - Plato distinguishes two worlds: the world of the ideas, and the sensible world which has been created by the Demiurge. The latter introduces the idea of God, the soul of the world, into the world body. By this act the world has been brought to life.

AVNER - The Demiurge ?

RABBI - As in gnosticism so also in Plato's philosophical system has the Demiurge his place. But in Plato's world the Demiurge is a superior being which plays an positive and beneficial role: he created the world. And, above all, he keeps order in our otherwise chaotic world.

EG - The Demiurge is not restricted to Plato's world. He is - as we have already learned - an important, but less pleasant actor in the world of gnosticism and of Manichaeism.

RABBI - We cannot complete our excursion into the realm of the greek philosophers' concept of the soul, without paying due respect also to Aristotle, who has had a major impact on the thinking of the generations following his. He contradicted what Plato and his school had taught. Aristotle had originally thought that the soul is 'a divine sojourner on earth'. But later on he denied that there is such a dualism of body and soul. He formed the definite opinion that the soul is inseparable from its body - or at least parts of it are - and that it perishes with the body.

CAROL - It may be of interest to you that also Aristotle speaks of a tripartite soul: an intellectual soul, a sensitive soul and a vegetative soul. He states, that the soul is instrumental in all of man's behaviour, thinking and feeling; that it is the principle by which man perceives, lives and thinks.

EG - It is indeed very interesting that he too believes in a tripartite soul !

CAROL - Aristotle distinguishes further between the active mind and the passive mind. Of the former he says, that "...the intellect is the maker of all things"; and of the latter that ".....the intellect

has become all things".

RABBI - Aristotle's philosophy of the soul - that it has a natural beginning; that it has no individuality of its own; that it has no separate existence - was accepted by the scholastic philosophers and also by Maimonides.

CAROL - But not by the Church which teaches, that the soul is not pre-existent but has been created by God.

RABBI - This is true. This doctrine the Church has again and again pronounced and confirmed over the centuries - the last time in the papal encyclic 'Humanis generis' of 1950.

AVNER - Let's leave the Church's opinions for the time being; and let us hear what Aristotle has to say about God.

RABBI - Let me repeat what we have already learned: Aristotle denies the soul's individuality and separate existence. He is of the opinion, what we call the soul is the realization of the inner capabilities of the body; that the soul cannot exist without a body; that after death the soul disappears with the disintegration of the body. However - and this is important - Aristotle also says, that there is in man some kind of spiritual being, namely the mind which is akin to God. It is uncreated and immortal. At birth it enters man from outside. This mind-factor does not amalgamate with the body. It represents the power of reason in the human being. At death the mind retires to its own separate existence; that is to say, the immortal intellect is that which approaches the divine in the world.

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Hermann H SELZER coll.

7/4 A man's fate 1993/4

pt. 4 (chapter 30-39 + epilogue
p. 295-398)

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A man's fate

pt. 4 (chapter 30-39 + epilogue)

p. 295 - 398

T H I R T Y

RABBI - This evening I intend to take you along on an excursion through the positions Judaism has taken on the issues we have discussed so far, viz:- about God and our world; about life and death; about the soul and its reincarnation. This evening I intend to raise our talks onto a higher level from where we are enabled to survey a wider horizon. I intend to deal also with evil and sin; with repentance and redemption. I am sure, my friends - I hope I am entitled to call you thus from now on - you have been waiting for this stage in our discussions. We shall take also a look into the deviations and changes which Judaism's daughter religions, Christianity and Islam, have introduced into their own theologies. In doing so we may possibly retrace certain original currents in Judaism which would otherwise not have attracted our attention.

Our journey will take us through a steadily changing landscape, each of which represents the stages of development through which Judaism has passed. Your attention has repeatedly been drawn to the fact that also in periods past - going back some thousands of years ago - when other than commercial contacts between people were far less common, and when direct cultural contacts between distant nations were the exception - there had been a steady, I may say an osmosis-like exchange of the religio-cultural currents not only between neighbouring nations but also between those at opposite ends of the then civilized world. Of this you have already been made aware when your attention was drawn to the impact the greek, the roman, the assyrian and the egyptian cultures had on each other. But also the iranian and indian religions of those days had an unmistakable influence on the peoples around the mediterranean bassin.

In other words: the original conception the Children of Israel, while wandering through the desert, had of themselves and of their spiritual and moral tasks and duties, changed after they had settled on their promised lands and had begun to develop commercial, social and cultural contacts - if not exchanges - with their neighbours, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Greek and the Romans.

Changes in the way they viewed their duties and rights became again necessary when the First Temple was destroyed. And again new concepts had to be developed when the Second Temple was destroyed and the Jewish

Commonwealth had come to an end. New rules of life and new attitudes to the surrounding world had to be evolved. And again the Jews had to make a deeply furrowing adjustment when they were admitted into the tolerant ambience which blessed the expanding islamic world; when they were granted some degree of freedom - even though at times that of second-class citizens - by their moslem host countries; when in some measure their human rights were given recognition under the benevolent umbrella of a flourishing moslem culture. And again new tactics of survival had to worked out, and new economic standards had to be instituted, when the growing hostility of the Christian world forced the Jews to withdraw into a factual as well as into spiritual ghettos. And again the Jewish people had to modify their ways of living, and had to adapt their outlook on life, when the era of Enlightenment offered them not only human rights but also the inducement to abandon their Jewish inheritance. And finally the Jewish people of today has been forced to give an affirmative reply to what the re-establishment of an independent Jewish State should mean to them. Or whether or not, in order to avoid the embarrassment of a positive reply, they should chose to escape into total assimilation.

I have painted with large strokes on my small canvass the jewish people's progression - and its associated social and humane developmental stages - in the course of the last two or more thousand years. It is open to us this evening - and possibly the next ones - to fit into the pictures I have drawn the spiritual progress and the intellectual changes of which you have become aware with the help of our talks.

We shall, of course, draw our first material from the Bible. We shall study what the Scriptures tell us about the view the Israelis of old held about life and death, about the human soul and about life after death.

However, a word of caution: do not get impatient if I or one of you will repeat passages, ideas, opinions or quotations which we have already heard in some other connection. This will be unavoidable. But it may well serve us as a step-ladder to the next - hopefully a higher - level of understanding.

AVNER - I am sure we shall hear now sets of quotations from the Bible which have been mentioned before. But I do not mind. We shall get confirmation of what is in my opinion a definite fact: that the Bible is a composition of folklore, myths and unconfirmed pseudo-history. To avoid any possible embarrassment, I propose we can henceforth do without biblical recitations or quotations.

CAROL - Avner, please...

Rabbi - Nevermind, Carol. I propose, Avner, that during the next hours you divest yourself of your preconceived ideas which are born again and again of what is quite evidently an uncritical negativism. Listen to what Bernard Malamud had to say: "If your train is on the wrong track, every station you come to is the wrong station".

AVNER - I am sorry ! I had not intended my remark to be offensive. I am sorry if I gave you this impression.

RABBI - Thank you, Avner. I want to introduce our program of this evening with the observation, that man's preoccupation with his soul; that his preoccupation with his life; that his preoccupation with his death - the latter though somehow to a possibly lesser degree - is a traditional characteristic of the semitic peoples. This tendency made headway already early in the history of our people due to the influence which greek philosophy and culture had on the Jews in the last centuries of the pre-christian era, when the hellenized Jews eagerly identified with the idea that man possesses an immortal soul; that good deeds performed during one's lifetime will be rewarded after death; that the wicked and the sinners cannot look forward to a blissful after-life. This trend is reflected in the so-called 'Wisdom Literature', whose introduction into the jewish culture was only made possible by the considerable influence which in the last few centuries of the pre-christian era hellenism had acquired in jewish circles. "The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God and no torment can touch them", says the Book 'Wisdom of Solomon'. It mentions also, that man's ".....lot is with the holy angels".

ASHER - We have heard various hypotheses about the human soul, its various components - if there are really any such - and their infiltration into the newly developing fetus. But we have not yet learned what the Bible, the jewish scriptures, says about the time and stage when the soul enters the body.

RABBI - The Pentateuch says that the breath blown by God into Adam had transformed the latter into a living being. There are other parts of Scriptures in which it is said, that the human being begins to live from the moment the divine breath enters the body,. "Were God to recall his breath...man would return to dust", says Job. The same thought also the Psalmist expresses: "..you stop their breath they die..and revert to dust". The Talmud too offers an answer: God compels the soul, which he has selected from a large number he has available, or which he may have newly created, to enter the womb at the time of conception. One of the Talmud sages tells us in addition, that the soul leaves the body at night and returns in the morning hours, newly charged with life.

And the Talmud reports also on some other occasion, that after death the soul continues to hover around the body for three days in the hope that life may return.

CAROL - Zoroastrianism says something similar.

EG - Does, according to your knowledge, original Judaism know of the kind of dualism which Zoroastrianism preaches ?

CAROL - Allow me to reply to your question, that at the time the concept of dualism with its principles of good and evil penetrated Judaism, also the belief in resurrection and a continued life after death became incorporated into Judaism. At that time also the concepts of Heaven and Hell, of the Day of Judgement and of the End of Days, of Angels and Demons, as well as that of the Messiah gained impetus in Judaism.

RABBI - However, as far as I know, original biblical Judaism never said anything of a dualism of soul and body in the way it is taught by the Greeks or Iranians.

RINAT - I know we have already heard an explanation of the dualistic principle. We have also learned something of the meaning dualism has in Zoroastrianism. I have been wondering, what we have to think of the ethical aspect of this dualistic concept. I meant to say, what is the status of evil in mankind's actual and future being ?

RABBI - God told Jesaya: "I am the Lord.....I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil". Evil is to be avoided, says the Bible. Depart from evil and do good, says the Psalmist. But in Jewish thinking, contrary to the Iranian one, evil is not the dualistic opponent of goodness. This means, that evil is not of necessity equal to goodness in permanency and survival. There is only one God, and it is he who has created both good and evil. Good and evil are not separate sub-gods. The Zohar describes God's left hand as evil and his right one as mercy. In Judaism evil has been introduced for the good it may create. "Whatever the Merciful does is for the good", exclaimed Rabbi Akiva.

CAROL - The saying of Jesaya which you have just now heard, is a definite anti-dualistic declaration. In the dualism as preached in Zoroastrianism, there are two gods and not one. Each has taken on a different function. Each is responsible for his own part of the Creation. Generally speaking, the god of good is one side and the god of evil on the other side. In the dualism of the Zoroastrians as well as that of the Manichaeans, evil is absolute and exists in its own right. Ormuzd is in Zoroastrianism light, and Ahriman darkness. In Gnosticism there is a distant and unapproachable God - and there is the evil Demiurge who has created the world.

AVNER - Is Satan not a dualistic opponent of God ?

RABBI - Not in Judaism. He is not a deity in Judaism. I propose we continue now with what we know about the Jewish view of the soul.

EGO - The significance of the biblical threefold composition of the soul - of which we have already talked some time ago, but on which I shall enlarge with your permission - is described in the Zohar as **Ruach**, meaning breath as well as vitality; as **Nefesh**, meaning emotions as well as the mental state; and as **Neshama**, meaning conscious life. Ruach and Nefesh, according to the Zohar, are susceptible to sin and will be punished. The Neshama, however, remains always clean and is not tainted by whatever happens in life. It will be stored in "Tzeror Ha'Chaim", the "Bundles of Life". It will ultimately return among the Sephiroth whence it originated.

CAROL - Nefesh and ruach combined were called 'Ka' in ancient Egypt; 'Pneuma' or 'Psoche' in ancient Greece; and 'anima or spirit' in ancient Rome.

RABBI - I shall enlarge, from a Jewish point of view, on the subject under discussion. You will agree with me, that to the average person - and especially to the intelligent and educated Jew - it is of great importance, that he obtains a clear understanding of the meaning of these metaphysical entities. In this matter the explicit circumscriptions and delineations we find in the prayerbooks are more helpful than what the Jewish theologians have to say in their treatises. The soul is pure, says one of the prayers. There is no original sin. We are born free of sin. Death is only a temporary passage.

RANIT - In which prayer is this mentioned ?

RABBI - In the daily morning prayer which begins with the sentence 'Elohai Haneshama.....'. This prayer - which sounds more like a statement than a prayer - dates from the rabbinic-talmudic era of about 2000 years ago. It says: "My God ! The soul you have given me is pure....you will take it from me, but you will return it to me in future....Praised are you, God, who returns souls to the dead bodies".

AVNER - This goes already beyond the limits of the factual...

RABBI - ...one can hardly speak of anything factual when dealing with these matters.

AVNER - But one should be offered a logical framework into which such conceptions can fit !

CAROL - I think, we have already been presented with such a scheme. However, I would be grateful if we could have it repeated in a few words, as it could serve as the starting point for an explanation of the belief in what amounts to a resurrection of the body after death. It appears

to me, by the way, that some among us are already sympathetic to this idea which has been presented to us as a hypothesis.

RABBI - There are an untold number of explanations for these three components which are mentioned in the Bible....

EG - I suppose you have referred to my hypothesis-like explanation of the original biblical system on which the Kabbala has enlarged. I shall gladly repeat what I told you some time ago. I believe that Nefesh refers to the vitality of the forming embryo; that Ruach comes into play when life enters the embryo and turns it into a fetus; and that Neshama is the soul proper, the karman-directed eternally surviving - and as long and often as necessary - reincarnating divine part of our being.

RABBI - Do you agree with what the Kabbala has to say ? Else what functions do you attribute to each component ?

EG - The Nefesh is the genetic profile of the DNA-strain. Ruach is the life factor when breathing starts; when the circulation starts to function; when the nervous system starts to form. It is the pre-life factor until the fetus-infant enters the world. At that moment the neshama is added. Nefesh, the physical character of the Jewish people, is propagated by the Nefesh. In children of mixed marriages this heritage may be enhanced - but mostly it is reduced. This heritage-scheme may also be upset in a child resulting from adultery. Neshama is that part of the soul-complex which enters the infant at birth. It carries in itself - or better said it provides the newborn with - the personality traits which will develop with - and will henceforth make up the character of - the individual. The neshama will provide the ethical direction; the stimulus to moral conduct; the aim of ethical completion.

RINAT - What does Judaism say to the survival of the soul; to the principle of the soul's immortality; and to the idea of a resurrection of the dead or at least of his soul ?

RABBI - The dead body and its soul were initially supposed to be stored in Sheol, as you may remember. Body and soul are abandoned there without hope and consolation. It may surprise you to learn, that in our Scriptures of an earlier date it is clearly said, that God has no power to intervene in Sheol on behalf a dead entombed there. But at a later period a change occurred in this perception. For the sages appear to have reasoned, that this is a contradiction: that whereas God is omnipotent he has to have the right to exert his power everywhere he wants. This made the Psalmist exclaim: "...but God will ransom me from the pains of Sheol, for he will receive me". Once Jewish theology had reached this stage, it was only a short step to the belief in the resurrection of man himself. We have also to take note of the Book of

Daniel. It must have been written under the influence of the cosmic and ethic dualism penetrating from Iran. This book, which was composed around the year 167 BCE, is one of the series of apocalyptic writings which, as a rule, were not recognized by the Rabbis of old. The Book of Daniel is the only exception.

RABBI - You are right. It is the only apocalyptic writing which has been accepted in Judaism's biblical canon.

CAROL - The concept of resurrection eo ipso implies that of the immortality of the soul. In this respect not only the zoroastrian impact, but also the influence of the greek philosophers on jewish thinking is clearly recognizable.

RINAT - I can well imagine how the assurance that my body will be resurrected - be it my soul only, or my soul along with my body - will make it much easier for me when my time comes to say farwell to my life on earth. It will also be a consolation for me, that the more humane ones among the ancient Jewish sages had come to the conclusion, that the prognostic negativism of those Rabbis, who predicted that only the righteous and faithful will be resurrected, does not agree with Judaism's ethics; and that it is sure, that all of us will one day be resurrected.

RABBI - I fully agree - and it has repeatedly been my personal experience - that the thought of a future resurrection may well ease the mind of a dying person. I am horrified whenever I imagine, what in old times a dying individual, under the impact of the then established concepts, must have felt, i.e. that the grave is a place of punishment in which one is confined for ever.

EG_ - You do not have to go far back in history to find evidence of such a horror of death. Today's followers of Mazdaism - the Parsees - are victimized by such a fear.

CAROL - And I know of many Moslems who are not better off.

AVNER - Are the Catholics not lucky ? They know that even on their deathbed their priest will absolve them from their sins.

RINAT - How terrible it must be to think that one is condemned and damned for eternity ! How terrible it must be to imagine oneself in a place and in a situation where one can only look forward to an unending term of punishment. How terrible it must be for an individual when he hears that in the best of cases an eventual return to earth a reincarnation may even imply a far worse fate.

EG_ - This is indeed what a Parsee knows will happen to him, and what a Moslem believes he has to face ! To this day the Moslem on his deathbed knows, that while eternally confined to his grave, he will have

to expect severe punishment not only throughout eternity; not only in a time-limited distant future, but already in the immediate aftermath of his death. That is to say, no sooner he finds himself in his grave. And after all this initial stage of terrible suffering the dead individual will have to join the masses of other deads in a sheol-like place called "Barzaikh", where the wicked souls will have to wait till Judgement Day.

CAROL - It is expected that the awareness of such a fate should stimulate a Moslem to an all-out endeavour to lead an ethic life. To live a clean life. For the souls and bodies of the individuals who have led an ethically clean and perfect life are after their death allowed to straight away enter paradise, where they will find all kinds of physical as well as spiritual enjoyments.

RABBI - I bow to the humanitarian spirit, which is revealed in the correction reflected in a moslem tradition and which says, that at the end of days the Prophet himself will be at hand to intercede on behalf of each believer who appears in front of God's throne on Judgement Day.

CAROL - This kind of consolation is not unique to Islam only. Also the Christians are promised that on the Day of Judgement Jesus will sit at the side of God, and will intervene on behalf of those who have been his faithful followers.

RINAT - May I confess, that I am more confused than ever by what I have heard this evening. Tell me first of all, please, how evil can be good for us ?

RABBI - While evil is indeed liable to diverge and alienate us from God, it gives also effect to goodness. And goodness is that which unites us with God.

RINAT - How is all this possible ? God has created the world. It is a beautiful creation. But why all the sordidness, the suffering, the hatred, the persecutions - in short: all the evil ?

AVNER - You are right. I would have done a better job.

RABBI - God does not act as man does. Whereas God is omnipotent, and whereas his creation is imperfect, it follows that God had wanted this world to have flaws; to show imperfections; to harbour evil.

EG - Forget about all the explanations which the kabbalists, the theologians and the philosophers offer. Think instead, that the world and mankind have been given the task to develop into an ethical society. And above all to do so on its own and without any forceful or other influence from above. In other words, that mankind has been given the task to achieve this perfection by its own efforts only. And finally and ultimately: mankind can measure itself and its efforts - and the success of its efforts - by the way it faces and handles evil.

RABBI - Had I the power, I would make every Jew have instead of the mezuzah on the doorpost, engrave on the most visible spot in his house the message of the Proverbs: "He who oppresses the poor blasphemes the Maker. He who is gracious to the needy honours him".

ASHER - May I return to what we have talked about before and ask, what concept the Christian have of an eventual resurrection ?

RABBI - Body and soul will one day be resurrected, the Church teaches. But the body which is going to be resurrected will be different from the earthly one of flesh and blood. It will be a kind of spiritual body.

ASHER - How do the other religions with which we are becoming more and more familiar, imagine the resurrected body to look ?

EG - In Hinduism the body is matter; it is totally different from "Parusa", the life principle or the Self. The soul or Self has no lasting bond with the physical world; it is only temporarily associated with a human body. The buddhist view is similar - but there is an additional twist: everything is illusionary, say the Buddhists. The body is a part of the world of illusion. The body exists but still does not exist.

CAROL - Further to your question I am going to mention, that in ancient Egypt the mummification of the dead indicated the belief in a resurrection of the body as well as that of the dead's personality. In Zoroastrianism the individual will be resurrected in the very same shape and form he had while alive.

EG - Resurrection can occur also in the form of a ghost or a spirit, and the Moslems believe that the living can be possessed by such a spirit.

AVNER - Before we go on, I would be thankful to you for a somewhat clearer explanation. Am I right to say that the dead, in the biblical view, keep their souls on entering Sheol; and that the dead will only be revived at the End of the Days, at the time of the resurrection ?

RABBI - The dead is taken to Sheol, the realm of death, body and soul, as a faint weak shape of what he had been when alive.

AVNER - What does Sheol look like ?

RABBI - Sheol is, according to the Bible, made up of "chambers and rooms, with strong gates and prison bars". It is a land of oblivion without hope. It is a land of desolation, from which there is no return.

AVNER - Not my taste of a prolonged holiday resort.

RABBI - Sheol is mentioned a great number of times in the Scriptures. I shall quote only Job saying "...the waters surrounded me right to my throat; the abyss was all around me". And Jesaya complained "...yes, Sheol opens wide its throat and gapes with its measureless jaw...".

RINAt - Did the people not despair for having to face such a hopeless future...? That whatever good deeds they had done in life were not taken into account ?

RABBI - People in ancient did not expect anything else. The biblical teaching - that award and punishment take place during the lifetime of the individual, and that death is nothing but the final punishment, was the accepted doctrine in early jewish history. Nobody thought of doubting it. And in any case, there was nothing one could do against what was viewed as an established fact. But later on, in the rabbinic era which followed the destruction of the Second Temple - that is at the time the Talmud was composed - and especially under zoroastrian and hellenistic influence, Jewish religious doctrine underwent a change. The soul, it was taught now, is a supernatural creation of God. It is given us humans on loan. After death God takes the soul back - but there will come the time when the body is resurrected and will be rejoined with its soul. In still later times this was further elaborated: all souls existed already since Creation. There is a place in heaven where the souls are stored before birth. The Messiah will come when the last soul kept in this store-room has been implanted in a human body.

ASHER - What you said just now sounds to me rather different from what I heard you say before. Firstly it excludes a resurrection, and secondly it is the reverse of what the Kabbala said and what has been accepted by most religious Jews, viz:- that the souls are sparks emanated from God; and that the End of Days will at last come when all the sparks have been collected and reunited with God again.

RABBI - You are right. This diversity - by the way an outcrop of a mysticism which exists not only in Judaism but in most all religious philosophies - clearly indicates the need we have not only of knowledge but mainly also of consolation.

AVNER - I was impressed to learn that - contrary to some greek philosophers' teaching - Judaism claims that the soul is not only immortal but also sinful; and that it is not an integral part of the body.

RABBI - It is true that Judaism teaches the soul to be immortal. It teaches also that the soul is pure and that it is the body which is the sinful part. However, even though - and because - the soul is the ethical giroscope within the person, it is responsible for all the sins this person commits. This is different from the greek point of view, viz:- that the body is sinful; that it alone is responsible for the sins which burden the soul.

AVNER - What was the official teaching at the time Jesus lived ?

RABBI - At that time the religious climate was determined by the

representatives of the two great political currents then dominating the religious and political scene - the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The former proclaimed the Scriptures as the only valid authority. The Sadducees, however, had their own rigid and uncompromising beliefs. They denied the souls' immortality because the Bible nowhere mentions any of this. They denied also, that the soul can exist outside the body. They denied furthermore, that the soul can transmigrate into another body. They strongly refuted also the possibility of a resurrection, because nothing of this kind is mentioned anywhere in the Scriptures. For this reason they denied that spirits and angels could exist.

CAROL - According to the New Testament it was the concept of resurrection which was the main cause why the Sanhedrin - made up of Sadducees - refuted Jesus and accused him of blasphemy.

RABBO - The Pharisees, on the other hand, had a totally different interpretation of the Scriptures and of Jewish life in general. You may call them the early Puritans. They believed in a resurrection. They too believed in whatever the Scriptures reports and in whatever Tradition transmits - but they believed also in a resurrection of the body. They believed in the survival of the soul after death. They believed in "T'chiath hamethim", the revival of the body. They believed in the coming of an eventual Judgement Day. And they were sure of a life in the world to come.

EG - You must a priori forget what the Christian Gospels say about the Pharisees. In an apparently purposeful distortion of the truth, they have painted the Pharisees in the most negative colours. In truth, the Pharisees preached a highly ethical standard of Judaism. They preached that charity is the most important injunction the Tora has issued. By the way: you will have heard of the Schools of Hillel and Shamai. They were Pharisees.

RABBI - Also long after the time of the Pharisees and of the Second Temple Period the Rabbis of old - those of the time when the Talmud was composed, say between 300 and 500 of our era - firmly believed in a resurrection.

EG - This was not something new, however. This belief had been in vogue already at the time of the Maccabees: their leader Juda ordered sacrifices to be offered on behalf of the dead in the evident expectation that they were going to be raised at the appropriate time. Had he not expected that his fallen warriors would in due course be resurrected, it would surely have been thought superfluous and futile to order prayers for the wellbeing of their souls. Do you agree?

RABBI - You are right. The Rabbis of the Talmud I mentioned clearly

stated in their teaching that - I quote - "...when the time fixed in God's plan comes, the bodies of the dead will be restored and rise from their tombs. The souls resurrected in the 'Bundles of Life' will rejoin their bodies; and the whole man as he has lived once will answer God for his conduct and character in his former life. Those condemned will go down to Gehinnom while the righteous who can justify his conduct will forever live in a blessed state in Gan Eden".

ASHER - This makes it quite clear....

RABBI - I have here another quotation from the Talmud - the Tractate Mishna Sanhedria - which, as you can see, could not be more explicit in this respect. "Whoever says that the Thora does not make mention of a resurrection of the dead, says that there is no Tora revealed from heaven. He, as well as the Epicureans, have no part in the future world".

CAROL - By force of circumstances the acceptance of the idea of a future resurrection gained greater acknowledgement in the year 553 when the Roman Emperor Justinian issued the order, that the Jews who do not believe in a resurrection, are to be severely punished.

RINAT - Has Judaism ever in clear terms acknowledged a transmigration of the soul ?

RABBI - The Rabbis of the Talmud preached that every soul has again and again to pass through one body after the other - and that the Messiah will come when all souls have in this manner, and through this process, been cleansed of all their impurities.

AVNER - Which of the many bodies a soul has inhabited in the course of its migration will it return to at the proper time ?

RABBI - You will not have to worry. Most likely a multiple of the same soul will arrange for this.

ASHER - What then is, in view of the expected resurrection, the accepted opinion of the relationship between body and soul ?

RABBI - In Jewish view man and woman receive their bodies from their parents. They receive spirit, life and soul from God.

EG - I may add, that it cannot be other than that the inheritance of racial characteristics and of other family distinctives - that is to say those specifics which are today known as being contained in the DNA and the genes - are in their entirety transmitted through the body of the parents; and that this transmission is totally unconnected with the soul. My contention is clearly indicated by what I had occasion to describe to you as my view of the relationship the soul has with the human body.

T H I R T Y - O N E

RABBI - I think we have by now gained an ample insight into the biblical and post-biblical views about the various matters we have over the weeks discussed. Let us now proceed with the examination of the views which the theologians and philosophers of the Middle-Ages had formed with regard to this matter.

AVNER - May I point out that we have not yet had an occasion to learn about the view which the Kabbala has formed regarding....

CAROL - Nor have you yet said a word about the concept of 'Gilgul'.

RABBI - I have not overlooked the important place occupied by the Kabbala in Jewish-religious thinking. What you both have mentioned is after all a product of the Middle Ages, and I intend to deal with the Kabbala, and especially with the Zohar, within the frame of medieval Jewish doctrine and philosophy. And within that same framework we shall talk also about 'Gilgul'. Now, and in passing, I will only mention that during the Middle Ages the then prevailing, very influential neo-platonic philosophical current had also a marked influence on Jewish thinking.

RINAT - What about Neo-Platonism ?

CAROL - Neo-Platonism represented the principle, that the souls have an affinity to the Godhead; that they are distinct entities which enter the human body from the spiritual world; that the souls have to undergo purification before they can return to the sphere of divine life.

EG - Was Philo not already a Neo-platonist ?

CAROL - He was. Neo-Platonism is not a current of the Middle Ages only; it originated already in the late Antique. Neo-Platonism, which came into the foreground in the last two centuries of the preceding era, took on a mystic character in the first two centuries of our era. It searched for the way to liberate the soul from the body - which was seen as the soul's prison - so that it can ascend to the High Spiritual World, the world of light, to the One God.

ASHER - Is the biblical One God identical with the neo-platonic One ?

RABBI - It is difficult to say. The biblical One is described in his deeds, his laws and cares; while of the neo-platonic One nothing is known as he is considered infinite and cannot be known.

CAROL - By the way: may I say a few words about Philo of Alexandria,

who was a quite interesting - and certainly an unusual - type of philosopher. He was a Jew and accepted it as a fact which cannot be doubted, that God had once revealed himself. And although God goes on revealing himself in the Creation, he wrote, God's essence remains otherwise incomprehensible to mankind. Man cannot apprehend God by intellectual reasoning - only by intuition. God's wisdom - his "Logos" - had been present in the world since it was created, Philo preached. The Jews of Philo's time refused to follow his 'logos principle', but the Christian did. They did so with enthusiasm. They liked and welcomed what Philo had to say about the 'logos'. This was the most likely reason why they claimed him as one of theirs.

RABBI - Let me enlarge on what you said. Neo-Platonism was indeed an important ingredient in the philosophies of the periods you mentioned. The line of its teaching was, that an 'over-mind' exists in the Universe of which the soul is an emanation. Originally there had been a 'universal soul' or an 'over-soul', but it came to be broken up in small individual parts which became encased in individual bodies. Each of the individual souls is a fragment of that 'over-soul'. After an individual dies, its soul returns to its fountainhead God.

CAROL - I stand corrected. I should have mentioned this specific neo-platonic concept.

RABBI - This neo-platonic concept is to us of particular importance as it had an influence on Maimonides - and above all because we can see it reflected in the mysticism represented in the Book of Zohar. A few words about Moses ben Maimon, who is known as Maimonides and also as the "Rambam". He lived from 1135 till 1204. He is, as you will know, considered the giant of Jewish thought in the Middle Ages. Sa'adya - although he is less honoured by the thinkers of our own time - has to be counted as not ranging far behind Maimonides. I shall deal with both of them at length after having mentioned one or two more philosophers of lesser calibre of that period. Among these I count Avicenna who taught, that nothing remains of man after death except his intellect. Maimonides seemed to have been attracted by this idea. Also Ibn Gairol believed that the soul originates in the world of intellect. The ultimate reward of man, the later wrote, is the contact his soul makes with what he designs as the "Superior Intellect". This "contact" will come about in the world to come. The soul of the righteous will go to the sphere of the angels - that is the "cosmos of the intellects" - and reach the "seat of glory" - that is God. Maimonides taught in his "Guide of the Perplexed", that the Jewish faith, though it is made up of a multitude of doctrines, is based on sound principles. God is incomprehensible

and inaccessible to human reason. It is, however, possible to understand and approach God with the help of a simple symbolic language. People should understand that the biblical language is a symbolic language. Once this basic fact is understood, it will prevent people from forming an anthropologic image of God.

EG - He stated all this in extraordinarily circumscribed and precise terms in his "Thirteen Articles of Faith".

RABBI - I was going to mention this. In some way or other you all will already have become acquainted with these Thirteen Articles. In these he states that God exists; that he is wise; that he is incorporeal; that he is eternal; that idols have no place in a Jew's faith. He also says, that the Prophets were true messengers of God; and that Moses was the greatest ever among the prophets. Truth is divine. The Tora is eternally valid. God is well aware of what man does. God judges man for his deeds. The day will come when God will send his Messiah and the dead will be resurrected.

EG - He also said somewhere, that God cannot be said to be simply "good" because he exceeds all which we can ever understand as good.

CAROL - I have studied the Rambam's writings and had the feeling that he is at times very dogmatic. He hedges about the immortality of the soul, I think. Only the understanding we obtain from cognition is immortal, he says. Therefore only "thinkers" can be immortal. Our bodies play no role in this respect. But he is ready to accept, that a physical resurrection - of the body re-united with its soul - will in due course take place after death; that both, body and the soul together, will be punished for the sins committed in their previous life.

RINAT - This means that he accepts the existence of an after-life.

RABBI - Very definitely so. However, he clearly states that only the immortal souls will survive. In his main opus, 'The Mishne Thora', he writes: In Olam Haba - the future world - no bodies exist, only the souls of the righteous. They are the angels who serve God. Therefore all the stories of feasts and celebrations are wrong - no food or drinks exist in heaven.

ASHER - Is there not a contradiction? First he says bodies and souls are united....

RABBI - There is a contradiction indeed - and nobody has been able to come forward with a satisfactory explanation.

CORAL - What had Sa'adya, whom you call the other leading medieval philosopher, to say about all this?

RABBI - His philosophy starts from the assumption, that the earth is the centre of the Universe. He comes to the conclusion, that all

which goes on in nature is mankind-directed, because man is Nature's highest achievement. And also, because the human being embodies in himself the highest qualities, be they physical or rational.

CAROL - What does he say about the origin of man's soul ?

RABBI - That every soul has been created by God. That the soul did not pre-exist as this would make us presume that the soul is eternal - and this would be illogical. For only God is eternal and nothing else.

ASHER - Where then.....

RABBI - When the body is created - explains Sa'adya - God creates also the soul which he assigns to this body. Every soul has a mission which it can only perform when attached to a body. On the other hand, the body needs the soul for its own guidance. Both - soul and body - are responsible for each other. When man dies, his body and his soul separate. The soul rises to the upper realm, where it is 'stored up' until the arrival of the Messiah, when it is reunited with its former body to face the Eternal's tribunal.

EG - This means that Sa'adya excludes the transmigration of the soul into another body ?

RABBI - Sa'adya absolutely denies a metempsychosis. Neither does he agree with Maimonides' assumption, that between the death of a person in this world and its ultimate resurrection, the righteous souls continue to survive in some form of spiritual existence.

EG - May I at this point of our talks present my own idea, the one I have constructed for myself in order to disentangle myself from all the theories, hypotheses and doctrines the Jewish theologians and philosophers and their non-jewish colleagues have to offer ?

I agree with the belief of the majority of philosophers that the soul is of divine origin. I have found satisfaction in the way the Indian religions face this problem: that in a karmic sense the soul has acquired defects or impurities or irregularities - you may give various names to what the religions call 'sin' - and in the course of many reincarnations the soul is 'deposited' in one human body after the other, so that during the lifetime of that body the soul is given the opportunity to free itself from the impurities and irregularities it has acquired in the course of its series of sojourns in human bodies.

RABBI - You are not the only one who has been influenced by - and feels satisfied with - the karman doctrine of the eastern religions. The Zohar too has this belief system. It has to be recognized, that the entire doctrine complex of reward and punishment, of evil and sin, of repentance and confession - in whatever form or definition these are expressed and depicted - are variations on this theme. Sa'adya, whom

we have just now mentioned, has in very clear terms defined this idea in his 'Notion of Purification', in which he refutes the established biblical belief that punishment and reward are dealt out during the individual's lifetime. He argues, that man is placed in this world of suffering so that the righteous may become purified of whatever sin he has acquired - and thus may enjoy total bliss in the Hereafter. The sinner, who has not made use of the opportunities he has been offered in life to divest himself of his failings, will be appropriately punished after his death. That is to say: reward and punishment will be dealt out in the 'World to Come' - namely in Gan Eden or in Gehinnom.

EG_ - I am afraid you misunderstood me. There is a difference between what Sa'adya thought and what I believe is the answer. Whereas Sa'adya does not accept a transmigration of the soul, I believe in such a metempsychosis. I believe, that in the course of untold reincarnations the 'affected and infected soul' is given a chance to get cleansed.

RABBI - I am sorry I misunderstood you. I propose we postpone to a later date hearing - and at length discussing - your explanation of your personal belief, because there is so much more for us to learn from the chapter on which we have started this evening. I have especially in mind the views with which the exponents of Jewish mysticism have faced this issue in the Kabbala and in the Zohar.

AVNER - I have been waiting to hear you detail what the mystic current in Judaism believes to know about God and our souls.

RABBI - First of all, when talking about Judaism and mysticism let me make it clear to you, that Reform Judaism - to which I belong - does not identify with mysticism. It absolutely refuses to grant the mystic trends the recognition they have gained from other currents in Judaism. Having made this clear, I shall say a few words about mysticism in general. As it deals with abstractions, some have gone so far as to count it a philosophy,- while others consider it a religion.

EG_ - This is not too far fetched for - let us a priori be clear in ourselves - all religions contain a dose of mysticism. In the Tora you can find, fo example, evidence of this in the story of Bileam. The same applies to the "Merkava Vision" of Ezekiel. Also the Talmud and its midrashim contain much mysticism. For instance, Rabbi Jochanan once experienced the Holy Spirit descending upon him. And so on and so forth.

RABBI - I could argue with you about your argument - but this would lead to nothing and would take up too much of our precious time. I may do so at some other point in our discussion. It is specific for the mystic - who will tell you that God is in everything and everywhere - that he aspires to communicate with God directly and without the help

of an intermediary. The mystic's soul wants to reach and embrace God. You may find many a mystic who will tell you in all sincerity, that he has been in contact with a Superior Reality of which he had not been aware before.

AVNER - Don't you think these are hysteric reactions ?

EG_ - I would not label them thus. Let us say - without condemning them and what they say - that these individuals were in a state of otherness in which their sensitivity was enhanced to a degree which made them enter a state of higher, sensual, exceptional consciousness.

RABBI - The mystic will tell you, that God wants to be known by his creatures. They will cite in confirmation God's word: "I was a hidden treasure and I yearned to be known. I created living beings so that I shall be known to them".

EG_ - But if you analyze with care what a jewish mystic describes as his vision, you will never hear him tell - or describe in the usually picturesque words they prefer - that they have seen God himself in any of their visions. They may describe seeing God's huge palace; they may describe some of God's surroundings; they may describe God's mantle and so on. At the most they will tell you, that whenever they do see an appearance of God, his face is always hidden behind a veil.

CAROL - A mystic can be very creative in his descriptions. Einstein once said: "Mysticism is the sower of all art and science".

RABBI - I have to enlarge my definition and description and say, that in some way an esoteric tradition of God is known to Jews, Christians and Moslems. Our as well as their Scriptures are supposed to have an inner, a deeper, a separate meaning. The mystics will add, that there is a very deep truth in the Scriptures which cannot be learned from books - and can only be known with the 'inner eye'.

ASHER - Would you count also the Prophets of the Bible among the mystics ?

RABBI - Not at all. They knew of God, of course. They presented the God they knew in his relationship to, and in his concern for man. However, there is this difference: although they did not reach for God by a theological approach; and although they did not present God with philosophical arguments - they never represented God's appearances in mystic terms.

EG_ - Except when they clearly speak of having had a vision.

ASHER - I often thought them impertinent when - speaking in the name of God - they used expressions, threats, metaphors and so on, which would not be acceptable in a polite environment. I have especially the synagogue in mind when extracts from the Prophets' writings are read

in the Haftara.

RABBI - I can assure you that their's was a language which their actual listeners well understood.

EG -and to which, suprisingly, the refined and sensitive public of today does not at all object.

RABBI - I want you to realize, however, that in the same way as the God, whom the prophets represented in their harangues or promises, had in their time found acceptance among the people, so was also the God of the mystics later on accepted by the people. That is to say, the language and imagery of the Kabalists was reverently accepted by the masses of Jewry.

ASHER - What about christian mysticism ?

RABBI - Also the Church knows of some kind of mystic tradition which has been transmitted orally by the Church Fathers - and was kept secret. This is to say, it was never written down. It had been kept secret from the uninitiated among the original Christians. I recall having once read that an "organized and accepted mysticism" had started with St. Basil. A mystic searches God with love, the Church tells us today, and not through reasoning or by argumentation.

CAROL - This approach of the mystic is like that of the followers of Hinduism and Buddhism.

AVNER - This means the mystic believes by blind faith.

RABBI - I would more precisely say, that the mystic claims he can attain a state of identity with God. Mystics are known to have exclaimed: "I am God".

RINAT - Does such a man want to say that God is within him ?

RABBI - This kind of exclamation, while in a state of ecstasy, does not imply an incarnation where God becomes man.

CAROL - A proper christian mysticism seems to have developed later than in Judaism. Meister Eckard, a prominent - perhaps even the first - representative of christian mysticism lived in the 14th century. It can with certainty be said, that Christian mysticism was nourished by the jewish and moslem mysticisms which had already been quite prominent in the preceding centuries.

RABBI - It might not be known to you that the Jesuits too practise a mystic form of christian religion. Details are very difficult to come by as their mysteries are kept hidden in strict secrecy. It is known that initiates - each of whom is entrusted to a personal guide and instructor - are taught these secrets in a retreat lasting thirty days.

T H I R T Y - T W O

RABBI - You have expressed the wish that we should spend some more time on talking about the essentials of Jewish mysticism. I agree that a thorough knowledge would be of benefit to all of us in understanding certain not very evident - and certainly less known - aspects of Judaism. Much of what I am going to tell you in my introductory words, is already known to you. Of course, with "jewish mysticism" only the Kabbala, and in particular the Zohar, can be meant.

EQ - Why only the Kabbala and the Zohar ? In my opinion there have been - and are to this day still - other faces of jewish mysticism on the jewish stage. I can think at the moment of the messianic movements in general; and that of Shabtai Zvi of some time ago; and that of the Habad Movement today. Likewise - in my opinion at least - also the various expressions of Hassidism contain marked mystic elements.

RABBI - You are right. I stand corrected. We shall include also these elements you have mentioned in our talks. Let us take up first the Kabbala and the Zohar. The latter, the most significant part of the Kabbala, has most likely been written at the end of the 13th century in Spain by a mystic with the name Leon. It describes how the Ein Sof - the name given therein to the Divine, the 'Absolute' - descended through the Sephiroth to manifest himself in the Shekhina. Ein Sof talks of himself as "I", mind you ! The Shekhina becomes part of mankind, that is to say of the Jewish people. Man is promised that he can rise through the Sephiroth to reach mystic heights. Though the Kabbala had been composed in the 12th century, and the Zohar sometime in the 13th century, as I said already, it is an accepted fact that whenever our historians of religion, and even our confirmed Kabbalists, study and speak of or delve into this fount of mystic knowledge, they will turn to and rely upon the works and interpretations which in the 16th century originated from the pen of Isaac Luria. You will understand the Zohar better if you realize, that it wants the Tora, especially Genesis, to be seen as hiding the profound secrets of the true process of Creation behind a curtain of symbolisms.

CAROL - Should you ever pay a visit to the tomb of Rabbi Shimeon bar Yochai on Mount Meron during the Lag Be'omer week, you may get a glimpse of the power the Zohar still exerts on the mystically inclined

people of this country. This day is presumed to be the birthday of this miracles-producing mystical rabbi who is reputed to be the author of the mystical Zohar.

RABBI - I have been there - it is indeed very impressive. Whoever of you has never paid a visit to Mount Meron should do so on the next occasion.

RINAT - Asher and I have been there too. But tell me please, what place the human soul has in kabbalistic view ?

RABBI - According to the Kabbala the soul is of a spiritual essence and the body is its material cover. The soul is one of the sparks which resulted from the catastrophic Zimzum event. The soul is, therefore, a light which has been emitted from heaven. Immortality implies, that the soul does not remain with the dead body; that on leaving the dead body the soul will not perish too; that the soul will return to the celestial world of pure light.

AVNER - By the way: may I ask whether the Kabbala differentiates between male and female souls ?

RABBI - At the outset, says the Kabbala, while reposing in an 'Upper Garden of Eden', every soul is a composition of both male and female material. Only when it descends to take up an earthly habitation does the soul become differentiated into male or female.

EQ - The Kabbala has taken over the biblical presentation of the soul and has further elaborated its differentiation into Ruach, Nefesh and Neshama. Could you enlarge on this ?

RABBI - It is better to say that the principle of the soul, which according to the Kabbala is made up of these three components, has become incorporated into Jewish thinking. To continue ! In our previous talks, especially when you explained your own theory to us, we have already hinted at the image which the Kabbala has created of the soul. I shall now go in details about the mystic structure which is specific of the Kabbala. The Zohar, the main book of the Kabbala, describes the body as the outer cloak for the spiritual nature of man. This spiritual nature of man is made up of three elements: Nefesh, Ruach and Neshama. According to the Zohar **Nefesh** is present in every living being. It enters the body at birth. It is the physical and physiological part of the soul. It causes man's vitality. **Ruach** and **Neshama** are spiritual factors. They enter the body at the time the individual has begun to develop his religious, spiritual and intellectual capabilities. In particular: Ruach comes into being when man's intellectual development begins, while Neshama, the light from heaven, the highest part of the soul, comes to be formed with the study of Tora and the observation of the Mitzvoth.

EG - Thus says the Zohar.

CAROL - Does this lead to the conclusion that the Jewish woman, because she does not study Tora, will not be blessed with a soul ?

RABBI - No such conclusion is called for, because the Jewish woman is expected to eagerly follow the Mitzvoth and to obediently observe the commandments of the Tora.

EG - You must not declare me a heretic if I say that this tri-partite division of the soul seems to me superfluous, illogical and unsatisfactory. The composers of the Kabbala - or should I say of the Zohar - felt under the obligation to adopt the biblical view of the divinely bestowed soul. They could not do otherwise, as this would imply that the Tora can be corrected, that it has not been handed down directly and in its entirety by God. I may sound conceited, but I feel more than ever convinced that my way of describing the Bible-introduced tri-partite composition of the human soul factor - if there is at all the need of dissecting the soul into three components - is far more solid and more convincing.

RINAT - I must say that your formula sounds to me more acceptable.

RABBI - I too must say that to a non-kabbalist - and I am one such - your classification sounds more acceptable.

ASHER - What stand might the Zohar take in this respect ?

RANIT - First of all: how do you describe the Zohar ?

RABBI - The Zohar is the principal, the main part of the Kabbala - though possibly not its original part. It would take us too far away into unrelated regions, should I give you an even moderate description of the Book of Zohar. Luria, in giving the Zohar an easier imaginable - but therewith by far not an easier understood - form, explains that all existence originated with the 'Zimzum', the "contraction of God within himself", whereby he created an empty zone outside and around himself. This divinely created space is filled up with the process of the world's creation. Later, in the process of the ongoing creation, God removes himself from this zone. Later still, in the further process of creation, matter filled the "spiritual vessels". The vessels broke into sheds. The sheds dropped into the void which existed within the Creation.

EG - The Zohar will be familiar to those of us who recall the scheme of the Ten Sephiroth.

AVNER - What about the Sephiroth ?

RABBI - Let it suffice if I say, that the Ten Sephiroth are the names God has given himself, and are those with which we have become acquainted. But the real name of God is not known to mankind. The Sephiroth are the mode by which God manifests himself outside the Ein Sof. The

Kabbalists see the Sephiroth as the emanations of God, with which God has created the world. Perhaps, at a future occasion we may get deeper involved in this aspect - and with it in the atmosphere - of Jewish mysticism.

RINAT - Let us hear some more about the Zohar, please.

RABBI - In general terms it is best to describe the Zohar as a mystical system which exposes a mythical or symbolic picture of the divinity. Now to your first question: The Zohar says, that the soul in its three parts is a light from heaven which originates in the world of these Sephiroth. Before entering the body each soul is delegated and obligated by God to piety and goodness. After death Nefesh hovers over the body, while Ruach remains with the body. Both Ruach and Nefesh are subject to punishment, but not the Neshama which will return to its divine source - provided it has remained pure. A soul which has sinned cannot return to God.

CAROL - What part has the soul to play in the human body ? What purpose has the soul to fulfill while it sojourns on earth ?

RABBI - On the human-related level the soul is - according to the Kabbala - the instance which guides ethic man through life; which leads man onto the right path; which makes man realize what is evil. On the higher level the soul is entrusted with the task of restoring - or integrating - into its original shape and form of the flawed, material universe. This is the task of the "Tikkun" process, which endeavours to seek, collect and reclaim the divine sparks which had been scattered all over the world at the time "the vessels broke".

CAROL - Is this not a gnostic point of view ?

RABBI - You are right. It is a gnostic idea. The Kabbala has a definite gnostic aspect.

RINAT - Is there an association of what we have heard just now with the principle of 'Gilgul' ?

RABBI - Only insofar as it fits into the doctrine of transmigration and reincarnation. Gilgul has for the Kabbalists the same meaning as transmigration or reincarnation are given elsewhere. It is a fundamental belief of Kabbalism, that the Neshama wants to return to its source. But in case the soul has not remained absolutely pure, it will require one or more - often many more - reincarnations to regain its former pristine purity.

AVNER - Is such a stained soul condemned to be reincarnated in a human being or can it be designated to enter an animal - say the puddle of a rich lady ?

RABBI - According to the Kabbala, reincarnation has not of necessity

to happen again into a human body. A soul - as many Kabbalists believe - can also be reincarnated in an animal; or even in a stone or tree. Basically gilgul is perceived as a punishment for the soul for having become spoiled by permitting itself to be stained by sins. On the other hand and at the same time these repeated incarnations are also seen as evidence of God's mercy: for in this way the soul is given another chance to free itself from its negative load and to get purified back to its former pristine whiteness.

ASHER - If I am not wrong, the legend of the Dybuk is based on this Gilgul concept.

RABBI - Not exactly. The Dybuk is the spirit of the deceased woman which has temporarily left her grave and has entered a living person which is already endowed with its own soul.

EG - In my view the principle of Gilgul is clearly related to that of karman. The latter equally indicates a complex concept of judgement and justice. The karman principle postulates that the soul, by being again and again reincarnated, is given a chance to free itself of its karmic load. In every life cycle the soul is tested by the difficulties and temptations it is made to face.

RINAT - I am surprised that the contents of Kabbala are so little known; that this opus is not commonly studied. Why is its study not part of the school curriculum ?

RABBI - I do not think it would be right to expose young people to such a study. Aspirants, who want to study the Kabbala and Zohar, have since ever been warned of the danger that their mind may become deranged by the involvement in this complex mysticism. It was always - and is generally still - insisted, that one should embark on the study of the Kabbala only under the guidance of a Master.

CAROL - This is not unique for the Kabbala. A similar warning is given to aspirants to the study of Sufism, of Zen and of other mystic movements. The aspirants have to be initiated with the help of a Guide and Master.

RABBI - I can tell you from personal experience that the acquisition of a true knowledge of the Kabbala, and the access to the circle of the Kabbalists, are from easy. The study of the Kabbala has since times past been restricted to a small group of mystically conditioned people - Jews and Gentiles alike.

RINAT - I cannot see why the belief in the Gilgul process should cause an upheaval in the mind of people.

RABBI - It is not the Gilgul itself, but what it involves. It is interesting to note, that while at the time the Kabbala and the Zohar

became available most Jewish philosophers and theologians had rejected what Gilgul is meant to convey, a marked change occurred after 1492, that is following the trauma caused by the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Henceforth interest in the Kabbala - and especially in what it said about Gilgul - became ever more acceptable among the Jews: the Galuth, the diaspora, was seen as a God imposed test - and no less also as a punishment - within the frame of a Jewish Gilgul-destiny.

ASHER - There are currents among the Karaites who to this day believe strongly in Gilgul.

EG - This is true. I have heard this stated by a Karaite.

RABBI - Somebody of you has remarked during our last session, that we have to see also in Messianism a mystic movement. And it has been pointed out, that the frequent outbreaks of messianic fervour which are reported in Jewish history - and manifestations of which we ourselves witness today - have to be labelled as outbreaks of mystic fervours. The adventure of Shabtai Zvi is a case in point. Can you, please, say a few words about him ?

EG - In 1666 a Greek Jew with the name of Shabtai Zvi came to Safed and declared himself the Messiah. The ever present expectations among the Jews of an early arrival of the Messiah were the reason that he was believed and not derided. He soon acquired a large following. When he turned out to be a failure - not a fraud, mind you, for this mystic was deeply convinced of his mission - the Jews of Europe reacted with a strong wave of rationalism. After Shabtai Zvi's death his spiritual adviser Nathan of Gaza, and with him all over the European world the groups of believers in his messianism, continued to preserve a favourable memory of this mystic.

CAROL - I read somewhere that even to this day communities of his followers exist somewhere or other.

EG - They are the so-called "Frankists", named thus after a certain Frank who took over the leadership of the movement from Shabtai Zvi.

RABBI - Another very strong movement - to some degree also mystic in character - is today's Hassidism. It was born in the wake of the messianism which had gripped Eastern Europe in the 17th century. You all know the Hassidim, and you know also about Hassidism. I shall, therefore, have to add only a few sentences. A primitive, uneducated man with the name of Israel ben Eliezer believed himself to be a gifted faith healer. He attributed his successes to God, whom he called the "Good Name". This made him take on the name of "Bal Shem Tov". His preaching encompassed a simplified form of Kabbala. The uneducated masses had no difficulty to understand him and to accept his message. The

essence of his preaching was, that God's glory fills the world; that a good Jew can in all his everyday activities become aware of the divine glory within and around him - provided his actions and activities are performed with joy, with dedication and with love for God and the next man. He assured his followers that there are no demons anywhere. Only God is everywhere. There is no need for us to look around for the divine sparks of which Luria had written, the Bal Shem Tov preached, for these are within us. The divine sparks are in everything we do and think. They are within everybody and everything with whom or with which we come into contact.

RINAT - It is surprising how the Hassidim can fit into the world of today. They live still in the Middle Ages. They have no TV in their houses. They do not visit cinemas. They educate their children to continue this restricted kind of life....

RABBI - You may be surprised to learn that even the most rigid Hassidim like the Satmars, who in Jerusalem or Bnei Brak curse those who have a TV in their houses, enjoy cinemas, videos and TVs when they live in Brooklyn.

AVNER - And in addition these people are enemies of Israel, although they live in Israel and enjoy all the 20th century amenities offered here, like water, electricity, transport facilities.....

ASHER - You cannot generalize. With exception of a few hard-headed exceptions the Hassidim are good citizens.

CAROL - I wish all Jews were as good Zionists as the Habadniks.....

RABBI - We have to be clear in our mind that, with the exception of the Eda Haredit, the hassidic and other religious groups in our country are good citizens and Zionists. It is the Eda Haredit, the loosely-organized association of all those haredim who neither vote in the Knesset elections nor take money from the State, which is actively engaged in anti-Zionist propaganda. The explanation they offer for their hostility is very clearly stated: the Jews had no right to establish a State; they had to wait for the Messiah to do so.

CAROL - It seems the Eda is getting stronger year by year.

RABBI - Unfortunately this is the case. The Eda Haredit, made up of the Satmar Hasidim, the Toldot Aharon and the Yerushalmi Hassidim get active and financial support from haredi groups abroad.

AVNER - You did not mention the Natorei Karta.

RABBI - They are nothing but a minuscule fringe group which has been excommunicated by the Eda Haredit mainly because of their highly publicized overtures to Arafat and the PLO.

ASHER - The Habad Movement, as we all are aware, is a pure hassidic

movement.

RABBI - Of course it is ! You may know already that their name is made up of the initials of the the three main Sephiroth, viz:- Hokhma which means Wisdom; Bina which means Intelligence, Wisdom and Knowledge; and Dina which means Justice. The movement was created by Shneur Zalman of Liadi. He preached that the world cannot exist without God. It is an illusion - due to our limited perception- to think that the world exists on its own. This truth can be realized by man with the help of God and the Kabbala. It is important that Jews study Tora and regularly say their prayers. If a Jew does so with the right fervour, he will reach such a state of ecstasy, that he will, while praying, become dissociated from all which goes on around him.

CAROL - None of these hassidic movements, it seems, associates asceticism with their efforts to reach a state of ecstasy ?

RABBI - Firstly, mysticism does not a priori include asceticism. Secondly, the Rabbis declared quite categorically, that asceticism is against the Jewish law. They declared it sinful to give up the earthly pleasures which God has provided for mankind.

EG - Fundamentally and in principle, a mystic experience which transmits the mystic knowledge of God, is the awareness that there is a Creator, a Supreme Being. This certainty one can reach within oneself without submitting oneself to asceticism. On the contrary.....

ASHER - Before we go on, an explanation - if not at least a description - of what you mean with a mystic experience, will be of help.

RABBI - A mystic will tell you, that it is impossible to describe a mystic experience, or otherwise express such an involvement in words. A mystic experience is felt. It is sensed. It is a kind of trance, far removed from the control of one's will. It is an unbelievable sense of elevation. It is an illumination of a deeper truth never before perceived by the intellect. Neither is it describable by the intellect. It is a transient, often momentary revelation of a deep wisdom.

EG - We can say that also every personal religious experience is more or less a mystical experience too.

RABBI - Let us say that a mystic experience can be a religious experience which is literally and objectively true to the mystic.

EG - In other words: such an experience is an expression of a deeply perceived faith.

CAROL - Said Tolstoy: faith is that by which we live.

T H I R T Y - T H R E E

RABBI - We have in our discussions reached a stage, my friends, where it would be interesting and profitable to see what the philosophers of modern times - Jewish and gentile alike - have to say about the materia we have been discussing last week. However, I have to propose with regret, that we overlook the ideas which the philosopher-theologians of modern times have developed. Otherwise we cannot avoid being led too far away from our program. And I must confess in all honesty that, although I am very much impressed by the philosophies of Kant, Leibniz, Spinoza and so on, I cannot be induced by other contemporaries of theirs to have us come down from the impressive intellectual level which, I dare to say, we have reached in our circle.

ASHER - And may I point out in addition, that we have not yet tackled the christian and moslem attitudes. These interest us very much, I venture to say, in view of the environment in which we live...

CAROL - May I add my opinion, that it is more for completeness sake why we have to study the viewpoints Christianity and Islam harbour about the matter we are discussing.

RINAT - I welcome your proposal, and dare to add my opinion, that it would fit in very well, if we start our talks with an explanation of what gnosis or gnosticism mean. I remember having once read somewhere that Christianity owes much to the gnosticism which is reflected in the Kabbala.

RABBI - You must not mix up gnosis and gnosticism. Gnosis means simply a special knowledge of God, of the universe and of its creation. This knowledge is acquired either through a direct revelation or by initiation into the esoteric traditions of such revelations. Gnosticism, on the other hand, has funny ideas about many things. For instance, it teaches that the God of the Jews is not the true God, but a kind of demon.

AVNER - Is this the infamous Demiurge you once mentioned ?

RABBI - Yes, he is connected with what I am going to say. Gnostics say, that the original Godhead could not have created the material world since he has nothing to do with base matters. It was one of his aeons who did this rather unbecoming job. He is the Demiurge or Creator - and he made a mess of it. Thereupon the "Logos" descended to earth to

put matters right. The Logos took on the shape and form of Jesus. Jesus was sent to bring order into the world, and to make mankind aware of God.

CAROL - May I expand on this ? Initially, as we have heard, the Demiurge was viewed as the original divine creator of the universe. Though the gnostics do not deny that the Demiurge created the world, they see in him an inferior divine being, one who belongs to an inferior world. That is to say, he belongs to the world in which the human souls are imprisoned. There is, however, a true but unknown God who ranges far above the Demiurge. The Unknown God would not have degraded himself with creating such a world as our's. He would never had populated it with such kind of humans and other living being. Instead, he delegated this task to the Demiurge. When the human soul which has been enlightened by gnosis, it has also come to realize the Demiurge's inferior status in relation to the Divine Spirit.

RINAT - What is the Demiurge doing now that he has created the world and its flora and fauna ?

RABBI - The Demiurge' job is to provide us humans with the higher part of our soul, while the inferior part of our soul, as well as our body, are created by inferior gods.

EG - We should particularly mention, that Gnosis specifically identifies the Demiurge with the Jewish God whom they despise.

RABBI - This is correct. They label the Jewish God as a kind of demon.

AVNER - What does this strange religious current want ? What in particular does it teach ?

RABBI - Gnosticism or Manichaeism has a dualistic conception of the world and its contents.

RINAT - What is the meaning of the word 'Manichaeism' ?

RABBI - Manichaeism is the doctrine which in the second century of our era had been created by a man called Mani. He called himself a prophet. He had a great impact on his contemporaries. In the third century Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity encountered each other in the Middle East - and inevitably exerted a great influence on each other. Mani preached, that light is spirit, and that darkness is matter. The world exists by the interaction of these two principles. The attacks of the base matter on light caused the latter's fragmentation into particles. These particles of light were scattered throughout the universe. These particles are the souls. When these light particles became enclosed in matter, man and animals and plants and all other living beings came into being. Whenever a Gnostic comes to the clear realization

that his soul is one such spark, he can achieve salvation. In this case salvation means unification with God.

ASHER - But this is exactly what the Zohar says !

RABBI - Exactly. There are still many other similarities. For instance: Gnosticism claims, as you have just now heard, that the human being contains a divine spark which has escaped from above at the time it was released from the transcendental God. These sparks have fallen into the material world where they have become imprisoned into mortal bodies at the time of their birth. These light particles should be released, Gnosticism demands, and returned to their original source. That is to say, to their divine source. Knowledge of this truth leads to a victory of good over evil, of light over darkness - and hence to salvation. However, salvation will occur only when the soul is liberated with the help of a 'Heavenly Saviour'.

CAROL - I must confess, I never realized, how much this gnostic image of the soul is reflected in kabbalistic thinking.

RABBI - Better say: has been taken over by the Kabbala.

EG - I must, however, point out, that we have here some more evidence of the impact which Hinduism and Buddhism had on western thought in the early centuries of our era. This influence is not only evident in what we learned just now. It appears to have continued even into the Middle Ages. There is, as you can see, a definite affinity between the gnostic ideas and what Hinduism teaches. According to Hinduism a man cannot gain salvation by the intervention of a godhead - only by his gaining the knowledge of truth, and by the realization of his Self. This very knowledge of his Self, of his Atman, is identical with the knowledge of the Self of Brahman, the true reality of all that exists.

CAROL - I remember having read that the Greeks had a great degree of influence on Gnosticism, this Iranian-born form of religion. Gnosticism speaks of 'Nous', the earth-bound part of the soul; and also of 'Psuche', that part of the soul which is going to be saved. It is the latter part of the soul which wants to return to the divine presence. If this is not achieved at the time of death, gnostic teaching goes, the soul will have to undergo another and another incarnation. The souls of the select, however, will without any delay return directly to the divine source of light.

ASHER - Gnosis and Gnosticism and Manichaeism belong to an age which has passed. Are traces of this strange belief system still noticeable in our world of today ?

RABBI - You could not be more wrong if you think that modern mind has totally done with gnostic ideas. Certain gnostic concepts - like

the dualistic principle of light in its contrast to darkness - are still to be found in many of the religions which are practiced today. They form also the content of many newly created religious trends, as well as of modern philosophies. Take Esoterism, for instance. It is depicted as the interpretation of a form of divine revelation. It is a gnosis by which the individual is offered the opportunity to gain enlightenment and salvation through the knowledge of the bonds which unite him to the world of the metaphysical - which in turn is depicted to him as made up of divine or intermediary spirits.

EG_ - Or take the Theosophical Movement. You may count it as belonging to the world of esotericism - but it is in every aspect a gnostic ideology.

RABBI - You are right. You must understand Theosophy as a religious discipline which is concerned with the knowledge of the hidden mysteries of God; with the knowledge of the relationship of God to the universe; with the knowledge of God's relationship to man. Basically this is an intellectual and speculative gnostic approach.

RIMAT - I have once or twice heard about 'Theosophism', but I have never cared to know more about it. Could you explain, please ?

CAROL - The Theosophical Society - the "Temple of Theosophy" as it likes to be called - has been founded in the last decade of the last century by Annie Besant. Theosophy, the "Wisdom of God", is an esoteric gnostic movement. It is knowledge of what unites man with the world of divine or intermediary spirits. It is the knowledge which brings enlightenment and salvation. It is concerned with getting to know the hidden mysteries of the godhead. It is an inner enlightenment which reveals mankind's soul and mankind's relation to God.

RABBI - It is not correct that Anny Besant, who died in 1933, has created the Theosophical Society. It had been founded by Blavitzky. Besant joined later. Let me add a rather revealing instance. Once, while traveling in South India, Besant came across a small, sickly boy with the name of Jiddu Krishnamurti. She adopted the child and had him, in due course, educated in England. She finally declared, that Jiddu was the incarnation of Jesus !

EG_ - Theosophy should not be mixed up with Anthroposophy for which Rudolph Steiner is responsible. Anthroposophy is based on a form of christian esoterism similar to that of the Rosicrucian Movement. Steiner offered to guide the spiritual part in the human being to the spiritual in the Universe. Anthroposophy communicates knowledge in a spiritual way. "Everything contains a spiritual reality", is its basic slogan.

CAROL - Theosophy - and possibly also Anthroposophy - are based

on analogues. By this method they try to explain to a person the essence of his being. They claim, that they succeed in doing so by trying to lead him to an inner revelation of the relationship of God to the universe and of mankind to God.

RABBI - In order to make a person come to an understanding of God, Theosophy makes use of every possible approach. It may point to what goes in nature; or it may make use of symbolism or mythology. The essence of Theosophy's teaching is, that an increase in knowledge - this, by the way is the mainstay in the program of all gnosticisms - may bring about a fundamental change in the individual itself. And the budding theosophist is assured, that on achieving a certain degree of knowledge an angel will enter into him. And whatever the individual thus possessed by an angel may utter in such a state of knowledge, is uttered by the angel inside the individual.

ASHER - It seems clear to me now, that the Theosophists, the Anthroposists and their likes have got many of their ideas from the Hindu world. What about the Christian mystics ?

RABBI - They form a distinct group by themselves. After they have been dead for some time - and after they have been declared "blessed" or even "saints" - a large number of the male and female mystics can expect to gain their permanent niches in the Church.

CAROL - Though I feel restrained by the Rabbi's injunction and warning, that we should respect that which is holy to other religions and other people, I cannot refrain from saying that these saints are nothing but hysterics. In addition I find their "case histories" singularly uninteresting. I would not care to hear more about them.

EG - I fully agree that we leave the catholic saints to their enjoyments in the christian heaven, and turn to the far more interesting mystics of Islam.

CAROL - Do you find them interesting because they have a certain affinity with what the Kabbala is about ?

EG - Not necessarily.

RABBI - Although the Sufis - and to a certain degree the Ismailis - form a distinct mystic sect of Islam, it would not be too wrong to say, that every faithful Moslem harbours within himself a certain mystic streak.

EG - At least a readiness to develop such a streak.

RABBI - Except for the Saudis. They belong to the austere Wahabi sect which is strictly against anything which smells of mysticism. They are also against saints, against reverence shown to graves and so on.

ASHER - Vaguely I know something about the Sufis already, but I

have never heard mention made of the Ismailites.

RABBI - But you have certainly heard of the Agha Khan. Ismailites are followers of the Agha Khan family. They form a mystically inclined Shi'ite sect. These people search for hidden meanings in the Qu'ran - as the Kabbalists do in the Tora. They seem to have evolved their own concept of salvation under the influence of zoroastrian myths and neoplatonic ideas.

EG_ - I would call the Sufis the prototype of religious mystics. They search for God more by intuitive experience than by a metaphysical or even a rational approach.

RABBI - In his respect one may compare them to the ancient prophets.

CAROL - The Sufis - this name derives from the woollen coat they wear - reacted against the luxury in which the Court of the Khalifs indulged. They preached the return to the simple life of the Prophet Muhammad. They accept that all religions are right, as has been pointed out in the Qu'ran.

EG_ - The Sufis will tell you that they try to reach God with love. They try also to achieve that spiritual completion in which Muhammad succeeded, when he was granted his revelations on his ascension into the heavens. By fasting and by foregoing sleep; by the constant, mantra-like repetition of Allah's ninety-nine names - the Sufis try to reach a special psychic state of consciousness.

RINAT - In such a case the Song of Song would suit them, I think.

EG_ - The Sufis maintain, that it is possible to attain a sound vision of God by using symbolisms and imagination instead of logic and reason. They identify God with one's innermost Self.

CAROL - The disciple is assured, that under the guidance of a Sufi Master - a so-called Pir - he can be united with the Creator.

EG_ - That is to say, that his self will be united with the Self.

CAROL - But the Pir will have to make it clear to his disciple, that whatever he perceives is only a product of his ecstasy and not reality.

RABBI - The exclamation of many a Sufi in his ecstasy "I am he whom I love - and he whom I love is I", is often recited.

EG_ - By the incessant recitation of the divine names - I called their's a mantra-like recitation - they do indeed gain a state of ecstasy. They try also to discipline their bodies. They adopt certain postures. They learn the technique how to control their breathing.

RINAT - Like the faqirs.

CAROL - Yes, like the faqirs. Certain Sufi orders use also dancing and music to reach the desired state of ecstasy..

ASHER - Are these the so-called "Whirling Dervishes" ?

CAROL - They go under this name. They claim, they gain in this way a state of total concentration by which they know that God resides in them.

RINAT - One hears lately so much of an increasing wave of islamic fundamentalism. Is there any mysticism associated with this kind of islamic faith ?

EG_ - Hardly ! It is more a political movement than a religious one.

RABBI - I do not agree ! It is definitely a religious movement, though a militant one which makes use of political pressure - and all kind of violence - to achieve the total and absolute predominance of Islam as it is preached by the ultra-orthodox Moslems.

EG_ - Wherever islamic fundamentalism is strong, their first and foremost enemy is their government. "Anyone who does not rule in accordance with Allah's revelations in the Qu'ran, is an infidel", is their slogan.

RABBI - They see also enemies among the non-islamic countries. "Islam has its enemies everywhere - and this forces us to fight the enemies of Islam wherever they raise their heads", these fundamentalists proclaim.

CAROL - They demand that the injunctions of the Qu'ran are followed in the minutest detail. They do not allow females to mix with males. They demand that the women are veiled when they meet men and so on.

ASHER - I read the other day that one of these Fundamentalists in Egypt - or it may have been in Iran or in Algeria - veiled the face of his infant daughter.

RABBI - We can definitely say that the islamic fundamentalists are not to be counted as mystics.

ASHER - Tell me please: am I wrong to say that also the alchemists were a mystic order of Islam ?

CAROL - Not in the sense you suppose. They did have certain mystic beliefs, but that is all. They were favourably accepted by Islam, because their work supposedly proved the greatness of Allah. Alchemy may be said to have been a forerunner of science. But there was a time when Christianity suspected a danger in the alchemists' ideas.

RABBI - Until not so long ago Christianity saw a threat also in the sciences and the scientists.

RINAT - Tell us about the alchemists, please.

CAROL - Alchemy engaged in what we would call today scientific research; but they saw in their work a spiritual activity. Alchemy

flourished in China, India, Egypt and Greece already in antique times. In the Middle Ages, and especially after the Renaissance, it invaded also Europe. This was at the time, when also the Kabbala gained acceptance - and aroused the interest of the alchemists. Alchemy is very esoteric in character. The alchemists had a mystic concept of God. They thought they could perfect God's creation. Strict secrecy about doctrine and technique were demanded from the initiates. The alchemists saw, apparently, their main task in the search for the "Philosopher's Stone" which not only could supposedly change base metals into Gold - for gold meant symbolically truth and perfection - but could also reveal the secrets of life, truth, longevity among other things.

T H I R T Y - F O U R

ASHER - On many occasions in the course of our talks the question has cropped up in my mind, in how far all what has happened to our friend Chaim; in how far all what has happened to each one of us in our lives; and in how far all what is going to happen to us in future - has been predestined, has been predetermined.

RINAT - I too have often been thinking along these lines. But each time I have made an effort to suppress my urge to come forward with the question, whether everything which happens to us is made to happen to us; or whether it happens with our conscious or subconscious contribution; or whether it happens by pure coincidence. In short: whether all which we experience, enjoy, suffer and so on has been predestined? Or whether we have a free will in all we do and what we decide. I know well that we have already thrashed out this question - but it would do me good if we could talk about it gain - and if possible, enlarge on it.

AVNER - Are we not giving the term 'predestination' too great an importance? Can you mean predestination to be anything else than a chance event to which you are wont to apply a causative term?

RABBI - The question of predestination and predetermination, of providence and of fate, has since long agitated our philosophers. For example: the question of a nation's election, or of an individual's selection come under this heading.

RINAT - I can understand the meaning of predestination and of providence; but what of predeterminism and fate?

CAROL - Predetermination means that an event could not have happened otherwise. Fate describes a destiny from which one cannot escape.

AVNER - Predestination has to mean, that the life and destiny of a nation, no less than that of an individual, have been running on a pre-set course. If you believe in this, you will have to maintain that the Jewish people have been selected, elected and predestined to play a great role in history - even to lead the world. And you will have to conclude, that I and my family's encounter with the Concentration Camps of the Nazis has been fatefully predetermined for us. Can you really believe this? Has the past history, and more so the recent history, not shown that this is nothing but nonsense?

RABBI - Believe me, I am not the only one among the Rabbis who do

not accept a predetermined special role of the Jews among the nations.

EGG - I, on the contrary, do firmly believe, that once upon a time our people has been elected to be prototypes of ethical living and moral behaviour, of selfless conduct and of humanitarian principles for the world.

AVNER - Why and how can you say this ?

EGG - Maintaining this to be the case, I base myself on a rather negative argument. This is and remains my sincere belief: because in the course of its history the jewish people have so often failed in the fulfillment of their duty; and because in accordance with common reason the jewish people have since long forfeited their right to survival; and because the jewish people so persistently neglected most of the moral principles which have been prescribed by the Power Above - which though distant and absent, I am sure never ceases to keep an eye on what goes on here on earth - the Jewish people should long ago have disappeared in the same way as other peoples have disappeared. But contrary to all expectations and all commonsense the jewish people has survived to this day. Instead a recurring phenomenon could be observed: each time our people have strayed from the expected straight path, it has been punished. In the course of its history it has very often and very much strayed off the right path. And it has again and again been very heavily punished...

RINAT - You mean the Holocaust ?

EGG - Yes, I do. The Holocaust is such a punishment. It is one of a series of such punishments. The Holocaust is only the latest and the severest of such punishments. The jewish people were every time punished for having neglected the duty imposed on it. God - or however you may call the Supreme Power which takes such a great interest in our people - has now created for us the environment where we can prove ourselves; where we have no more our commonly used excuse that we cannot move and act freely; where we cannot anymore come forward with the never missing defense argument, that we are not allowed to do what we want. At this stage in jewish history we find ourselves here and now in an ambience, where the intellectual and spiritual class of our people can freely and unhindered unfold their genius to develop into an ethical nation....

AVNER - You mean Israel ?

EGG - Yes, Israel, the newly re-established Jewish State. Cite me any laws of natural history; cite me the history of another people in the past; cite me the history of another nation present or past which can be compared to the history, the fate and the revival the jewish nation

has experienced ?

CAROL - You should be careful not to talk in the name of history. The psychologist Erich Fromm once wrote that "...the history of man is the graveyard of great cultures that came to catastrophic ends because of their incapacity for planned rational voluntary reaction to challenge".

RABBI - Is there not a flaw in both your arguments ? I say this because originally and primarily Israel had not been created to offer a home to the Jews, but to build up a centre where a solid eternal Jewry can survive.

EG - I do not consider this a valid argument. Whatever the initial aim and purpose may have been; whatever the original reason may have been - these have only been the roads leading to the ultimate purpose which I have outlined.

CAROL - Why did you speak of a a centre for Jewry and not one for Judaism ?

RABBI - Because the survival of the first is the precondition for the survival of the second.

ASHER - And if so: can Judaism survive in a secular state ?

RABBI - Judaism's ethical values can certainly survive.

CAROL - Can assimilation not play havoc also in Israel ?

AVNER - In this case, I am certain, Judaism's ethical values can flourish, can survive, can be enjoyed and can find nourishment also without Judaism.

RABBI - Under such circumstances the only surviving segment of Jewry will be the Haredim.

EGO - Might such an outcome under such circumstances not possibly have been the purpose of such an evolvment ?

AVNER - As our questions are now digging to such depth, let me ask you, whether Zionism could have been born without a God ?

CAROL - Allow me to enlarge this question and ask you, whether Redemption could have come about without the mysticism underlying the zionist movement ?

ASHER - And let me add also my question: can you imagine a future for the jewish people ? Can you visualize a Judaism without granting God an explicit place in the scheme foreseen for the world in general and our nation in particular ?

RABBI - All you have asked ultimately boils down to the question, whether our actual, or any future Jewish Homeland, could not have been planned; could not have been erected; could not go on flourishing without it being associated - at least to some degree or in some form - with God in the background. I personally can only think, that it could easily

have been attempted - but that it would ultimately have turned out to be impossible.

ASHER - But you will agree, that the original dreamers and planners did not associate God with their dreams and plans.

RABBI - What does this matter ? God acts without waiting for the Jews to turn to him with their plans and proposals. And furthermore, do you realize that at the time of which you speak there were large numbers of Jews who did not imagine nor expect and plan an independent state which had to have all the religious institutions or other religious trimmings a "normal" independent state would a priori be expected to have ? No, my friend ! These original pioneers imagined and expected and planned nothing more than a spiritual centre for the Jewish people.

EG - Had you - or the original socialist pioneers - wanted to, planned to, intended to do away with God in the planning and in the rebuilding of a Jewish home, you would have to concede that there is a God to be replaced or ignored. And this would have been independent of the question, whether he might still be vital and of help or not.

AVNER - I do not think it would have been so bad, had only such a spiritual centre, and not a state with all the religious trimmings, - and even without the complicated government machinery - been planned and achieved. It would not in the slightest have bothered me, had such a state only been a stopgap until the time the Messiah arrives.

RINAT - What would in such a case have become of all of us ? Of you yourself in particular ? I begin to think that this state of ours was planned in time and for the right time - and that it was ready when it was most needed.

RABBI - Let us not overlook and also concede, that the original planners, carriers and builders of the Zionist ideal were secular Zionists who wanted only a normal state, i.e. a state like all other states; a nation like all other nations; a state and nation with its very own criminals, prostitutes, illiterates, murderers, policemen, judges - and its own economically deprived classes.

EG - You mean to say, that the secular Zionists ignored - or wanted even to do away with - the true Jewish uniqueness ? In other words: that they planned a Zionism not motivated by messianism ? This would have given the Holy Land a rather strange, an improper face, I must say.

RINAT - I fully agree. This would have amounted to a desecration of the Holy Land.

RABBI - Like the Christians you too speak of the 'Holy Land' when you speak of Israel. This is a wrong habit. The Bible says nowhere that the land is holy. God spoke only of a holy people.

EG_ - The Holy People made the land holy, I suppose.

AVNER - It was not so much their Holiness than the freedom from slavery which primarily and ultimately did forge the israelite tribes into a nation.

RABBI - They became a nation after they were given the Tora and the Commandments at Sinai - that is after they were given a legal and an ethic basis. With that moment they became a compact people and a true nation. And on this basis, this people's and this nation's long suffering has in our own lifetime come to an end. And we can live now in our ancient, our proper home.

AVNER - Do you really believe, that suffering is a coin with which you buy an independant state with all its paraphernalia ? Do you really believe, you are no more dependant of the goodwill - I may even say on the whims - of the other peoples and nations in the world ? Do you really believe, that the nations, who have kept silent when the Germans went about to exterminate the Jews, have repented their silence and have offered us our land of Israel on a plate ? When I spoke about silence of the nations of the world I did not mean a silence of cowardice but the always and everywhere lurking silence of antisemitism. -

RABBI - You are wrong, Avner. We Jews do not justify our return to Israel as a grant from the non-jewish world in compensation for our centuries-old suffering. Nor do we consider our Israel a remuneration for the victims of the Holocaust. Never think that our new state has been gratuitously given to us. Throughout our exile history we Jews have never ceased to claim this country as ours. And we have now legally taken it back. It is now legally recognized as ours. And furthermore: Israel has not been created as a band-aid for the bad conscience of the nations of the world. Our State of Israel has not been established to whitewash those who stood by while the Germans slaughtered the Jews. The Jews' own and persisting efforts to verify their claim to the Land of Israel precedes the Holocaust by thousands of years.

EG_ - And never overlook, that the active steps the Zionist Movement took to fulfill this hope, were taken in hand before there was even a thought of a Hitler and of a Nazi Germany.

AVNER - And again I return to the question which has bothered me: Can your words possibly contain the hint, that you subscribe to the thesis the return of the Jewish people to its ancient homeland could be an indication, nay the proof, that all this has been predestined ?

RABBI - I do not believe in predestination. I do not believe in a divine appointment of my people. But I believe in the mission our people have to fulfill towards itself. And in any case, here is one

instance at least where Israel has a message: our actual status of a living nation; our survival to this day as a people; and our having with our own efforts rebuilt our own new state - prove to the remnants of other peoples that they should not give up hope; that the rebirth of a nation after 2000 years is a definite possibility.

EG - We may possibly not be entitled to the belief, that we have the right to speak of predestination; but in my opinion we have every right to speak of election or selection. I cannot perceive of any other reason why we have survived to this day. We have been elected for a predestined future - this I firmly believe.

AVNER - You seem to base your diagnosis on the past history of the Jewish people. In my less optimistic prognosis I base myself on the anything but soothing actuality I observe in our world. However, if your diagnosis is right my prognosis is grim.

EG - Maybe ! But do not get upset. We ourselves shall never find out who of the two of us was right and who was wrong.

ASHER - Let us return to a more positive mood, please. May I enquire about the attitude of the other religions in our neighbourhood to the question of predestination ?

RABBI - From its beginnings Christianity has definitely and finally affirmed, that all and everything in the world - and in and for man - is predestined. St. Paul maintained, that nobody can be saved by his own efforts, only by God's grace. However, he makes it very clear, that God's grace is not predetermined by man's predestined destiny. Most all Church Fathers and later theologians agree with Paul's judgement. Luther and the later protestant theologians, in particular the Calvinists, taught that predestination is central to the christian faith. However, most of the protestant theologians of modern times reject the principle of predestination.

CAROL - Also modern philosophers have pondered about the problem of predestination. F.Schleiermacher thought that predestination results in a religious individual from his being conscious of his dependence on God. Rudolph Otto somehow agreed: predestination, he wrote, is the religious individual's interpretation of his dependence on God; and of man's realization of his own impotence and unimportance.

RABBI - It is a fact, that a person who believes in predestination has the singular benefit, that in an adverse situation he has not to look for a supportive belief in magic, or for an outside hostile influence to explain what happens to him.

ASHER - What about Islam ?

RABBI - Everything in our lives is predestined, Islam says. The

span of our life; the quality of our life; our successful adventures in life; our failures in life - all of these are predestined for us. And this applies not only to the single individual but also to a nation. "If God had willed he would have made you into a nation", says the Qu'ran. And in another sura it is said: "God leads astray whom he pleases, and guides whom he pleases".

AVNER - How can Allah then blame a Moslem who has deviated from the moral path ? Who has sinned ? Who has committed a crime ?

RABBI - It is to be assumed, that the predetermination of all and everything a person does, in no way frees that person from his very own responsibility for all his activities in life. Man is given the power to chose between good and evil - but however man may chose, he will of necessity chose that which God has predestined he should chose.

EG - For completion's sake I will mention, that the Bhakti form of Hinduism contains a belief in predestination. Vishnu predestines some souls to blessedness, it is written, and others to damnation without consideration of the individual's merits.

CAROL - The classical form of Hinduism, however, has its own attitude to the question of predestination: no divine power will and can interfere in a man's life. It is a person's karman which plays this deterministic role. But a person can improve his fate - that is to say his karman - by his free will.

AVNER - Talking about "free will". If all a Moslem does - to the last lifting of his finger - is predestined by Allah, how can that poor sinner be blamed for his sins ? If, as is taught in Islam, my 'free will' is in truth not a free choice; if whatever way I take is directed by divine will; if even my so-called free will is predestined - how can I be made responsible for my actions ? I cannot understand such a way pf reasoning. My mind cannot come to grips with such a theology.

RABBI - 'Islam' means the total submission to the will of Allah. And questions like those you ask will never enter the mind of a good Moslem.

AVNER - I still do not understand. Divine will, human free will or predestination, this is the question. Does predestination imply that God has determined - most likely at the time he is supposed to have created the world - what is going to happen in this century ? If so, could he have planned all the rotten things to happen in this century as have happened in this century ? And whereas they did happen; and whereas all this did happen in the presence of God, this can only be a sign that this God is impotent. I am going to be more specific: if you really maintain that every event is a predetermined one, then also

the Holocaust has been predetermined by your God. In such a case also Hiroshima has been predetermined by your God.

RABBI - Do not talk of "your God". Try for a change to think of God as your God too. And think and act - for a trial period at least - in the way God may want you to think and act. And now to your question: accept that the things you enumerated may indeed have been predetermined, or that they may not have been predetermined. We do not know. Realize that God's will and intentions remain hidden from man.

EG - I am going to be still more explicit. There is no need to introduce even the irritating principles of predestination and even less that of predetermination. I am going to start my own argument from a different angle. Do you realize, that once you talk of something like predestination, you eo ipso accept that a God exists? If a God exists, you will have to agree that this world has been created by God. If God has created this world, it stands to reason that he had created it for a purpose. If the God who has created this immense and wonderful universe for a purpose, he could also have straight away realized the what and how and whence of this planet he had planned. But he did not. He did not have to. And whereas everything in nature is working in such a perfect and smooth way, we are entitled to say, that also in the evolution of our nation's life and development - as well in that of all nations past and present - there must be a purpose, a plan, an aim. We have discussed this issue already some time ago, I think. And though, in my view about our life and about that of this world in general, we all and everything else are items in an existing over-all master-plan, it is exactly the free will granted to man which decides his fate, his next stage of being.

RABBI - Predetermination or not, man has definitely the free will to choose how he acts and how he restrains from acting. Were there no free will, there could not exist a difference between moral good and moral evil, since each depends on the individual capability to choose between the alternatives of good and evil.

AVNER - Seems to me, that the Moslems succeed in doing so without their claiming to possess - or to be deprived of - a free will.

RABBI - I very much wish every Moslem success in his choosing between good and evil under the umbrella of his independently governed and outside directed right to choose.

ASHER - Does what you said just now about 'free will' represent the 'official' Jewish view?

RABBI - In Jewish view man has the free will to choose. We have the freedom to sin or not. Again and again this is pointed out in our

Scriptures. I am going to cite only a few such instances. "Good and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth come from God....it is for you to chose", says Ecclesiasticus; and again "...he has set water and fire before you; put out your hand to whatever you prefer". And in the T'nach we read: "Today I place before you life and prosperity, death and disaster". Ben Sira said: "God does not lead persons astray, but created them with the freedom to sin". Also Sa'adya taught that man has the free will to chose. The Pharisees, though they seem to have believed in predestination, granted man the right to do good or to do evil. Their contemporaries, the Essenes on the other hand believed, that man has no free will to act as he likes; that God has a priori determined who will do good and who evil. The Rabbinic Schools of the Talmud era taught the belief, that man's salvation depends on God and not on what man does or does not do - but that man is in every instance responsible for the evil he does.

CAROL - Christianity does not make any concessions to free will.

RABBI - It can impossibly make any such a concession. With regard to man's future and his salvation, a free will would contradict the doctrine that God's grace and judgement intervenes in man's fate. St. Paul told his followers that nobody can be saved by his own efforts; that only by God's grace can man be saved. To St. Augustine freedom to chose meant absence of restraint. Those who sin by their own free will are to be condemned, he maintained.

EG - Here the problem of Theodicity has to be mentioned, that is to say the question of God's justice. It is a complex question which we may tackle some other time. In principle it implies, that we must rely on our freedom to chose and act in order to gain salvation. We have to have freedom to chose, so that we can be aware of and justify our expectation of being granted salvation.

T H I R T Y - F I V E

RABBI - This evening we shall turn our attention to a detailed study of what Christianity has to say with regard to the soul of man; with regard to the resurrection of man; with regard to the meaning of life and death. We shall discover - and should not be surprised at this - that many a concept has been taken over - or maintained, if you like - from Judaism. But we shall not indulge in an analysis of this fact. We may come across residual traces of gnostic influences, and this will make us understand the extremely hostile position the Church has taken against gnosticism. But also in this regard we shall not allow us to be delayed by a more detailed discussion of these factors.

The same attitude and program we shall adopt in our approach to what Islam believes and teaches.

RINAT - I have a request to make, Rabbi. From the little knowledge I have in these matters I have gained the impression, that among the religious systems, the christian and islamic theologies in particular, and more even than the Jewish one, revolve not only around the questions we have so far aired with your help - that is, the meaning of life and death, and the significance of man and his soul's relationship with the Infinite - but also around the issues of man's immortality in relation to his soul's reincarnation and transmigration. Could we hear from you a short explanation of these concepts? I have often felt regret that I did not put forward this request at the outset of our talks.

RABBI - I understand you well and agree with you. Although we have in other contexts made mention of these notions, we shall first discuss, as a preliminary to the subject I want to talk about this evening, a short survey of the theological doctrines at which Rinat has hinted. She has quite rightly pointed out that these issues have a special place in most all the religions past and present. In our own Scriptures we have ample material relating to this theme. I shall quote at least some of it.

ASHER - Please define the meaning of immortality and then, please, proceed from the general to the specific.

RABBI - Simply defined, immortality means the survival after death. This may relate to the soul alone or to the soul and body remaining united after death. The belief in immortality, that is in a kind of after-life, can be found in most of the ancient and modern religious religions. We have already pointed out, that visits to graves, prayers to and for the dead, ancestor worship and so on are indications of such a belief.

ASHER - What is in this respect the specific Jewish belief ?

RABBI - The Jewish Bible presents no definite concept of immortality. At the most - this is the opinion of the philosopher Hermann Cohen - immortality applies to nations and never to human beings. As we have already learned, the ancient Jews believed that their dead continued to exist in Sheol; the Greek theirs in Hades; the Babylonians theirs on the other side of the 'World Sea'. Of course, this kind of a continued, shadowy, miserable existence cannot be called the after-life of an immortal soul.

CAROL - The Babylonians believed also, that man - Gilgames was the specific prototype - could with the help of some mysterious food or drink become immortal; and that by this means man would be dispensed from having to join the dead in their underground world.

RABBI - We have already mentioned the ancient biblical view that the souls, made up of Ruach + Nefesh + Neshama, have no independent existence apart from 'Bassar', the body.

ASHER - Wherefrom comes the human soul ?

RABBI - In Jewish doctrine the human's Ruach - that is his life - is granted to man by God. It is this gift from God which distinguishes mankind from the animal world. And although the soul complex leaves the body after death, it is not a 'living soul' anymore but a dead, a shadowy one which enters Sheol along with the body. Also death is not understood to be the physiological or traumatic ending of a life, but the punishment man is given for the sins he has committed in his life. "Life lies along the path of virtue; the path of the vicious leads to death", we read in the Proverbs. "The dead will never rise", laments Job. "Man, he dies and lifeless he remains. Man breathes his last, and then where is he ?"

EQ - But on another occasion Job also says: "This I know that my Avenger lives....after my awakening he will set me close to him".

RABBI - This verse expresses a later development. It indicates indeed that there will be a revival or a resurrection. It is this verse in particular, by the way, which is cited by Christian theologians as indicative for man's immortality and future resurrection. The T'nach, however, does not reflect such a belief. When a man dies, the Bible says, all his communication with God, and equally God's commitment to him, have come to an end. Later on, in the sayings of the Prophets in particular, this negative outlook undergoes a change. The Prophets promise revivification of the dead and resurrection of the body. This is very clearly expressed in Ecclesiastes: "The spirit shall return to God who gave it". Jesaya predicts that the dead ".... will come alive; corpses will rise and awake". Ezekiel says "I am going to open your graves; I intend to raise you from your graves, my people". And the Second Book

of Macabees declares loud and clear, that the then prevailing belief in resurrection would be baseless "were not the fallen also to rise again".

AVNER - Permit me to remark, that the popular opinion you cited of the shape and form in which the soul survives does not appear to me logical and consequential. It should be more probable that the soul ages with the body and dies along with the body.

RABBI - What you remarked about the popular opinion is anything but logical. In the opinion of mankind, from the original human tribes to the faith-bound religious individual of today, the soul the infant receives from God is not different from that which has departed from its ancestors.

EG - This applies generally, but am I entitled to say, that all in all only few references are found in jewish scriptures about an eventual resurrection ?

RABBI - It is better to say that the principle of resurrection is not as clearly expressed in our Scriptures as it is in the myths of primitive peoples where - according to J.G. Frazer - the yearly repeated resurrection of the dying god is symbolic for the yearly occurring death and renewal of the vegetation.

CAROL - This is a commonly found symbolism in most ancient religions. In the religion of the ancient Canaanites, for instance, Baal is the god of rain and fertility. He is killed by Mot, the god of death who is the symbol of the dry season. But Baal will ultimately - and assuredly and without fail every year - return to life again.

RABBI - There is an abundance of such myths. Greek and egyptian, nordic and slavic legends are nourished by them. The Mystery Religions are based on them. However, what I have quoted from jewish Scriptures about resurrection are only very vaguely expressed notions. They seem to have been added at a later stage in reaction to - and by adoption of - the conceptions which were prevalent in the surrounding cultures at that time; and which were absorbed from there into the jewish cultural sphere.

EG - But I have to repeat that, as far as I know the promise of some kind of resurrection has never become an essential part of the Jews' belief system. You have mentioned Job saying "if a man dies he will never live again ...". It is more likely that this has been the accepted view in biblical time. I heard once the opinion of a bible expert, that what Ezekiel said about the bones to be raised, refers to the revival of the spirit of the nation and not to a physical one, and especially not one of individuals. The same may possibly be said about the words of Jesaya you have mentioned.

RABBI - There may be some truth in your argument; but in Daniel it is clearly stated that "...many of those who sleep in the grave will awake,

some to eternal life, others to eternal shame". However, I must concede that these are later developments - if not secondary additions. And I must also point out, that the entire complex of resurrection is mainly a christian concept. In christian doctrine it very clearly means the future revival of the dead body.

CAROL - Resurrection is also a mainstay of Zoroastrianism.

RABBI - I am aware of this. However, in Zoroastrianism the body is totally destroyed, and only the soul survives and will be resurrected. I agree that the possibility of a resurrection is far less circumscribed in Judaism. But I feel entitled to say in conclusion, that the concept of resurrection - that body and soul die together and remain together underground until they are resurrected; or that the soul returns to the body in the grave and both, soul and body reunited, are resurrected - is known in clearly and exactly defined terms only in Christianity.

EG_ - In India the dead - the total person and not the soul only - is perceived to be in due course resurrected and to go to some kind of heaven and hell.

CAROL - In ancient Egypt the soul lives on as a bird.

RABBI - A few words now about transmigration. It is the mainstay of the Indian religions - Hinduism, Buddhism etc. It means that the souls have to wander endlessly from one body to the next. The soul - or whatever is perceived as its equivalent - leaves the body after death, enters a human being or an animal body, there to be reborn. It may also have to be reborn into a tree or in a rock.

EG_ - In Indian religious philosophy the transmigration of the soul had no beginning; and it goes on indefinitely. Desire-loaded or -initiated actions pollute the soul during its sojourn in the human body. They corrupt the soul. They add to the load of the karman the individual already carries from prior existences. This situation will inevitably lead to a series of further, often endless reincarnations. The belief that this is the fate of man and his soul after death - originally mostly characteristic for the Indian religions - is reflected in many of the western religions.

RINAT - For how long will this process of reincarnations go on ? Until when will the soul have to wander about ? When can the karman's slate at last have become clean ?

CAROL - The wheel of deaths and rebirths turns without a break.

EG_ - In Buddhism and Jainism it is taught, that once an individual becomes aware of how much his ignorance puts him into bondage; and once he feels induced by this knowledge to spend his life as a monk or as a nun - this decision and the resulting conduct can remove the unethical and sinful matter from his karman. He will have reached his enlightenment.

His Self, his soul will become totally dispassionate and omniscient. At this stage his moksa is achieved.

CAROL - And this will at last lead to his salvation.

AVNER - Did I hear the word "soul" mentioned as that which is being reborn ?

EG_ - Transmigration, as you heard the Rabbi say, plays a great role in all indian religions. It is the Atman, the Self, the Jiva, the Paruse which is reborn.

ASHER - What is the Jiva ?

EG_ - It is that which Jainism understands as being the soul. It is that surviving part of man which is condemned to eternal transmigrations as long as it is covered with the dust of karman. I have once already explained the Jains' view of karman. However, I want to point out that transmigration is only a part of the far larger principle of reincarnation or metempsychosis. I would thank the Rabbi to give us a more extended explanation of the metempsychosis principle.

RABBI - Metempsychosis is the incarnation of a pre-existing mortal soul in a succession of bodies - human, animal - or in inanimate matter.

CAROL - The concept of reincarnation or metempsychosis is widely known. It may not have originated in Hinduism, but it has found its best known expression in the Indian religions.

EG_ - As you have just heard, metempsychosis is an important factor in Hinduism. It's basic meaning is clearly outlined in the "Law of Manu". A detailed explanation of this Law's principles would occupy too much of our time. I shall, therefore, mention them only in headlines: "The soul survives after death. Our actual life is only the preparation for the next. Samsara is the succession of rebirths. The next rebirth is determined not by the gods - who are affected by the same fate as mankind - but by dharma and karman, the person's way of life and his own actions in the preceding life".

CAROL - Belief in reincarnation is known to have been prevalent already in the earliest developmental stages of mankind and in all cultures. Next to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism it had been preached since long also in the ancient Egypt of the Pharaos, and in Iran's Zoroastrianism. In Greece - as you have already learned - Pythagoras, Plato and Plotonius among others believed in metempsychosis. Epidocles tried to give a more detailed explanation. He taught that man's immortal soul has fallen from above; has been imprisoned in a body; and is condemned to wander from one body to the other until it is restored to its original state of purity.

RABBI - However, during the period which you have described, Judaism did not contemplate the possibility that the soul could be reincarnated.

And - you may take this as certain - there prevailed at no time the idea, that the souls were to be punished by migrating from one life to another. Whatever may appear to you indicative of a reincarnation in the sermons of the early Prophets, had the meaning, that punishments are imposed and rewards are granted on a national scale, in this world, and not in any future existence.

CAROL - May I point out that metempsychosis played an important role in Manichaeism which, as we have learned, was of such great importance in the beginning of the christian era. However - and this too has already been mentioned here - in Christian teaching metempsychosis is denied as not compatible with Christianity's doctrine of resurrection.

EG - Also in Islam is the reincarnation of a soul into another body not a part of its belief system. Only the Sufis and the Druses believe in reincarnation.

CAROL - I think also certain other shi'ite sects believe that the soul can transfer to another body. This is expressed in the principle of the inherited endowment of their spiritual leaders, the Imams.

RABBI - Most likely also that of the Agha Khans.

CAROL - However, these instances you mentioned are certainly not the only ones. We can with confidence say, that the belief in the survival of the human soul; and its entering one body after the other after death, still persists in many parts of the world and in many circles in our own world. In our times it has been again and again introduced in modern philosophical and theological perceptions. It is not only incorporated in the various reform movements of Hinduism, but is also represented in modern western thought, theology, philosophy, religion and psychology. Not only the German philosophers we have already mentioned, but also C.C.Young and Aldous Huxley belong to the modern believers in a reincarnation of the soul.

RINAT - Does also Buddhism accept this ?

EG - To some degree.

AVNER - But you told us that Buddhism does not know of an atman, of a soul or a Self. What then transmigrates ?

CAROL - It is the thought, the mind, the intellect of the individual which transmigrates.

EG - To be more precise: it is man's mental activity which gets free after death. It is man's intellectual energy which wants to get free from the wheel of samsara. Certain buddhist philosophers are more precise still: it is the last thought the individual has before he dies. This is the "emigrating thought"; it determines the new birth, the "rebirth thought". These thoughts, by the way, make it possible that the souls of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama can be discovered in their new

manifestations.

ASHER - Do the various religions and cults differentiate between reincarnation and transmigration ?

RABBI - There is only a difference of degree: transmigration includes the possibility of a transmigration into non-human bodies; and secondly, it is not always conceived as the consequence of a karmic necessity.

CAROL - As far as I know, transmigration as defined in this way, played hardly a role in Greek philosophy. For the soul, according to the generally accepted teaching of those times, disappears along with the body into Hades - of course, with the exception of the predilected souls which go straight away to the stars or to the Elysian Fields.

RABBI - But there were exceptions: Pythagoras told his disciples that he remembered a series of previous incarnations and transmigrations in his former existences. Also the Orphics preached a transmigration of the souls.

RINAT - Does not the story of the "Dybuk" indicate that Judaism knows of, and believes in, transmigration of the soul ?

RABBI - Originally - that is in biblical and rabbinical Judaism - transmigration was as unknown as the concept of reincarnation. Only at a later stage in the development of Judaism - in consequence of its contact with other cultures, as I have outlined before - were both these concepts absorbed into the Jewish belief system.

CAROL - What about 'Gilgul' which is an accepted concept in large Jewish circles ? Does it not have the same meaning as what you have described as transmigration ?

RABBI - The belief in Gilgul among the Jews is no contradiction to what I have just now said. Yes, the meaning of Gilgul is that of a soul having to migrate from one body to the other. But Gilgul has appeared in Jewish thinking only in relatively recent times. It appeared first in the Kabbala - and the Kabbala appeared only in the 12th century. But in principle you are right: it has the same meaning as transmigration, as the rotation of the souls through a series of bodies. Some theologians have seen the transmigration of the soul as a punishment. Others see it as a divine favour which, in the divine scheme of things offers the soul another chance; or the opportunity to achieve the desired perfection by atoning in every new existence for sins it has committed in former lives; or to erase the shortcomings it has acquired in former existences.

CAROL - There is the generalized popular tradition, that the souls of those who have died childless will have to return to earth for another chance.

EG - This can only be a Jewish tradition. From what we have heard here, the Church and Islam would condemn such a belief as evidence of

superstition, if not of heresy.

RABBI - You are right. Christianity eo ipso and without exception rejects this or any other such concept as a contradiction of its specific doctrine of resurrection. Such a belief would also be incompatible with the role of Christ as the Saviour. However, when St. Augustine speaks of the "revolutiones", that is of a "revolving of the souls", he may well have meant something like their transmigration.

ASHER - What about Islam ?

RABBI - The Sunnis reject the idea of a transmigration, as they do that of reincarnation in general; but the Sufis and the Druse - as has already been pointed out - do accept both.

CAROL - The entire issue has in every age been a matter of discussion in their theological and philosophical circles. Medieval philosophers have made their contributions to this problem. Ibn Rushd claimed there is no resurrection. The soul is immortal, he said. It rises from the dead body in form of an image or as a substitute of the earthly body, and not in combination with the body itself. Avicenna described the soul as essentially intelligent, immaterial, indestructable and immortal. The human intellect, he taught, is a separate factor and has to be perceived as separate from the soul. The soul came into existence along with the body; but it has a life of its own and operates on its own. The soul is only temporarily housed in the body, Avicenna wrote.

EG_ - I think it is of interest if I mention in this context, that Goethe, Kant, Lessing, Schopenhauer - and possibly also other philosophers on the German firmament - appear to have played with the idea that the soul transmigrates from one body to the other.

RABBI - But with certain restrictions: their self-important teutonic mind could not perceive, that such perfected minds as theirs could ever completely disappear. They had more a reincarnation in mind than a transmigration. But they hinted quite unmistakably, that this advantage is not granted to the world's hoi polloi.

RINAT - Have the philosophers and literati of other nations and other generations expressed similar views ?

RABBI - I have not enough knowledge in this respect as to answer your question.

EG_ - I have looked through the literature and came up with a negative result.

RABBI - You will remember having learned already, that Anthroposophy, Spiritualism and Theosophism too accept that there is a transmigration of the soul. And this also the Gnostics have done - and do. In these belief systems the soul is considered the source of spiritual life which does not disappear. However, it is not viewed as the bearer of life.

T H I R T Y - S I X

CAROL - Our frequent and vast sweeps through ancient and modern theology have provided us with much new knowledge. However, there are still a few questions, especially with regard to the christian religion, which to my mind - at least for my personal satisfaction - require some further elucidation. For instance: has Christianity recognized the way the Old Testament perceives and values the human soul? That is to say: does christian religion accept the jewish evaluation of the soul with regard to its relationship to the body and beyond that to eternity?

RABBI - Initially, that is only in its earliest stages of existence, the Church did accept the biblical doctrine. The Church accepted even the traditional and popular jewish views prevalent at the time of Jesus. Let us not forget that the first christian leadership - we better call them the jewish-christian leadership - had been a rather uneducated and unsophisticated lot. A century or more was to pass before these men were replaced by a well educated, sophisticated and hellenized group of men. This second set of leaders had grown up outside Palestine, within the hellenistic-cultural ambience which dominated the social and cultural life of the area on this side of the Mediterranean Sea. In accordance with the usual steps Jews will take when they are about to divest themselves of whatever jewishness is left in them, these second and third generation Christians began to hellenize and romanize not only their traditional jewish names, but also their jewish, tradition-sanctified bible-based concepts. This was the stage when christian doctrine began to reflect the dominating greek philosophy and culture. I can give you many instances to this effect, but in reply to your original question I shall show you, how this process influenced the way our souls were henceforth perceived. Nefesh, which was life and was man's Self, became now Psuche. Ruach became pneuma, the spirit. The soul itself, that which was understood as the spiritual energy, was designated the "Zoe, the inner life of man". This "Zoe" was designated to become eternal, to last for ever. It became now the established teaching that, whereas the soul was considered to derive directly from God himself, it had eo ipso to be indestructible. It had to possess eternal life. And logic led to the conclusion, that it had to be the soul of man, this indestructible element in man, which is assured of salvation.

ASHER - What, in christian perception, happens after death to this indestructible element in man ? In other words: what do the Christians believe will happen to them and their souls after death ?

RABBI - There will come the day, teaches the Church, when by grace of Jesus Christ the individual's body and soul will be resurrected from the grave. This, according to the fundamental teaching of Christianity, is the meaning given to resurrection. This is the specific christian theology which is reflected in - and at the same time also derives from - the resurrection of Christ. "If Christ be not risen", Paul told the Corinthians, "then is your preaching in vein and your faith is also in vein".

ASHER - This kind of belief structure could not have been the brain child of the men around Jesus, of whom you said they possessed only a primitive education. From where then, did the early Christians acquire this specific faith complex ?

RABBI - They had not far to search. This concept - of a resurrection which takes place sometime in the distant future - was taken over from contemporary Judaism, which, in turn, had absorbed it from the neighbouring Canaanite religion.

CAROL - This original, simply and plainly formulated christian belief in a future resurrection must have been further influenced - and somewhat changed - by the at that time widely prevailing Greek-Platonic doctrine that the humans are made up of a soma and a psuche - of a body and a soul.

EG - But it was at the same time also made irrevocably clear that, although all mankind may expect to be eventually resurrected, not all mankind can expect to benefit from the eventual resurrection. For it is very clearly stated in christian doctrine, that even though the souls of sinful men will also be resurrected, only the souls of those who have sincerely believed in Jesus Christ and all he stands for, can expect to enter the everlasting existence, which has been made possible by the grace of Christ. Those who do not express this sincere belief, and who do not confess their total faith in Christ, will not have the slightest chance to be raised to eternal life.

RABBI - This is right. The belief in Christ is a fundamental and basic precondition. It is the pre-requisite to salvation. For - and this is fundamental - on his own, and by his own rights, man is not immortal.

CAROL - For the Christian the final conclusion from all these speculations has to be, that at the 'End of Days' only believers will be resurrected. My school friends had to learn by heart these quotes from the Gospels: "...fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell";

and "...the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham....the rich man died ...and in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham...".

RABBI - We find also reported in one of the Gospels, that Jesus promised the thief crucified at his side "...today you will be with me in paradise". There may be more specific quotations but for the moment I have them not at hand.

CAROL - From all this it is by far not clear, what part of the dead is resurrected. Whether the entire body or only the soul ?

RABBI - As far as I know, Christianity does not provide a uniform doctrine with regard to what happens to man after his death. Specifically the New Testament does not provide a detailed description of the entity which is going to be raised. Neither could I find an authoritative dictum about the relationship between soul and body in general. At best the pious wish "Requiescat in Pacem" may be taken to indicate, that body and soul remain united after death.

EG - To my knowledge, it is the commonly accepted supposition of the various christian theologians, that the dead are to sleep until the Day of Judgement, when they will get up from their graves to be judged. Only after the ultimate judgement has been passed, will the fate of man finally be decided: it will be either paradise or hell.

CAROL - This is right. However, there is the proviso, that the Saints are an exception. They go straight to heaven.

ASHER - Mention has been made here, as far as I remember, that there had initially been some degree of adherence of the Church to the philosophy of Philo.

RABBI - Although the original enthusiasm for Philo and his philosophy has in the course of time died down, to this day Christian theologians and philosophers like to claim - without any reason or justification - that Philo of Alexandria, the egyptian-jewish philosopher, had been one of their first adherents.

ASHER - What precisely did Philo contribute ?

RABBI - Philo's philosophy reflects in part the greek philosophy which was at that period - that is around the beginning of the christian era - dominant in Egypt.

CAROL - Philo's teaching was in no way different from that of Plato and Aristotle - only the words and images he uses are different.

RABBI - But he did preach, that the soul is the pre-existing, the transcendental, the incorporeal "Logos" - whereby he defined the Logos as a projection of God's mind.

CAROL - This is right. But, strangely enough, he differentiated

between the qualities of the various souls and graduated them according to ranks. Thus he granted Moses the highest rank among all souls. He preached also, that soul and body are separate entities; that bodily desires pollute the soul; that the soul is, through its power of reason, related to the divine realm; that, on leaving the body after death, the soul wants to return to that realm.

EG_ - The same proprietary claims as on Philo the Church has also made on Tertullian, another philosopher of that period. I have read some of his writings.

RABBI - Tertullius - as he is also called - had a somewhat different approach. He describes the soul, which is born of the breath of God, as "immortal though corporeal and representable".

EG_ - From my reading I learned, that the original christian doctrines regarding life and death, evil and sin, resurrection and after-life have in the course of the centuries been, if not changed, given at least a somewhat different interpretation.

RABBI - Patristic influence - that is the teaching of the Church Fathers of the first few centuries - has brought on a gradual change in the christian conception of the soul's survival after death.

AVNER - Who and what were these Fathers of the Church ?

RABBI - These philosopher-theologians - most of them were bishops of the Church - preached and taught their personal, often conflicting, interpretations of the Church doctrines which their predecessors in office had pronounced. From the teaching of these Fathers arose the - in the end generally agreed upon - perception, that man is made up of an immortal soul and a body; and that God does not want to separate soul and body forever. Body and soul will - this was therefore the conclusion - be reunited at the time of Resurrection.

EG_ - But the Church Fathers introduced also something new in the Church's theology: that at the conception of the embryo God creates for each human being a new, an individual soul.

RABBI - This was not the commonly accepted doctrine; for others among the Church Fathers were of the opinion, that not only the body but also the soul is transmitted by the parents.

ASHER - Did the Church Fathers - whom we can, apparently, call the formers of the Church's doctrines - say anything about the principle of metempsychosis ?

RABBI - Not at all, as far as I know. In general, reincarnation is hardly ever mentioned in christian theology, as you have already heard. The only exception, as far as I know, is Origen, one of the more important Church Fathers. As he greatly admired Hinduism; and as he no less also

adored Platonism, it is not a surprise that his ideas about metempsychosis run more or less along the religious line which is dominant in Hinduism and in the philosophical ideas of Plato. Origen preached, that the soul passes through many embodiments; that it grows and matures along ethical lines; and that in the end it is judged in accordance with the positive or negative development it has undergone in the course of each of these reincarnations.

CAROL - Origen, who lived from about 180 till 254 of our era, has presented also some other interesting ideas: before the world was created, he said, tiny portions had been constantly falling away from God. These had turned into spirits. When the world was created, these spirits were changed into souls. The soul, Origen preached, is a spiritual and also rational substance which is identical with man's spirit and mind. All rational creatures, he said, had been created at the same time and at once. In the beginning they had been pure, made up of intelligence in their entirety, and without body or matter. However, as they were in addition capable of doing not only good deeds but also evil ones, they failed the tests to which they were exposed, and committed many evil things.

RABBI - The only exception in this scheme presented by Origen was the soul of Christ which had kept its pristine pureness. Depending on whether - during their sojourn on earth - the souls failed or succeeded to keep their original state of purity, they were turned into demons or angels.

CAROL - We should mention also Irenaeus who was another, no less important figure among the Fathers of the Church.

RABBI - He has certainly left his mark. He disagreed with the idea of the other Church Fathers that the soul existed from the beginning of Creation. He disagreed as well with the belief in the transmigration of the soul to which some of the Church Fathers subscribed. Every body has its own individual soul, he preached; both, soul and body, will be reunified at the time of Resurrection. He denied Plato's belief in the soul's immortality. Finally, he refused also to acknowledge the divine origin and character of the soul. The human soul, he said, has the very same nature and characteristics as the body it inhabits.

EG - There is quite some neo-platonic influence in this teaching.

RABBI - There is indeed a marked neo-platonic influence on all the early developmental stages of christian doctrine. Its impact had been noticeable already in the early centuries.

CAROL - I want to mention that Plotonius, a leading Neo-Platonian, and others like him, had preached that the soul is a concrete, individual

substance which has its origin in the 'World Soul'. In this world of ours it is joined to a body, he believed. After death it returns to its original home.

RABBI - St. Augustine thought along similar lines: the soul is a spiritual substance, he preached, which is intimately united with the body. Man and his soul are created by God as one unit. However, he warned that the soul, even though an emanation of God, should not be perceived to have also been created in God's image. He viewed the soul as the active principle and the body as the passive one.

EG - About a thousand years later, in the 13th century, another sainted man, Thomas Aquinas, added his share to the ongoing discussions among the philosophers and theologians: body and soul, was his opinion, constitute a single unit. The soul has the configuration of the body. It is made up of a separate, a 'spiritual substance' which can lead its own separate and individual existence after death.

RABBI - Having reached this point, my friends, I propose we do not expand our comparative studies further, as this would lead us into modern times. We have heard and learned what is essential in making us understand the christian interpretation of the soul's relationship to man and God.

RINAT - Could you, before we conclude this chapter, please say also a few words about any possible significance the 'Purgatory' has in this respect ?

RABBI - I shall need only a few words to do so. The strange concept of a Purgatory has originally not had a major significance in christian theology. The simple reasoning behind this useful "invention" took on a prominent role in catholic theology only around the middle of the 12th century when it became a Church dogma as "...that place or state of temporal punishment, where those who have died in the grace of God expiate their unforgiven venial sins.....before being admitted to the Beatific Vision".

RABBI - Let me repeat that in my judgement we have learned enough about the christian concepts of the soul and the destiny which awaits it after death. You will agree that it has presented us with a very interesting subject for discussion. I shall now have to say some words about Islam and its views on the same topic. However, I shall limit myself and explain the matter as far as possible to that which interests us within the context of what we have been discussing. With the background we have acquired in the course of the evenings, it will be possible - as has been in the case of Christianity - to extract only the relative essentials from the islamic theology.

You will recognize in islamic teaching many a biblical, talmudic and jewish-folkloric thread. This ethiologic characteristic has already been mentioned on some previous occasion. It is understandable from a historic point of view. For the Moslems claim to be the true successors to, and ultimate heirs of, Israel's divine election as God's people.

AVNER - With what justification ?

RABBI - With that of being the heirs of the first-born son of Abraham. They claim to be the descendants of Ismail, the first-born son of Abraham. They claim, that their Prophet Muhammad has, in a direct revelation from God, been appointed Allah's prophet; that he was the last prophet to appear on earth before the Day of Judgement; and that all the announcements of previous prophets are superseded by those of Muhammad, the latest and last Prophet of God.

RINAT - How can they explain away the fact, that Israel had been appointed before ? How can they explain the Epiphany at Sinai ? How can they explain away the Bible received by Moses ?

RABBI - They accept and acknowledge all this as facts. They accept all you said as historically and theologically true. But, they say also, that Israel has not followed God's commands. It has not lived according to the rules of its appointment. For this reason God has cancelled the appointment and election of Israel, and has elected and appointed instead the peoples of the islamic faith.

AVNER - Very convenient. What else do they have to say ?

RABBI - Most other islamic concepts will be easier acceptable to you, as many of them are taken over from Judaism and Christianity - even though many of these had developed only in the Middle Ages.

CAROL - But before you continue in your outline of Islam's theology we shall have to acquaint ourselves with a few facts. Islam is not a religion in the western sense known to us. You will do better to see it as a totally self-contained civilization. A Moslem is totally engaged in and by his religion. The western concept of a separation between religion and state is unknown in Islam. On the contrary: everything which goes on in the islamic sphere at once acquires political relevance.

RABBI - The islamic state was started with the primary aim to apply God's word in practice.

EG - This meant making Islam to rule the entire world. This meant, that such a global religious state cannot suffer any other state to co-exist. This meant the abrogation of the non-islamic world's right to exist at all - except perhaps as subordinate entities.

RABBI - It is a fact that Islam is a communal religion and not one which individual Moslems, or even a community of Moslems, is allowed to

interpret and map out for themselves. A Moslem can only see his religion's ideals and perfections within a community of his correligiousists.

EG_ - And whereas a community in Islam is usually a politically guided and inspired one, Islam and its followers accordingly identify their task, duty and aspirations within the frame of territorial conceptions. That is to say, they divide the world into a part dominated by Islam and in one in the hands of the infidels.

CAROL - You may say "still in the hands of the infidels".

EG_ - This is right. This is the meaning of 'jihad'. Islam cannot be discussed, or even imagined, without its 'jihad' legacy. Classically it is the holy war to liberate lands - whether they had once been in moslem hands or not - from its infidel occupiers.

RABBI - Who are always seen as illicit and illegal occupiers.

CAROL - And here and in this context you will easier understand the idea of an after-life in Islam: it is the reward for those who have died in the fight for the interests and wellbeing of Islam. This promise is taken very seriously in the moslem world. And this will make it less difficult for you to understand the average Moslem's wish for what he interpret's as martyrdom.

RABBI - A few more words about Islam. The original religious concepts outlined in the Qu'ran - which, as I said, clearly point to a jewish and christian origin - had been developed and interpreted from hearsay and from anecdotes told around the camp fires by a desert people of illiterate Bedouins. I must warn you, however, not to interpret these words of mine as derogatory or ironic. Muhammad was certainly a well informed and learned man. He was in fact a genius. And above all, he was fully convinced of the truth of what he preached. And in addition he was sincere in all he said and asked to be written down.

CAROL - The Qu'ran witnesses what you said. The interpretations, which the Qu'ran offers to the questions we have been studying here in our circle, provide a well perceived and easily followed knowledge of the religious perceptions and philosophies which were in circulation in the 7th century.

RABBI - With regard to the soul, the biblical view of a Ruach and Nefesh is reflected in the Qu'ran which teaches, that Allah created the first man by breathing into him Nafs, the soul or Ruh, the spirit.

EG_ - There are, however, in this respect some variations in the conception and the interpretation of the various islamic divisions. For instance: in the Sufis' belief Nafs is the seat of lust, and Ruah the spiritual breath which can communicate with God.

RABBI - Another specific islamic teaching is, that when Adam was

created, his soul contained also within itself the souls of all his descendants.

AVNER - Does this mean, that Adam's soul survives and incessantly spurts forth, one after the other, the souls of all newcomers to this misfortunate earth ?

RABBI - Not exactly. Until a soul enters the womb it is kept in some kind of 'Allah's Treasure House' or in a receptacle near God's throne. At the end of time, it is promised, the Day of Judgement will come. This Yom-al-Din is a 'day of decision and catastrophe' for the resurrected souls: they will be presented with their misdeeds which have been recorded in books at the time they lived on earth.

RINAT - Does this not mean that the Moslems believe that there is a resurrection to come ?

RABBI - Again, not all currents in Islam agree on this. Among those who accept that there is going to be a resurrection, are the Sufis. They believe that the soul, along with the body, will be resurrected shortly before the Day of Judgement. The Sunnis teach a complicated sequence: the soul, having died with the body, will be revived by God together with the body immediately after the death had occurred; that is to say, while both are already in their freshly dug grave. But at this stage they are revived again, even if only for a short time. They will die again, and will have to remain dead in their graves until they are resurrected for the Yom-al-Din.

RINAT - What do the Sufis have to say about their soul ?

RABBI - These mystics believe, that it is the task of the human soul - which they define similarly to what we have heard described as the 'Self' - to establish a close, an intimate relationship with God. This is possible with the help of 'Fana' - a name they give to their mystical experience. When 'passing away' in the mystic state of Fana - which they describe as that of a mystic absence of the Self - they sense that the Self, the divine essence in man, is 'annihilated' in them.

CAROL - The Sufis have their own specific view of the soul. For instance, while the philosopher Al-Ghazali preached that the human soul is made of an immaterial substance, Sufism took an opposite attitude and perceived it as a material substance. They have also otherwise created their own classifications and definitions: to them Nafs - it is called by them also 'latifa' - which is contained in the human body, refers to what is negative in man, as well as to his illnesses and sins; while al-Ruh, the spiritual factor of the soul, represents all that is good in man.

RABBI - I heard once a Sufi describe his religion as a spiritual

alchemy which purifies the soul of its disciples.

CAROL - This is indeed an appropriate metaphor for a Sufi.

RIMAT - What association had Islam with Alchemy ? I learn only now that they knew of Alchemy.

CAROL - It can be said that Alchemy always had a significance for the Moslems. Alchemy was introduced in what went then as the scientific world, when islamic culture was at its zenith. In Islam 'Al-Kemya', which the West has disfigured into 'Alchemy', is loaded with symbolisms referring to the incessant aspiration of ethic man to purify his soul to a state of perfection.

CAROL - But the knowledge of Alchemy goes far back in history. The Gnostics were the first to maintain, that everyday science cannot achieve as good results as Alchemy. This made the Gnostics, by giving religious names and characteristics to the symbols of Alchemy, turn the latter into a vehicle of Gnosis. To give you an example: as an impure metal aspires to be freed of its impurities, thus a soul imprisoned in matter strives to purify itself from the flesh. Hence the transmutation of metals became the symbolism for the regeneration of the human soul.

EG - Throughout the Middle Ages Alchemy has been viewed as a secret knowledge which was available only to the initiates.

CAROL - May I add that Alchemy, in its specific meaning and with its specific expectations, was known to the Chinese long before it was adopted by the Sufis, even before the gnostics learned of it ? The Chinese alchemists aspired to gain perfection through their dedication to the mysteries of alchemy in the certainty, that they would thus be enabled to achieve immortality.

EG - And I have to add, that Alchemy had also since long had a large following in India. The indian alchemists saw in gold a symbol of immortality. And may I further add that in the East, as well as in the West, even in modern times alchemy's symbolism is made ample and frequent use of by philosophers and writers. Goethe was one of them.

(From some of the Rabbi's recent remarks I had become aware of the conclusion he had reached, that we had learned from him what we had asked him to teach us; that he had removed the doubts which had tormented some of us; that he had answered the questions for whose clearance we had approached him. This made me think that he had planned to bring our "study circle" to a close.

I had also noticed with great pleasure, that my four friends had greatly enjoyed our meetings; that they had undergone a great change in their perception of and attitude to religion as far as it affects them personally; and that without exception they had already on their own set out to enlarge and deepen their knowledge by studying the appropriate literature.

For this reason - and without consulting my friends - I approached now the Rabbi with the proposal and the request which I had readied since some days already.)

EG_ - We have learned very much under your guidance, Rabbi, and many of the doubts and uncertainties in our minds have been cleared up. We are greatly obliged for your help and your patience, your teaching and your guidance.

However, I am sure to speak also in the name of my friends if I request you to grant us one or two more evenings as we need your guidance also in finding real understanding for - among other problems facing us as Jews - the meaning of evil and sin, of redemption and repentance. And we would very much like to know, how you view the future of the Jewish people; how you imagine the destiny of the Jewish nation to be; and in particular what you think of the future of our homeland, of Israel.

T H I R T Y - S E V E N

RABBI - Evil exists in the world. It has existed since ever. We cannot get away from this fact. Every religion and every philosophy dedicates energy and time to this reality - and to the endeavour, to fight the effects of evil on the individual and on society. I do not think we have to make a wide survey to learn the views which theologies and philosophies have formed about evil - for there is hardly ever so much consent in any other field of human existence and coexistence as in the general and specific attitude to the undesirability of evil. Neither can we expect to learn much from references to mythology's untold number of stories about the first appearance - or the original introduction - of evil among the living beings on earth.

RINAT - Why had it to be within the divine plan that there is evil in the world? Why has everyone of his creatures to suffer because of this regretful fact?

ASHER - If evil is necessary to achieve a purpose, why can this purpose not be sought in some other way?

RABBI - For man to have a free will and the freedom of choice, there must be good and evil to choose from, must it not?

EG - No doubt, evil is a test of a man's ethical balance.

Rabbi - You must see evil as one of the factors which separate man from the God who is totally free from evil.

RINAT - What is Judaism's attitude to evil?

RABBI - Good and Evil, set in opposition, are frequently mentioned in the Bible. If we read Genesis with some care we have to conclude, that Good and Evil were originally known to God only. But after "Adam's Fall" this knowledge was acquired by mankind too.

ASHER - But the snake, the symbol of evil, existed already before Adam bit into the apple.

RABBI - It was only after that bite that the snake became a symbol of evil.

CAROL - The psychoanalysts will tell you that the snake has since ever been a sexual symbol.....

RABBI - Let us not invite psychoanalysis into our conversations, as otherwise we shall have to measure everything, not only 'Adam's Fall', with their criteria.

AVNER - What has the Kabbala to say ?

RABBI - The Zohar says, that evil has its root in God, in the 5th Sefhira; that is to say in that of 'Din', the Sefhira of Judgement. God holds Din in his left hand, and Zedek, Justice and Mercy, in his right hand, the Zohar says. Evil results whenever both hands do not collaborate harmoniously.

ASHER - What do the ancient philosophers say to this ?

CAROL - Let us only quote Aristotle who says that evil is emotional in origin; that whereas the human mind "is never ready to produce without appetite, man will never develop the instinct to do good".

EG - Spinoza is more outspoken. The human intellect, he says, is powerless against emotions. Knowing what is good and what is evil is not enough. As soon as the knowledge becomes an emotion, the desire for the good becomes strong enough to defeat the desire to do evil.

CAROL - Talking of 'desires': it is a welcome human emotion for the Greeks -- but is considered evil by the Buddhists.

RABBI - It is acceptable within certain limits in Judaism.

CAROL -- You too may find it interesting, that in Hinduism evil is one of manifestations of the Godhead.

RABBI - Interresting indeed, for according to the Kabalists evil is "in the hands" of God, as you have already heard.

AVNER - This explains at last, why God permitted the atom bomb to be exploded over Hiroshima; and why he looked with such indifference on the Holocaust.

RABBI - I think, my friend, that with such a reasoning you place yourself under a misconception. You should free yourself of it and accept it as an axiom, that God does not favour evil. Listen what Jesaya had to say on behalf of God: "Take your wrong-doings out of my sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good. Search for Justice. Help the oppressed. Be just to the Orphan. Plead for the widow".

EG - Avner's is a fundamental misconception. The Holocaust and Hiroshima were essentially man-made evils. God did not intervene to produce or to prevent them. The cry that "God is dead", and the lament "Where was God at that time" are less than ever misappropriate in these two instances. Mankind was tested when its scientists set out to produce the evil of the Atom Bomb. Mankind was tested too when its planes unloaded the Atom Bomb over Hiroshima. And Germany was likewise tested by the way it organized and executed the Holocaust. And all mankind was tested in the way it tolerated and ignored the Holocaust. The individuals' and the nations' karma will reflect this additional load they have henceforth to carry.

RANIT - I am still not satisfied with all your answers. You will not deny that God could have prevented Adam from biting into the fateful apple - and in consequence there would not have been a "Fall". In other words: whereas God knows and foresees everything, he could have prevented sin from raising its ugly head. Could he not have? Is it not true that he could have abrogated sin at any stage thereafter, had he ever had the wish to do so.

AVNER - But he never cared to do so! Had he done so, he could have prevented suffering from ever affecting long-suffering mankind. For it appears evident to me, that suffering is always born from sin.

RABBI - Of course! God could have prevented evil from ever becoming manifest in the world. But whereas God could have prevented sin from invading the earth and did not do so, he must have a valid reason for allowing sin to become a factor in human life. What may the explanation be? you will ask me. I do not know; but a sentence in the Talmud, in the Rabbah Tractate, may possibly give you a somewhat acceptable answer: "Were it not for the evil impulses, no man would build a house, or marry a woman or beget children, or engage in business".

CAROL - I cannot buy this. He could have created an a priori just and happy world.

RABBI - You better submit your priori to the fundamental truth, that God's justice is different from that of man. Yes, God's justice is beyond man's comprehension. These very same questions as yours' have been raised by the Kabbalists: why do the righteous suffer, they asked, and why do the wicked prosper in this world? Why do children suffer? And they answered themselves: because rewards and suffering are in relation to man's deeds here in life and in former existences. You may perhaps see in the Jewish nation a suitable example for what the Kabbalists mean with their questions: the Jewish people suffer now as they have suffered in the past, because they sin now as they have sinned in the past.

ASHER - Does this mean, that the Jewish nation is hopelessly condemned even in these our times when we have established our own state? How does Judaism value or weigh man's sinning?

RABBI - In Judaism sin is defined as a contamination of the god-given laws. It is seen as a breaching of the relationship which God has formed with man. Ultimately it means, that sin is man's contravening the laws of ethics; and of violating the rules of inter-relationship between man and man. By being conscious of his duty to avoid sin at all times and at all costs, man has the chance to be ultimately turned into an ethic being.

RANIT - Judaism imposes a heavy task on us.

RABBI - There is no other way out of this dilemma. We must always be aware that mortal man is inclined to do evil. In later stages of its development Judaism has added another ethiology - or better another dimension - of evil: the 'Yetzer Hara', which is not meant to represent an original tendency to do evil, but the temptation to do evil. And man and his evil deeds are judged accordingly.

RINAT - Can goodness be taught ? Can one learn to be good ?

RABBI - Judaism says you can learn to be good. Goodness faces you everywhere and at all times, it teaches. It is to you to chose, it admonishes you.

CAROL - We Jews are in any case better off than the Christians who are told, that due to "The Fall" man's nature is inherently corrupt; that man, by his own efforts, is incapable of goodness; that only God's grace can save man.

AVNER - You will not deny the basic demand ethics places on us, viz:- that we take upon ourselves the responsibility for every evil deed we do. I maintain, that there cannot be an excuse, nor an embellishment - and also no pardon - for man's evil deeds. From all our talks in this circle I have gained the consolation, that somehow and somewhere evildoers will get their dues.

RABBI - This is an important realization - and concession, Avner. And I hope it will also soothe your pain.

RINAT - Can a person ever avoid all the temptations which lead to evil deeds ?

RABBI - You must never overlook that we are endowed with the Free Will to chose. This has to signify that whereas we ourselves bear the responsibility for all we do, we should not grumble if we are made to suffer for our sins,. In other words: we cannot load this responsibility on others, nor blame God or fate for our misfortunes. This is clearly accentuated in the Bible. Also the Talmud is quite clear in this respect. "If a man sees that painful suffering is visiting him, let him check on his conduct". And another talmudic passage warns us that "...there is no suffering without a sin". Illness, misfortune, injury, we learn, are punishment for having sinned. The T'nach outlines also very clearly the consequences of how we chose between good and evil. Goodness brings peace and prosperity, we are told; and evil brings plagues, famines and wars. "Happy is the virtuous man, for he will feed on the fruit of his deeds. Woe to the wicked, evil is on him, he will be treated as his actions deserve", says Jesaya.

RANIT - Is only Judaism as strict as you describe ? What is the christian doctrine ?

RABBI - Fundamentally there is no great difference between Jewish and Christian views, as there is none between all the ethic religions. Who sins by disobeying God will die, we read in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. The Christian doctrine is expressed in clear-cut terms: sin has been introduced into the world by Adam's Fall - and man has for ever to suffer for this. "Sin entered the world through man and through his deed", stated also St. Paulus in his letter to the Romans.

CAROL - Cyprianus, a Church Father who lived between 200 and 258 of our era, attributed great value to this principle. Augustine developed it later into the doctrine of man's 'Original Sin'. And the Church has fixed it as a dogma which every believer has to accept as a divine dictum.

RINAT - Does it really say that because of Adam we have to suffer all our lives ?

RABBI - The Church says in loud and clear terms, that because of Adam all mankind is born sinful and guilty. For this reason, says the Church, mankind merits eternal condemnation. According to Augustine this 'original sin' is transmitted from one generation to the other; and therefore every individual is culpable from the moment of his birth.

EGO - Do not forget to mention, that this original sin can be washed away by the water of baptism.

ASHER - This is indeed a great advantage. What about the other sins a Christian accumulates in the course of his lifespan ? Can also all the other sins, all those which a Christian acquires in the decourse of his life, be washed away in a similar manner ? And finally: when and where can the Christian soul be freed from all the many sins it acquires during its bearer's lifetime ?

RABBI - The soul of a Christian will in due course have to face its divine judge. God has fixed a day, according to what is written in Acts, when the whole world will be judged in righteousness. And it is further written there, that God has appointed Jesus, "the Son of Man to sit in judgement".

ASHER - Am I justified to suppose, that none of this has entered Islam's doctrine about sin and judgement ?

RABBI - Nothing of all this the Moslems have taken over. They have their own clear-cut ideas. "Man's heart is prone to evil", is the basic idea. Sin, according to the Qu'ran, is mainly due to pride, to opposition to God, and especially to the denial of God. This is exemplified by Satan's fall from grace because he refused God's command to pay obedience to man. However, every Moslem is given an outlet through which he may find forgiveness for his sins. A Moslem who undergoes the right kind and number of acts of atonment which will lighten the load of his sins.

The Haj Pilgrimage, above all, cleans away all sins. However, all this does not suffice for a Moslem to find salvation ! He has to prove in addition, that he has performed good deeds, and that has a deep faith in Allah.

CAROL - Every man, woman and child - with the exception of the saints and prophets - will in any case be judged at the end of the days.

RABBI - The true believer is assured, that he will fare better than others on the Day of Judgement.

CAROL - I learned from a Druse himself, that his religion - you may call it a splinter religion of Islam with specific gnostic features which believes in a cosmic soul and is sure of reincarnation - offers man a chance to gain salvation with the help of the special knowledge which the Druses' wise leaders possess, and which is available to those who seek such knowledge - the 'Juhhal', the 'Ignorant Initiates', they are called - after they have advanced to the higher grade of the 'Aqils', the 'Followers', as these are called.

EGO - I am sure you will continue to hear again and again these same promises of reward and salvation, of punishment and damnation, of judgement and clemency, should we go on analysing the attitudes and the promises, the warnings and the threats which all religions present and past have held in front of their followers, whether they behave rightly or wrongly. All religions map out the paths to be followed or the limits to be observed by the faithful desirous of avoiding the threatening evil. But what is the true impetus we receive to make us avoid evil; to make us behave humanely; to make us live ethically ? Do we really receive convincing replies to our question of the why and how ? Is it not expected from each of us, that he develops into a moral human without having to be deterred by senseless threats and fanciful promises ? Can we not rely on that moral compass, which we harbour within ourselves, and which has been finely tuned by the cultural development our genes have undergone ? Allow me, please, to point again to my theory that we have to perceive our lives as a testing ground for the standard of our ethical values. Day and night we have to remain conscious of the fact, that our deeds and omissions; that our failings or our misconduct; that even our thoughts and their execution are under constant control. And we should be aware, that what we do wrong is ultimately not judged as sins to be washed away by some holy water; or to be cancelled by some fines imposed on us; or to be burned out of us in some hellfire - but as failures when our ethical conduct and our moral reactions are weighed on our own innate and finely tuned scales.

CAROL - Do you, within the frame of your explanation, see also man's

reactions to evil as tests of his moral strength ?

EGO - I think I have already in some of our past discussions exposed my firm conviction, that the vicissitudes man has to face on his own, as well as the global ones a nation experiences, are not punishments which end in suffering; or in punishment; or in extinction - but are tests whose outcome will qualify an individual to advance to a higher state of being; or a nation to survive with a firmly grounded reputation of cultural achievements. In the case of a nation it means also its continued existence in its surviving components and not as a footnote of history. From my observations - and within the frame of my personal philosophy - I am inclined to see in suffering not only a test but also an educational value.

AVNER - You apply your philosophy to the suffering we receive at the hands of fellowman; but how can you react in any but a definitely limited and purely passive way to the adverse powers of Nature you have to face ?

EGO - The world, once it had been created and consolidated into its actual form, is directed and ruled by the regular laws of nature. Man is - similarly as in other ways of life - tested by the manner in which he reacts to the events in Nature.

RABBI - Cannot God change the elements in your test ?

EGO - Only rarely will God interfere in the course of nature or history. The same applies to the effects human nature and natural history have on a nation's reaction. I may perhaps be entitled to see such an intervention of a superior power in our own lifetime in the onset, in the decourse and in the ending of the Holocaust.

T H I R T Y - E I G H T

AVNER - All through the past week I have pondered and weighed what we had been told here in our last meeting. I must confess, that I am beginning not to find your thesis a priori unacceptable. But I would need some more clarification before I can make up my mind. For instance, have I to conclude from your words, that you still insist the Jews have been elected to a special role ? Have I also to conclude from your arguments, that you still insist the Jews are the beloved children of God ? Can I see from your own example, that you still insist God protects his beloved Children of Israel ?

EG - You are not mistaken. I definitely and absolutely reply in the affirmative to all your questions. If you look through the history of the Jews of the last 2-3000 years, you can see behind every suffering and every fortune, behind every defeat and every success a guiding hand...

AVNER -a divine hand which gave its children a good spanking whenever they did some mischief.

EGO - Let us take the very recent history of our people and our country. You will be no less informed of all the details than I. Look at the war of 1967 ! This war had been, as you will agree, a very decisive moment in the history of this country, if not of the Jews everywhere. Had Israel not won this war, it would have ceased to exist. You will agree that Israel won this war against all possible odds.

AVNER - It won due to the stupidity of its enemies.

EGO - Alright ! It won due to the stupidity of its enemies. But who made these stupid in those decisive hours and day ? You will agree with me, I hope, that these enemies had otherwise, and throughout their preceding past, been anything but stupid; that they knew the prescribed political and strategic moves quite well; that they had a vast reservoir of material support and an ever sprouting fountain of emotional goodwill ll over the world. And was his not also the case in 1973. Israel was again at the brink of disaster - but did in the end win the war. How can you explain this otherwise than as a god-issued warning ?

ASHER - It was indeed a kick in the israeli pants.

RINAT - Am I justified to say, that there can also be such an interference, such a direction from above, to the benefit of one or the

other individual ?

EGO - Definitely so; and in every aspect so.

RABBI - What you all have been saying ultimately relates to the issue of Theodicy which mankind has since ever discussed. I mentioned this issue on a previous occasion without going into details. Theodicy is the question of God's justice. Therein the basic argument is, how far man is directed or forced to do evil; or in how far he has a free will; and in how far he can act accordingly. On another occasion you have raised the argument, that the snake, the symbol of evil, has existed - nay had been created - before Adam's Fall. You are wrong to take the snake as the representative of a cosmic power of evil. It is meant to represent the symbol for the threat to man's inner balance against doing evil; against what has been called here his inner gyroscope; against the wrong reaction in the test of his ethic fortitude. You must realize, that we live in a deterministic world. We are not automatically moral and responsible people. We behave morally and responsible because we want to behave in this manner - whatever the reasons for this may be. I fully agree, that we have a moral control instance within us. And I fully agree also, that whenever we react to outside stimuli in a positive or negative way, it is only rarely done for purely ethic reasons. Mostly we react under the threat of punishment. Or we avoid reacting at all.

EGO - I subscribe to what you have said. It follows, therefore, that a conscious effort is necessary to avoid our giving in to evil impulses. This our effort is greatly strengthened whenever we make ourselves realize, that we are facing a test; that whatever happens in those moments is not forced upon us by some irresistible outside power; that it is not due to destiny or fate - but is left to our free will to act and to decide. It is left entirely to us how we are going to act and decide.

AVNER - Don't we mostly act instinctively.....

EG - We surely do, but ultimately our instincts - even those primary and primitive ones of self-preservation - are dictated by our ethical attitudes and restrictions.

AVNER - Would you call a troublesome fellow, an incompetent clerk who tests my patience, also a test for my future life ?

EGO - Yes, surely so. Your reaction to the clerk's behaviour will mean the failure or success of your inner control instance.

RINAT - I read somewhere not so long ago: "If you feel burdened by a chronic invalid in your family, or by a demented brother, or by a child with a physical defect, think that it has been given to you,

has been placed upon your shoulders for a purpose".

AVNER - Who evaluates whether the test is passed or failed ?

EGO - We have an inbuilt sensor which tests our actions to this effect and makes us know whether we did right or not.

AVNER - To decide whether we are fit for heaven or hell ?

CAROL - No, it is the karman we carry in our soul

ASHER - ...which may be in fact our soul ?

CAROL - ...which weighs whether we have reacted in such a way as to remove the blamish which our negative reactions to similar events in past experiences has left on our karman.

AVNER - Than we must wait for the recurrence of such or a similar event ?

EGO - Not necessarily so; our action may - whether sub-consciously or consciously - recall with regret, pain or shame a similar one in which we have reacted badly or wrongly. Our positive reaction may also determine our behaviour in other, totally different situations where our morality is tested.

CAROL - This is in conformity with Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism who explain with karman everything which happens to man. Innocent suffering does not exist.

AVNER - Who will judge us when the time comes for us to face what you call the Divine Court ?

EGO - Karman is in itself the judge and judgement.

CAROL - We have learned, that in the mythology of ancient Iran the soul has to pass over a narrow bridge. The same judgement occurs in the myths of some Indian tribes of Central America. In many other religions the soul has to face a divine court after death.

RABBI - In rabbinical times it was taught, that at death the soul of the righteous Jew is separated from that of the wicked man's soul. This happens automatically and not by a judgement as in Zoroastrianism.

EGO - As I have pointed out - and as I have postulated - this separation is regulated by that automatic control system which is within our soul.

RABBI - Judaism may have a similar mechanism in mind; that is to say that automatically the righteous soul goes to the blessed abode - Heaven or Gan Eden - and the wicked one will be "slung away in the hollow of the sling".

AVNER - What will be judged and punished at the time we face this Divine Court ?

CAROL - I have a similar question: how are our sins weighed and by whom is the judgement pronounced ?

RABBI - The talmudic midrash has a suitable answer to this question: When the time comes, God will call the soul and ask: "Why did you commit all the sins ?". The body will answer "It was the body which sinned. Have I sinned since I was separated from the body ?". Then God asks the body: "Why did you sin ?". "It is the soul which has sinned and not I", the body replies. "Have I sinned since I was separated from the soul ?". And God brought soul and body together again and punished both.

EGO - This is interesting: I heard this rabbinic tale told by Indians too.

AVNER - People appear to sin by imitation. We should get rid of the first sinner we encounter.

RABBI - You are wrong. The Talmud has also here the answer for you: "Pray not for the destruction of the sinner. If sin can be eradicated and obliterated, there will be no more sin nor sinner".

AVNER - Is there a different evaluation and a different degree of condemnation between moral sins and what I may call "material sins ?

RABBI - Moral crimes are judged more severely; they are viewed as bad as idolatry.

AVNER - Do you subscribe to the condemnation of the homosexual and lesbian people ? The orthodox people hate them like poison.

ASHER - The Tora prescribes the death penalty for Jews who engage in homosexual practices.

RABBI - I do not condemn either homosexuals or lesbians. They have their own life style. It should not be our concern what consenting adults do in their private life. They want to live their own lives and they have the right to do so - as long as know that they have to avoid causing public disorder.

AVNER - What stand does Reform Judaism take in this respect ?

RABBI - For us they are good Jews and as decent people as the next Jew and the next man. That is to say, we accept them as Jews with all rights and duties. We have our own homosexual rabbis who care for homosexual communities.

AVNER - Would you perform the marriage of a gay couple ?

RABBI - I had so far not to face such a case. I will in all honesty confess, that I would avoid such an occasion - mainly because I do not want myself or my synagogue or my Movement to be involved in a bitter and degrading public debate. But I can assure you, that such a couple will have no difficulty to find a rabbi.

RINAT - Would a gay man or woman be absolved by the Church ?

RABBI - I suppose they would get absolution if he or she repents and promises to change the style of his or her life.

CAROL - In Christianity the water of baptism is supposed to remove one's sins. Bathing in the Ganges is supposed to have the same effect. Is such a procedure also known in Jewish custom ?

RABBI - Total immersion in water is prescribed for ritual cleanliness but not for the removal of sins.

AVNER - You forgot to mention the great benefit granted to the Jews on Yom Kippur. They fast and pray; they confess and repent - and lo' and behold comes the evening and they can eat and drink heartily again in the knowledge, that all their sins have been washed away. They have been forgiven by a clement and fatherly God.

RABBI - It is not exactly as you say. On Yom Kippur God will forgive the sins a man has committed against God, but not the sins a man has committed against his fellowman. These latter sins we will have to compensate in the ways prescribed by profane legislation or by the rules of the society in which he lives.

ASHER - What do other religions say, advise or conclude ?

RABBI - Christianity, as you have learned on another occasion, states that whereas man is afflicted by the 'Original Sin', also all mankind is affected by sin and deserves, therefore, to suffer.

ASHER - Does this not mean that mankind is a priori and eternally condemned - especially we who do not believe in Jesus and baptism ?

RABBI - Our christian brethren think so. But this unkind thought does not derive from the time of Jesus. I cannot imagine that he would ever have expressed himself in this way. The Original Sin complex was born in the 4th century.

CAROL - The association came just now to me, that this way of thinking may have been the cause and reason why the Church has such a poor opinion of women .

RABBI - This is very interesting. Try in your leisure time to elaborate this thought. It may also explain a similar attitude of the Moslem.

EGO - In Islam it is a great sin, and blasphemous in addition, to blame God for mankind's suffering.

RABBI - The greatest sin in Islam is idolatry.

ASHER - What have our wise men of the past to say to this ?

RABBI - An excursion down into the past would lead us too far. I shall only cite Sa'adya who said, that sins have been created so that the punishment and suffering we receive in consequence will make us humble. And I will also cite Maimonides who said, that every man eo ipso and by nature harbours sins and merits. If his merits outnumber his sins he is a righteous person. In an average person both, sins and

merits, are balanced. This applies equally to a state or a nation.

AVNER - And if sins outweigh merits we get kicked around.

RABBI - The traditional concept in Judaism - similarly formulated also by Maimonides - is that God rewards and punishes the individual according to his deeds and thoughts. This is more or less axiomatic in the Bible. There is also an old tradition, that most souls have the stay for one year in a kind of purgatory from where they are thereafter moved to paradise. And after all, many Kabbalists' consider gilgulim to be some kind of punishment.

RINAT - Has it any true effect if we confess our sins ?

RABBI - Confession of one's sins has great importance in Judaism as well as in Christianity. It has above all the great benefit, that it conveys to us the realization of having sinned; of having personal faults; of making us, hopefully, determined not to repeat the sin; of making us decide to eradicate our faults.

EGO - Did your words not convey what I had tried to say ?

RABBI - In a certain sense it does. Rest assured: in my opinion your hypothesis has great merits. However, in continuation of my reply to Rinat's question I have to tell you, that in Judaism the confession of one's misdeeds by omission and commission does not eo ipso deliver the sinner from his sins.

CAROL - But confession in whatever shape implies repentance.

RABBI - It does. Repentance means to regret the transgressions one has committed in the past. Confession is the verbalization of one's repentance. The principle of repentance is known in many religions, ancient and modern.

CAROL - And illnesses and misfortunes are explained - in the absence of a true repentance - as resulting from one's conscious or unconscious transgressions.

EGO - It is true: the confession of one's sins is the main liberating factor. But it is even more: it is the acceptance of one's responsibility for the sins committed. Repentance involves mostly a ritual procedure.

RABBI - Indeed, the Prophets advised, that repentance should be accompanied "by fasting and tears".

RINAT - One can only repent a sin if one feels guilty of a sin.

RABBI - You are right. In Judaism guilt arises mainly for sins which are consciously or deliberately committed.

AVNER - Is this the stimulus the Ba'ale Tshuva experience ?

RABBI - A Ba'al Tshuva, a Repentant Jew, a Returnee to God, may be motivated by his amassed sins or by his sense of inadequacy.

AVNER - Is the Ba'al Tshuva's way the best way ?

RABBI - The Rabbis said, that repentance and good deeds are the best way to be forgiven and to be redeemed.

RINAT - How much easier it is for a Christian, though he is born with sin and filled to the brim with sin. As soon as he is baptised all his sins are gone.

EGO - But one can also chose martyrdom. This is a still more efficient method.

CAROL - Even a sinner on his deathbed gets rid of his sins by being sprinkled with holy water.

AVNER - Is the repentant Moslem better off ?

RABBI - Allah is merciful and compassionate. He accepts a repentant. Sinners who repent and return to God ; who accept the truth of what Islam means; who do good deeds - this step is called 'Tawba' - are cleansed of their sins. They are henceforth as pure as they were at the time of their birth. Also a haj pilgrimage cleans away all sins.

EGO - The greatest luck is to die while on such a pilgrimage - for in such a case one enters straight into paradise.

CAROL - For the Sufis repentance is the first step taken on the mystic path. The Sufi's sins are cleaned away by a regime of ascetic practices. The performance of these exercises the disciple learns already at his initiation.

RINAT - From all you said here I understand, that by repentance we try to neutralize our guilt.

RABBI - It may be our primary intention. However, we must realize, that when we speak of repentance; when we vocalize our wish that we may be able to erase and annihilate what we did to others - we involve ourselves primarily in giving expression to our regret for having harmed or offended others. But, unfortunately, we hardly ever the thought comes to us of regretting or wishing away what we did to ourselves.

EGO - This may indicate a lack of that kind of supervision and control which we should have applied to ourselves - but it does not include the regret, the sorrow, the pain that we have not been able to develop the conscious trend to better ourselves.

RINAT - What about Tshuva in this respect ?

RABBI - Tshuva, the "Return" to a religious life, is not only the effect of remorse but to make amends, to correct one's faults and defects. It is not enough, says Judaism, to have the will to make amends, to change one's ways - to be aware of being tested - but divine mercy is necessary to make Tshuva truly effective.

CAROL - Is the sense of guilt I perceive not a warning against my

having sinned or that I am about to sin ?

RABBI - Guilt is indeed the awareness of having transgressed in thought, word or deed. Public or communal confessions; confidential or personal confessions - such made during prayers or otherwise - play a great role in many religions, especially so in Judaism. It indicates a great advancement in inner awareness - and also in moral status - to be truly aware of having sinned; of being anguished for having sinned.

EGO - It is an unfortunate human trait to react negatively to one's sense of guilt; to rationalise or compensate one's guilt - by shifting the guilt onto others.

RINAT - Psychologists tell us, that a feeling of guilt may cause a person to cut his hand; to break a bone; to scald himself with boiling water.

RABBI - I agree, there is always a cause and an effect; a cause for every effect. Scriptures - especially Job and Ezekiel - maintain, that whenever a person is affected by an extraordinary retribution this indicates an extraordinary guilt.

T H I R T Y - N I N E

RABBI - This will be most likely our last coming together under the aegis we have established when we met for the first time nearly a year ago. Of course, this should not and will not mean that we shall not keep alive our social contact, and shall not continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship which have grown between me and you all. I shall say aloud what I hope you all have thought for yourselves: that we had spent nearly a year together; that each one of us has benefitted from our discussions; that each one of us has widened his horizon. I will go further and say, that we may even have reorganized our outlook on life and what we think it stands for. And with your permission I will add a personal note: I have been fortunate to forge very pleasant and firm links of friendship with each one of you.

And now to "business" ! I do not propose to set a theme for this evening's talk, as we have - at least to my mind - already talked about all the relevant matters which had initially formed the impetus for our talks. We have constantly enlarged on this program; and we have never avoided themes which are on the fringes of this program. I agree, that we have not - and could not have - handled these matters in an exhaustive or encyclopedic measure. But it gives me deep satisfaction to notice, that each of you has since some time already set out to study on his or her own what had turned out to be to you worthy of further knowledge and of an expanded study. I prefer we do not take up again any of the subjects with which we have dealt before even though only to a more than superficial degree. For should we do so, we shall most likely only repeat what had been said before. I propose instead, that we air one or the other less related, but to you certainly also relevant matters, which each of you may have on his mind.

Will, please, anyone of you begin ?

RINAT - May I do so with the question, whether you believe God to be the author of the Bible ?

RABBI - The answer is in the affirmative, but not in the sense that God had up there on the mountain top dictated the Bible word for word to an eagerly listening and diligently recording Moses. Or even, as tradition wants us to believe, that God "with his own fingers" wrote every letter of the Tora. It is my firm conviction, that God has been

the author of the Tora's basic ethics which have been transmitted into the subconscious mind of Moses; which had since times past become the heritage of spiritually favoured individuals; and of which thereafter other divinely inspired men became aware - and were made the messengers. These mortals, who were endowed with an elevated level of spirituality, enlarged and verbalized what they sensed surging up within them. They dressed into words what they sensed were God's commands, demands and promises. They organized the messages they perceived into directives and laws. They fortified with easily understood metaphors what they had to communicate. And they transmitted what they comprehended, what they knew and what they thought, in form of a historic document of ever-valid dimensions.

EGO - I would add to what the Rabbi has so aptly formulated, that at every stage the Tora was passed on into the custody of its next custodians, it proved to have greatly benefitted from the spirituality of the preceding generation of interpreters. And there is no doubt in my mind, that every generation of those wise Rabbis of old, whose midrashim we hear and repeat today with delight, are to be counted among these wise and exalted successors. However - and I do not hesitate to call this development calamitous and destructive - what these wise rabbis adapted to the requirements of their own days, has by their successors been encased in halachic concrete. These halachic interpretations - since the time they were promulgated by those talmudic scholars of old - have been jealously protected from any infringement whatsoever by the iron claws of the rigidified rules and laws of today's Halacha.

RABBI - There has not been a stage in the social and cultural development of the Jewish people when there had not arisen the need to adapt Judaism's ethic principles and laws to the changing times. Last Shabbath we read in the weekly Tora portion the divine advice: "Remember the days of old; ponder the 'Shinot', the years of each generation". The famous Rabbi Samson Hirsch translated the word 'shinot' as 'changes', suggesting, that we must understand the changes which occur in every generation. Each generation is different, he said, and we have to act accordingly. This is important! It should be the guideline of every generation of religious leaders to recognize, that what had been thus "modernized" hundreds of years ago, does not in every instance and not of necessity, suit the demands, nor fit the comprehension, of our own generation. Unfortunately, none of today's modern-thinking Jewish leaders dares to modify the antiquated interpretations and adaptations which are congealed in the codified Halacha of the Shulchan Aruch. Nobody who is in the position and has the power to bring about the changes,

dares to do so. Any such attempt is at once stopped by organized orthodox Jewry, which has declared these ancient interpretations sancro-sanct, because God had supposedly transmitted them orally to Moses on Mount Sinai. The "Oral Law" - as such the Halacha is valued - is to the orthodox Jew as as holy as the Tora itself.

CAROL - You are perfectly right. It is difficult, if not impossible, for us modern questioning Jews, who are trained in philosophy and have benefitted from the Einlightenment, to agree with the orthodox explanation of the origins of Halacha - and even less with the many, later added interpretations which are based on these.

AVNER - I have set out to read the T'nach, and in the course of my reading I have often wondered, how it can be possible that today's educated and materialistic people meekly accept the wonderous events therein described. To give you only one example: I learned with much surprise that Jacob, Moses and the Prophets had wrestled with God himself. I too tried to wrestle with God - and found nothing between my arms.

EGO - You cannot wrestle with God in a literary sense. You can only wrestle with yourself, with your moral Self.

RABBI - You cannot take a rationalist nor a fundamentalist view of the Bible. Neither must you see in the Bible only a collection of myths and symbols, of commandments and rites. The Bible is a treasure chest of ethical fundamentals which each generation should interpret, express and apply in its own terms.

CAROL - I checked the Bible and found it silent on abortions.

RABBI - Even so Judaism has taken a firm stand which is expressed in jewish tradition: Judaism not only permits but also demands an abortion when the life - or even only the health of the mother - is threatened.

ASHER - Today this been adopted in modern jewish thinking and has found expression in legal terms: if the life of the mother is at risk, abortion is not only permitted but also required. In the absence of such risks, abortion is proscribed.

AVNER - Is God really as much involved in the life of a woman as the above rule indicates ? And to enlarge on my question: is God as much interested in mankind as the Prophets make us believe ?

RABBI - I best quote you the Psalmist again: "...unless the Lord builds the house, those who built it have laboured in vein".

RINAT - What underlies the Mitzvoth ?

RABBI - A mitzvah is in principle a commandment we fulfill. It

is a religious tenet we follow. It is the way we conduct ourselves in accordance with our religion's ethical demands.

EGO - Call it in addition a prayer-like doing. See it as an action or an activity which may serve equally well as a prayer.

CAROL - Hearing you mention prayer, a thought come to my mind: why have truly effective prayers to be addressed to the Divinity in a Minyan, i.e. in the presence of ten men ?

RABBI - It is not for the companionship's sake

EGO - ...which in any case is often a distraction.....

RABBI - ...nor is it meant as a reinforcement of the prayers. View it as the expression of the wished-for communal bonds; of the social oneness of the community; of the national unity of which a Jew must always be conscious. And in this context you may have realized, that in our prayers we address God as "we" and not as "I".

AVNER - As I said already, I have been reading the Bible and its commentaries. I read about what we have at one stage or other already discussed here at length, viz:- that God created the world within a span of seven days. I know the most acceptable comment which has been offered, viz:- that a biblical day does not consist of 24 hours. Still, to me this does not make sense.

RABBI - You may feel more satisfied with the ancient comment, that God's work has not ended; that the Process of Creation goes on. Do you realize that modern science says exactly the same: namely, that the universe goes on and on and on expanding ?

CAROL - In the context of what we have talked about I have a question, Rabbi: do the prayers in the prayer books offer you the vehicle on which you can send off what you want to communicate to God ?

RABBI - Next to good works and to selfless deeds, prayers are the best, possibly the only other communication average man has with God. One may use the prayers in their prescribed form - but you must be cognizant of the fact, that these are only formulas; and that the rabbis who formulated them thought them suitable for the common man to express his fears and his hopes, his wishes and his complaints. You are not bound to use these words and formulas; you can use your own words. You can express what you want to say in the way you can best express it.

EGO - If you have the right financial means, you would hardly buy a factory-made dress, but will prefer to go to a tailor and have him make this dress on measure. In this metaphor I mean the intellectual and emotional factors, of course.

RABBI - While praying the prayer-book prayers you may add whatever

you feel coming forth from your heart.

EGO - But still ! You will not be amiss, if you use the prayers in the prayer-book. I have often discovered, that they express that for which I could on occasion not find the proper words. If you ponder these prayers you will realize, that their text has been forged by master minds, by poets and clear-thinking people. But whereas it is my view, that we express to God our intime thoughts; that we address our sincere feelings; that we offer our sincere apologies - via the Self within us - it does not matter what words you use. It really does not matter, whether the sentences are well constructed; or whether the poems are properly rhyming.

RABBI - And you can also pray whenever you want. And whenever you feel like praying. You are not bound by a fixed time table.

ASHER - Why then are we faced with a rigid time-table ?

RABBI - It is true, our sages have prescribed the number and the hours of the daily prayers. They have also fixed the season for each of the various holidays. I am sure, they did so only to make sure, that people do not forget to offer their prayers.

EGO - Likewise you can pray anywhere you want. You do not have to pray in a luxuriously made-up synagogue. Believe me, in the Stiebl of the Hassidim prayers may be more sincere and honest than those offered in our cathedral-like modern synagogues.

AVNER - Would you be able to pray in a Church ?

RABBI - I surely can - and have done.

RINAT - You may be surprised to hear me say that I miss very much the common prayers which cement the family life. I have read about this custom and have seen this presented in films - and I think that the absence of such a custom is doing great harm to the jewish life here.

RABBI - I cannot but agree with you. There is not anymore today that cohesive family life of which in times past religion had formed a solid base. This experience is not restricted to Israel. It is common all over the world. And more so in the US. Even a generation ago the rabbis proudly extolled the virtues of Jewish family life - and because of their families' stability Jews were the envy of the gentiles.

EGO - These distinguishing jewish qualities have always been singular and have since ever represented the essence of Judaism.

CAROL - You are right. Until recently Jews were not like other people. But we are still different from our gentile surrounding, because we have different values and aims. Were this not so, our nation would have since long disappeared. And in view of the changes you have cited, we have the more to value the existence of Israel, our own jewish state.

AVNER - I hope you do not mind, Rabbi, if I change the topic and turn personal. I have since long realized, that we could never have talked with and to an orthodox rabbi - not even to a conservative rabbi - as we have talked with you. Can you explain to me, what have been the causes and facts which have induced Reform Judaism to establish itself as a separate unit of Judaism in a Jewish world which, to all appearances, has not yet heard of the principle of "Pluralism" ?

RABBI - I do not mind answering your question - and you will, please, not mind if I do so at some length.

Until about two hundred years ago Jewry the bonds, which had united all classes of Jews and all denominations in Judaism, had been the common faith in a divinely revealed Tora; and in the rabbinical interpretations of what the Tora says, wants and means. At the end of the 18th century, under the impact of the Enlightenment, this state of affairs underwent a dramatic change. The emancipation of the Jews from their ghettos took place. This changed not only their daily life, but it enlarged also their horizon. Jewish life became secularized. Religion was deprived of much of what had until then, in their everyday life, been of all-exclusive and all-including significance to the Jews. The demand arose to liberalize the obedience to, and the practice of the rules and commands which the Jewish religion demands from its faithfuls. This demand was put into practice by the liberal-oriented Jews of Germany. The leadership of this religious-liberal movement passed, already before the First World War, into the hands of the no less progressively minded Jews of the US. This process was, of course, accelerated in the wake of the persecutions in Nazi time, when German Jewry lost most its leaders. From that time onward, the Jewish Reform Movement of Germany had to finally give up whatever claim on leadership it may still have cherished.

CAROL - What has been the main moving factor which made the Reform Movement declare itself independent of the general current of contemporary Judaism ?

RABBI - It happened, because the Jews became aware that in modern times it was no more sufficient for a Jew to be simply a Jew. The Jew's Jewishness had to be classified. He had to be either an Orthodox Jew or a Conservative Jew; either a Reform Jew or a secular Jew; either a Zionist Jew or an anti-Zionist Jew.

EGO - And in addition he had to fit also into one or the other sub-division. He was either an Ultra-Orthodox Jew or a Modern-Orthodox Jew; either a Conservative Jew or a Modern-Conservative Jew; either a Religious Zionist or a Secular Zionist.

AVNER - I can well imagine that for this reason - and most likely

there have been many other reasons - the orthodox Jews do not like you.

RABBI - They do not even recognize me as a Rabbi. They do not even recognize Reform Judaism as a part of Judaism, although there are times when we still count as Jews - for instance when they need one of us for a Minyan.

ASHER - It is surprising, that the preponderance, and the leading influence of the American Jews in all spheres of life in Israel, is not also reflected in - and has so far had not had an ameliorating effect on - the abnormal position which Reform Judaism occupies in this country.

RABBI - The most likely reason is, that in reality we American Jews make up only a tiny fraction of Israel's five million people. We are hardly one percent of the population ! You may also be surprised to learn, that since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 less than 80 000 American Jews have immigrated - and stayed.

EGO - I would dare to say, that the main bone of contention between the Reform Movement and the orthodox groupings is the importance each gives to Halacha.

RABBI - I will be more explicit and say, that the reason - possibly the exclusive cause - for the dissension is the orthodox world's defense of the Halacha as immaculate; as undisputably holy; as impossible to change. But I beg you not to draw the wrong conclusion: Reform Judaism is not totally and absolutely against everything the Halacha proscribes or prescribes. Reform Judaism accepts and respects many aspects of Halacha. But Reform Judaism is not willing to submit to the dictatorship of Halacha - especially when its rules are not appropriate.

CAROL - You are most likely familiar with every single detail of what Halacha demands. May I ask you, whether is it on the basis of this knowledge that you consciously and conscientiously deny Halacha a major significance in these our days - at least for yourself ?

RABBI - I will be honest with you and confess, that this rule of conduct applied in the past - and only to a minor degree also today - far more to the older generation of Reform Jewry. It is also more of a factor for those who have embraced Reform Jewry after having been brought up in orthodox families. But the youth of today is brought up in total ignorance of what Halacha is; of what Halacha stands for; of what Halacha demands. And this is definitely not only wrong, but also a grave omission. Every Jew, whatsoever his origin and background may be, should make his choice either to be an observant Jew; or to become a Reform Jew; or to turn into a Secular Jew - only when he is fully aware of what is demanded of and by an Orthodox Jew.

EGO - I could not agree more. And I would add, that every Jew should

be told to respect the religious feelings of others. I remember having told you once, how much I was perturbed by the Jewish family which - in full view of those of us who were on our way to the synagogue on Kol Nidre Eve - sat down to a picknick meal on a public lawn adjoining a main road in Jerusalem. And last Pesach I saw in Tel Aviv people sitting in outdoor coffee houses or inside restaurants enjoying their sandwiches, their whole-wheat crackers, their breadsticks.

RABBI - These were certainly not Reform Jews but secular ones. This purposeful obnoxious behaviour you describe, is a regrettable trait in many Israeli Jews. I can assure you, that in the US those Jews who do not fast on Yom Kippur; that those Jews who do not want to deprive themselves of bread on Pesach; that those Jews who cannot forego their ham sandwiches or their egg-and-bacon breakfast - make every effort not to be seen by other Jews. They will travel to far away parts of the town to have their meals.

EXO - It is understandable, that the inconsiderate behaviour of such of our people will cause resentment here. But it is no less also a fact, that non-religious Israelis have a grudge against Reform Judaism because it has not always been in favour of Zionism.

RABBI - This is true. Once we had been very outspoken Anti-Zionists. But we have been converted to Zionism since a hundred years or so, and will find us now the most fervent converts. Since very long now we have arduously favoured the Jewish dream of a homeland in Israel.

CAROL - I read recently, that your Movement has been attacked by the orthodox branches of Judaism for having taken on issues which in their eyes are unacceptable.

ASHER - The conservative Jews - your half-friends when it suits you both - have joined in this attack on the Reform Jews.

RABBI - You must think of the positive attitude we take to the demands of women for equal rights. Indeed, we grant women equal status in our synagogues. They are admitted as Rabbanoths and as Chasanoths. They are called up to the Torah. They sit side by side with the menfolk. In the regular synagogal prayers - which in the past had been exclusively male dominated - we have included what you may call a "gender equality".

ASHER - Quite naturally this will hurt the orthodox crowd very much.

AVNER - Do your opponents consider you sinners or heretics ?

RABBI - Both. We do not count anymore as Jews in their eyes. Abroad we never were - nor are we today - a problem to them; but here in Israel we definitely are. Here we are a hurtful problem to the Orthodox, even though they are in a majority; even though they dominate the political scene. I come occasionally across - and feel offended by - well-wishing

orthodox Jews who try to "give me hope". They are wont to cite a saying of Maimonides in which he expressed what I consider a commiserating attitude to Karaites and to the non-Shabath-observers. For the old philosopher never gave up hope, that these "non-perfect Jews" will in due course change and turn into orthodox Jews.

CAROL - A similar optimism was expressed by the late Chief Rabbi Kook with respect to the secular Zionists.

ASHER - Do you really reject Halacha in its totality ?

RABBI - Not at all. Many halachic rules are in my opinion excellent in perception and of value to this day. But this cannot be said of many others. Of course, whatever we may do or say, the Orthodox will feel hurt by the way we interpret the halachic rules. For instance our insistence - as I have already mentioned - that women have the same rights as men. It hurts them that we translate into practice what we preach by appointing female rabbis, counting women in a minyan. And the Orthodox have recently taken issue with our declaration, that not only those Jews who descend in a mixed marriage from a Jewish mother are to be counted as Jews, but also those who have only a Jewish father.

EGO - No less will your recognition of the rights of homosexuals upset the other streams of organized religion in Judaism.

AVNER - I can well understand how much this hurts the Orthodox.

RABBI - We would have no difficulty with the orthodox streams in Judaism, if they would only show more sensitivity to the changing times.

CAROL - Will they not change their mind, even in the knowledge that their obstinacy causes so much diversity and hatred among the Jews ?

EGO - How can they as long as they believe, that the halachic rules have at Sinai been whispered by God into Moses' ears ?

ASHER - I have learned that there is another Reform Movement still, which is by far more reformed than yours.

CAROL - You have the adherents to "Humanistic Judaism" in mind ?

ASHER - I do. What do these people want, and how are they related to your Movement ?

RABBI - In plain words: Humanistic Judaism is a Judaism without God. It is a philosophical current at best, but I am unable to call this movement a religion. We have nothing to do with them. I cannot vibrate with Jews who pray without including God in their prayers.

CAROL - I heard once a man say that the Reform Movement tries to "christianize" Judaism ?

RABBI - That man cannot have ever visited our synagogue. Or if he did, he cannot have ever attended a church service.

AVNER - Tell me, please, Rabbi: would you be ready to solemnize

an intermarriage ?

RABBI - You ask whether I would officiate at the marriage ceremony of a Jew and a gentile ? I will be honest and say that it would very much be against my wish; but that I would have to. Like many reform rabbis I would be unwise to speak out against intermarriages. At least in the US no rabbi would dare to do so; for if he did he would hardly have a chance to be appointed to a pulpit.

ASHER - One can hear at all times the demand trumpeted aloud - and you Reform Jews use the biggest and loudest trumpets - that we Jews need unity and harmony among us; that we Jews should put an end to the strife which divides us; that we Jews should give pluralism a chance.

RABBI - The argument underlying this demand is based on the fact, that the Jewish people are losing their numeric strength due to the apparently uncontrollable assimilatory process. A main manifestation of this process is the statistically, proved yearly increasing, number of intermarriages. But our pleading falls on deaf ears, as our main opponents - the orthodox and more so even the ultra-orthodox - appear not to mind. Apparently they do not mind, because they show a steady increase of their number due to the many children they produce.

EGO - And their number is increased by the large number of Ba'ale T'shuva whom they like to designate "newly involved" Jews.

ASHER - And their number is also increased by the not inconsiderable number of converts to Judaism whom they like to call "Jews by choice".

CAROL - The greatest pity - and possibly a great harm done - is the Orthodox Camp's rejection of Zionism.

RABBI - This is not new. From the first day Zionism was translated into facts, the Orthodox have been burdened with a totally wrong idea of Zionism. You must not forget, that the Jewishness of the first Zionists - from Herzl down - was at best a secular one. The Orthodox Camp of that age perceived Zionism as a threat to the traditional life of Jewry. With traditional life they meant one of and with the Torah. These people perceived Zionism not only as a secularism, but as a dangerous secularism. In their conception Zionism rebelled against God's plans for his people. For God is said to have in clear words predicted, that one day his Messiah would arrive to lead the Jews back to their homeland Israel. How dared a Herzl play the role of the Messiah, they asked ?

EGO - I had talked to a number of ultra-orthodox Jews. Their grudge is the Zionists' dream, that we shall one day become like other nations. They do not want our people to become like other nations. I explained to them, that Zionism is above all the opportunity to renew the special

ethos of Judaism. I tried to persuade them that Zionism wants to ready the Jewish people to reach its pre-destined goal. But I failed in my efforts. I could not penetrate the hardened crust of their orthodoxy.

RABBI - In America I tried similarly to persuade our secular youth - but all my efforts were drowned in the onslaught of assimilation which is affecting the Jews everywhere in the world.

AVNER - I too talked to some of the Ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionist people. They told me, that the Holocaust was God's work. They argued that the loss of millions of Jews in the Nazi hell was nothing more than a stage in the ongoing galuth.

CAROL - They never call the Holocaust "a stage in the ongoing galuth" but a "gzera", which means a divine decree. At times they call it also a "puranuth", which means a retribution. Or they call it a "curban", which means a destruction.

RABBI - These terms are not new. They had already been applied to the Crusades in the 11th century; and to the Ukrainian pogroms of the 17th century.

EGO - We have in our midst a very good example of ultra-orthodox intransigency: the Satmar Hassidim. There is hardly a Jew in Israel who does not consider them an abomination.

RABBI - And mainly so their leader, Rebbe Moishe Teitelbaum who - although his life had during the war been saved by the Hungarian Zionists - did not change the anti-Zionist views he had propagated before the war. His venom goes so far as to accuse Zionism of being the cause of the Jews' suffering under Hitler.

CAROL - What makes him do so ?

RABBI - He sees the Holocaust not as a sign of Zionism's failure, but as a retribution for Zionism's success. The Jews had been under the injunction, he argues, to suffer their galuth with forbearance and patience until the arrival of the Messiah. God has ordained, he says, that the Jews should never rebel against any nation whatsoever. But the Jews did not listen. They did not keep their promise. They preferred to establish their national home ! And this made God order the Nazis to punish the Jews for this crime.

EGO - Quite a contrast to Rav Yizhak Kook. He saw the Jewish soul purged from its galuth load by the Holocaust. The settlement in the Land of Israel was the beginning of the Redemption, he said.

RABBI - The Holocaust has been turned into a problem of theodicy: how could an omnipotent and benevolent God have allowed the Holocaust to happen ? And although many an answer has been given; and although each one of us has striven to find an answer at least for himself - there

is no complete answer.

AVNER - May I take up the question of assimilation you have touched upon a short while ago? For many reasons I shall not go into, my question relates mainly to the assimilatory process among American Jews. After all, the American Jews are our hope.

RABBI - I am sorry I have to correct you. The American Jews are not our hope. Yes, those who have not yet left the Jewish camp - except for the Orthodox Jews - have maintained their interest in and their love for Israel. But this generation is passing on. Watch the yearly invasion of American-Jewish tourists in Jerusalem. I see them in our synagogue. Most of them sit there without looking at a tefilla. They do not know what is going on. They may enjoy the music - but only for a short time, and they are happy when the service is over. They will not return another time.

EGO - They come improperly - I would even say disrespectfully - dressed. Most of them do not even cover their head - while every single Christian visitor will come decently dressed and will have a kippa on his head. These same Jews will certainly not enter a church in shorts and singlet - nor would they go on chewing gum all through the service.

RABBI - These are exteriorities and should not upset you. However, we should not overlook the seriousness of the situation. The American Jew had the choice to be an American Jew or a white American. And many chose the latter option.

CAROL - I submit that the War of 1967 has caused a revolution in the attitude of the American Jews. They saw the Jewish people's nationhood asserted and the Jewish state become a reality. There was, apparently, no need to wait for the Messiah. Or he may already come, the Jews thought. Was this indeed the beginning of the Redemption, as Rav Kook has said?

RABBI - But long before that Justice Louis D. Brandeis had clearly and unambiguously stated, that "to be a good American we must be better Jews; and to be better Jews we must become Zionists".

EGO - Is this still valid today?

RABBI - I would paraphrase it and say, that to be both a better Jew and a good American is to become aware of our Jewish values, and to be aware of being a Jew.

CAROL - Talking about assimilation: you said once you did not object to intermarriages, as these may strengthen the gene pool in the Jewish partner. If this is your main reason, why then do you insist that the gentile partner converts to Judaism?

EGO - In any other intermarried couple this would not be important.

But in view of what I see as the special role the Jewish people has to play, I maintain that conversion is essential, as it means taking on the responsible role of the Jew in the scheme of things.

AVNER - Why? Is not with or without conversion the gene mixture the same?

RABBI - It may be supposed - or at least hoped - that the converted partner will endeavour to acquire Jewish knowledge and to cultivate Jewish values - and that he will raise Jewish children.

AVNER - I hear that antisemitism is on the rise in America. Does it affect also the assimilated and converted Jews? Is the old racial antisemitism effective even in the cases of converted Jews, I ask?

RABBI - Antisemitism is not yet racial in this respect. It is surely increasing, but I find that the Jews show more pride in being Jews.

CAROL - I cannot agree with what you said. Even the Jew who has converted; and even the Jew who has arianized his name, will be a Jew in the eyes of the antisemites. Especially in the eyes of the Blacks. Who does not know that the Singer Jan Peerce's real name was Jakob Pinkus Perelmuth; that the actress Paulette Goddard was born Pauline Levee; that the real name of actor Tony Curtis had been Bernard Schwartz?

ASHER - And is not the Jew accused of being a financial mogul, of dominating the press and of mastering Hollywood?

RABBI - Since the time of Roosevelt's "New Deal" has the Jews' proximity to - and their achievement of - political power been accused of engendering antisemitism among the American masses.

RINAT - "It is difficult to be a Jew", my Grandmother used to say. Fortunately it is not difficult for us here in Israel.

AVNER - It should not be difficult to be a Jew in Israel, but it is. This society is sick. Why? Because all Zionism has disappeared. The Jews here have lost all idealism. They are totally self-centred. Their ideal is to have a good time, to travel abroad every year, to have their children become Prime Ministers. If not generals or at least professors. The main interest is to make money, money. Nevermind how. In the past - how well I remember how we felt in the Displaced Persons Camp - the Jews who looked after us had a mission. They had dreams. They lived for an ideal. We knew they were people whom we could trust. But today the Jews I see around me - perhaps they are the very same Jews - have no interest in or care for other people. They want to enjoy the same privileges and pleasures as people elsewhere in rich countries.....

RABBI - Much of what you say is right. Many of your complaints are justified. But rest assured these individuals do not Israel make. They are not the typical Israelis. We have innumerable motivated and

caring people here in Israel, ready to strive for the higher ideals of Judaism, and to sacrifice themselves for their country.

CAROL - And what, Rabbi, do you think of the future? Of our future problems and of the problems in our future?

RABBI - There have been many changes since I came here first. I do not know of any country in modern history which has developed in such an impressive way as Israel. There are towns, roads, factories, hospitals, universities, museums, theaters, agricultural settlements where there had been nothing some fifty years ago. But, as Avner has pointed out, Israel has changed very much. Also the world at large has changed. Materialism has everywhere displaced idealism - but it appears to me, this here more than elsewhere is this the case. The former impressive Jewish-Zionist trend to be of service to one's next man, and to volunteer for social work among the less favoured people, has given place to the people's rush for personal pleasures. To get rich - as soon and as easily as possible - is the ideal of the masses. People are valued today according to the money they earn; according to the size of their apartment; according to the price of their car. And while we have among us large numbers of people who are rich and are getting richer, there are among us also other Jews who are poor, even very poor - and many also who have not enough to eat. Nearly a million Israelis travel abroad each year, and possibly a similar number hovers here around the poverty line.

EGO - Is the realization of this unhappy situation the reason why so many Jews in Israel are turning now to religion?

RABBI - I have heard that this is the case - but I am not sure whether this is not only a passing trend.

EGO - On the other hand there is no doubting the trend to materialism with all its unpleasant side-effects which prevails now in this country. I predict that the future will be bleak, if we do not learn to develop the sense of a collective responsibility.

CAROL - We are not unique in this respect. We are, after all, part of the civilized world. We share also all the other global worries of the other nations in this world. We have, for instance, to care for and bear our share of the environment's pollution; of the impoverishment of the under-developed countries; of the raging and decimating famines; and of the snow-balling brutalization of the people.

EGO - You may be surprised to hear me say that I am in addition also frightened by the ongoing rapid progress in science and technology. At no time in recorded history has society undergone such rapid and profound scientific and technological changes. One moment one thinks

the absolute limits of progress have been reached - and next day the stakes have been advanced again. I am honestly worried ! Are we at the brink of a catastrophe ? Are we tested by fate ? Are we tempted beyond our controls ? I do not know. I have to fight against the thought that only a great catastrophe, an uncontrollable epidemic, a disastrous upheaval in nature will reduce to acceptable and tolerable limits our overcrowding, our food shortage, our lack of working places for everybody. I am worried.

RABBI - None of us knows what is going to happen. Many of us are no less worried than you - and many of us are frightened too. But let me concentrate on our own problems and on our own near future. I see various categories of problems in our future. One of them is Israel's very survival. Another is Jewry's very survival. Another is Judaism's character. And still another one is the Jews' character.

ASHER - And there is also the major, the burning question, whether the Jewish people will learn at last to coexist in a harmonious way.

EGO - And let us not forget to include in this list of worries also the gentile world's attitude to the Jews. And above all, let us perceive the magnitude of the problem presented by our nation's lack of unity - whether under stress or not.

CAROL - Quite a worrisonome list.

RABBI - I must confess that I am worried.

RINAT - May I ask why you are worried ?

Rabbi - You have just now heard enumerated the reasons why I am worried. I can see a common denominator in all the problems and dangers which face us: our lack of a sense of history.

ASHER - Are we not cursed by too much of a sense of history ?

EGO - But not always of the kind which counts.

RABBI - I know quite well, that we have an overdose of the typical Jewish sense of history. I do not deny that history is one of Judaism's strong pillars of support. Primarily and ultimately it assures the Jewish people's right to exist among the nations.

EGO - Consciousness of his history should make the Jew conscious of his task in life and in the world. We Jews are not born to live our span of life and die. Each of us is a fiber in the continuously woven strand which leads to the making and completing of the predestined fate of the Jewish people.

CAROL -and history is the record of the obstacles we encounter.

EGO - Jewish history and destiny appear to proceed in the form of a spiral, which returns to the same experience as in the past, but each time on a higher level of experience, of interpretation and of insight.

RABBI - My friends ! Let us above all never forget, that for us Jews the past is not a series of closed chapters to be packed away into the archives. History always remains vivid in front of our eyes. It never goes away. It is never allowed to leave our field of vision. It is always there to remind us. To caution us. To warn us. Woe to our people, if we ever move out of sight our history of suffering; our experience to survive persecution; our knowledge of keeping alive under peril - and above all if we ever lose our confidence in ourselves and our trust in our destiny.

EGO - You should never cease to point out, that the greatest danger to our people is the lack of unity among us.

RABBI - This is and was indeed the case. This was so in the past; and this is the case also with our generation. Already the Rabbis of the Talmud era had to castigate their contemporaries for this deficiency. I have too little exact information at hand, whether at the time of the great catastrophies in jewish history - for instance when the two temples were destroyed and when the Jews were expelled from Spain - disunity had been a major vice in Jewry. But the continuously waged inter-communal fighting; the reciprocal hatred of the classes; the bitter enmity between haredim and secularists; the hatred of the Orthodox for the Reformists; the enmity between the ultra-orthodox and the zionist groupings; the political rivalry between the right and the left; the lack of harmony between the religious and the secular Jews; the never ceasing tension between the socialists and the nationalists - here in Israel, could not have been worse at any time before, be it between the Nationalists and the Hellenists at the time of the First Temple; be it between the Sadducees and Pharisees at the time of the Second Temple.

ASHER - Are not your worries still more multiplied by the prevalent state of tension between Israelis and Arabs ?

RABBI - I confess that this situation causes me great worry. Israel is constantly endangered by its Arab neighbours who will never give up their plans to gain one day the right military strength with which to annihilate the jewish state.

CAROL - And we have no less to worry about the Israeli Arabs, those who live within the borders of Israel. They will never agree to live in peace with Israel.

ASHER - It is my contention, that much of the tension between our two peoples is due to the british Mandate peoples' conditioning and nourishing of the Arabs' hatred against the Jews - and viceversa, let us concede - and by the purposeful cultivation of such tension since 1918, the year the British were entrusted with the mandate to administer

Palestine.

CAROL - The British have to this day always favoured the Arabs. When they had the power in this country, they never let up in their efforts to arm the Arabs and make them fight the Jews. By their one-sided malicious policy the British have certainly not created love for themselves here in this part of the world. On the contrary, I would say. They have thereby, and to this day, ruined their standing in the Middle East - nay in the whole world.

EGO - The attitude and behaviour of the British Imperialists should not surprise us. At that time Jewish Palestine was a British Colony in their eyes.

RABBI - I would not be surprised, should history one day judge that what the British planned and did here in our part of the world, may possibly have - to a large degree at least - contributed to the downfall of the British Empire.

CAROL - It is to me a remarkable - and no less also a worrisky - phenomenon, that Israel and the Diaspora are slowly drifting apart, while all sections of Galuth Jewry are united in their interest in Israel.

AVNER - This should not surprise you ! This is understandable, because each of them, Israel and the Galuth, has developed its own priorities.

ASHER - And today the gravity of the development is compounded by the added wave of assimilation.

RABBI - This is by no means a new phenomenon. Assimilation has also in the past been a major problem. Don't forget the situation which developed in the year 538 before our era, when King Cyrus of Persia - soon after he had conquered Babylon - issued his famous proclamation that the Jewish exiles could return home to Jerusalem, there to rebuild the Temple. The majority of the Jews exiled in Babylon, who had shed such bitter tears "at the rivers of Babylon when they remembered Jerusalem", ignored this offer. They preferred to remain in the Babylonian diaspora.

EGO - Nowadays this phenomenon is repeated but to a larger degree.

RINAT - It may only seem so. Due to modern communications it is possibly much more noticeable.

RABBI - There are other facets of the same truth. For instance it is a fact, that a large number of the Jews, who had emigrated to the US from their religiously very active and deeply rooted shtetls in Poland and Russia, divested themselves of their orthodoxy - I would even say of all their religious vestiges - no sooner they had reached their new

homes. Most preferred to turn into secularist Jews under the impression - and guided by well-wishers - that this step would ease their integration into their new surroundings.

EGO - Sociological investigations have shown that, in the shadow and doctrine of socialism, already the elements of the first generation of emigrants - those who were still endowed with a solid knowledge of Jewish tradition - had detached themselves from every form of actively lived and manifested religion. And what is much more regrettable: they never cared to transmit a sense of Jewishness to their children. They did not give their children a minimum of religious education ! In my opinion, they have loaded thereby a great guilt on their soul. They are to be blamed for having started the assimilation of their descendants.

RABBI - You are right. I meet now and then Jewish parents and children who appear to go through life without even a minimum of Jewish identity. Or for that matter without any identity at all. To them I often cite the words of Job: "Therefore enquire, I pray you, of the former generation; and apply yourself to that which their ancestors searched out. For we are but of yesterday; we know nothing because our days upon earth are a shadow. Shall not they teach you; tell you; and utter words from the heart ?"

RINAT - Still, I meet so many among my not very religious-minded acquaintances, friends, pupils' families, who are members of one or the other synagogue.

RABBI - This may be so; but more and more Jews do not belong to any denomination. This is most worrisome, as mainly young people belong to this category. If these young people call themselves Reform Jews - even Conservatives or whatsoever - it is mostly because they want to acquire a label. But in reality these people do not belong to a Reform or a Conservative synagogue or movement. Neither do they express in deeds or facts that they identify with the label they have attached to themselves.

AVNER - One should not generalize. We do not call ourselves reform or conservative or secular or humanitarian Jews - but we are still "perfect Jews". We know and feel that we are Jews without the need to carry a label.

EGO - You can do so, say so, feel so, because you live in Israel. It would be different were you to live anywhere else. To whom and to what would you assimilate here ? At the most, and at the best, to what you find most comfortable in your local environment - and this would at best, and at the most, be a secular milieu which is and remains still a Jewish secular milieu.

ASHER - I can in comfort carry my Judaism as a cultural heritage. I do not see in my Jewishness a halachic system into which I have to fit. Jewish land, history, culture, literature are sufficient to make me a proud Jew. They suffice to fill me with the burning desire to put my life on the line for my nation's honour, rights and survival.

RABBI - You are entitled to your attitude as long as it does not make you conclude that other currents in Judaism - all along from the ultra-orthodox to the reform - have not the same rights, the same purpose - and the same enthusiasm.

ASHER - There is no need to point this out to me, as it is my firm conviction that only as a pluralistic society can Israel face the dangers threatening her future.

CAROL - I met many Jewish youths traveling through India, Nepal and other countries in Asia, who have converted to Hinduism or Buddhism or any of the other religious currents in vogue in Asia. I should better say, they divested themselves of their Jewish religion and accepted Hinduism or Buddhism as their religion.

EGO - I have met them too; and I can assure you, that neither Hinduism nor Buddhism will accept these people as their regular members. These 'converts' can at best integrate into one or the other of the reform societies born by these two major ancient religions - and even there they will never be more than ridiculed and good-humouredly tolerated fantasy-driven foreigners.

RABBI - From my experience with some of these young people I have met, I feel assured that their's is only a temporary infatuation. And we have also to take into consideration the fact, that these young people could a priori not have been religious Jews. And is it in principle not the same, whether they assimilate into secularist non-religiousness, or into any of the Asiatic religions they fancy? It may in their case even be preferable, if they become pseudo-Hindus or pseudo-Buddhists than that they waste their youth as areligious and politically infested youngsters.

RINAT - To come back to what we mentioned before: Is it possible, that the actual political situation - to be more precise: the way our Jewish society handles the "Arab problem" - can be made responsible for the alienation of our youth?

EGO - I do not think your question justified. The estrangement of our youth from Judaism, from the Jewish people and from the Jewish homeland, is not due to any guilt-feelings towards the Arabs. It is certainly not due to any disagreement with the policy of the government. In my opinion it is due to the strongly developing streak of selfishness

which is suffocating in these young people whatever is left of their inherited, old-established, communal identification. I regret to say, that the typically jewish tendency to identify with the common jewish destiny, is missing in our young people of today. To them it is no more a moral value, nor is it a national obligation, to feel as Jews responsible for other Jews and for Judaism in general.

ASHER - But you can be sure, that in case of war - even in a mild state of emergency - they will not hesitate to rush forward and to man the front lines.

EGO - May I air another question, please ? Until not long ago we could always rely on the Diaspora Jews to replenish our stock; to keep the immigration flowing; to support the moral of the Jews of Israel. Can we hope that the Jews of America will continue this tradition ?

RABBI - Not for long, I am afraid. The jewish community in America is shrinking day by day.

CAROL - I agree. Although the American Jews still form the largest contingent of Jews in the world - this cannot go on for much longer. Steadily their number is now scaled down. In view of the prevailing tendency among American Jews to assimilate, you may expect this source to dry up in the not so distant future.

RINAT - I think the situation in the Galuth in general, and in America in particular, is truly frightening.

CAROL - I would call the situation worrying and not frightening. There is still a large reservoir of Jews in Russia.

RABBI - You will have to count out most of them. Also in other countries in Europe, Asia and so on are the Jews rapidly decimated by assimilation. Whatever has been said before, we have to conclude that this makes the US still our greatest hope - whatever may be going on over there.

RINAT - But antisemitism is steadily growing there too. I must say, it frightens me at times when I read about the goings-on over there. Many TV stations over there appear to specialize in Jew- and Israel-baiting. The newspapers and magazines are often very antagonistic. On the university campuses - especially the black ones - Israel and Judaism are more and more under attack.

RABBI - We are indeed facing a very worrisome situation. The truth is, that there was never a majority of those among the american Jews who cared truly and deeply for Israel. But can this be true, you will ask ? They do so much for Israel, you may say. Yes, you are right. But I see this generosity of the majority of the american Jews due to

a sense of guilt they cannot overcome towards the Jews in Israel. I am not going into details, but there is one blatant fact which can only be explained by this psychological uncertainty, viz:- that about eighty percent of the American Jews - most of them regular financial contributors and moral supporters of Israel - have never visited Israel ! But what worries me far more is the sad fact, that the Jewish youth in the Diaspora has very little - if anything at all - in common with the Jewish youth in Israel.

RINAT - The assimilatory process must be stronger than I had thought.

RABBI - It is better to call the majority of the Jews in the Diaspora a generation of ignorants than one of assimilants.

AVNER - And what does the US Government say or do when it comes to all the other problems which Israel faces in the outer world ?

CAROL - You can rest assured, that the US Government will be helpful and supportive as long as it benefits the US.

ASHER - And as long as the myth of Jewish power persists.

AVNER - From your pessimistic prognosis, and from what you diagnose as Judaism's ailments - I feel entitled to think, that we and our kind are doomed. And if this is so, in the end only the Haredim will be left.

EGO - I have told you already on another occasion, that we may see a providential arrangement in such a possible phenomenon. For if the assimilatory process continues and if Judaism is exposed to another catastrophic upheaval like the Shoa, we can be assured that at least a nucleus will be left - an energetic, fruitful, albeit an antiquated one - from which the trunk of Judaism will regrow.

AVNER - It is more likely that this nucleus will vegetate for a few generations and then disappear too.

ASHER - Unless they too will not be whiped out before that by the ever growing antisemitism.

RABBI - My friends ! Let this be enough. I do not want our cycle of discussions to end on a sad, or even a negative tone.

RINAT - You have already made us understand, Rabbi, that our weekly circle will come to an end today. I must say that I have learned much; that I have understood more; that I have greatly matured. I am very much indebted to all of you, and mostly so to our Rabbi.

RABBI - My friends ! I think indeed that the time has come for us to terminate this cycle of meetings. Otherwise, I fear, we may get stale and the bloom of interest will fade. I have been very much pleased - and, I must confess, also impressed - that our talks have at no stage degenerated into political discussions. Having said this, may I request

you: please do not start on praising me. Believe me, it is not a formal or polite statement if I say that I have learned very much from you all. And I do not mean only material knowledge. I have greatly enlarged my intellectual horizon, as well as my psychological understanding. I have learned to look at our society with different eyes. May I, therefore, propose that we spare each other further farewell speeches - and me any further laudations. I propose we accept, that Rinat has expressed all our sentiments. However, there is no doubt that we shall also in future meet on a social level. You may rest assured, that I shall always be ready for any advice you require. And I hope, you will not mind if I do call upon you, should I need advice in one matter or the other.

IV.

A K I N D O F E P I L O G U E .

Our weekly evenings in the study of the Rabbi had initially been intended as an one-time coming-together; as a kind of therapeutic session; as an ambience to provide us with consolation; as an hour which - with the help and under the guidance of the Rabbi - would carry us over the loss of our friend Chaim. After that first meeting the Rabbi declared himself willing to continue our evenings as a short course of instruction about the basics of Judaism. The evenings turned into discussion meetings between a group of intelligent persons - each one well educated in his or her sphere of activities - who were blessed with a never satisfied curiosity; a sincere desire to enrich his or her knowledge; and the determination to explore intellectual, and even spiritual regions they had never before had the possibility, nor even the intention, to enter.

We did not always meet on Saturday evenings. Often the day and hour of our meetings had to be re-arranged due to some pressing engagement to which one or the other of us had to give preference. We did not even meet every week, as holidays and vacation days were often wont to interfere. But none of us ever missed any of the forty odd meetings we had in the course of the year.

Whether by coincidence, or whether planned by the Rabbi, we ended our "comings together" more or less exactly after a year.

A few days after our last meeting we assembled again at Chaim's grave. We were greatly pleased that the Rabbi had joined us. I must confess, I - and certainly also all the others - would have been greatly disappointed had he not come.

To the surprise of all of us Anver stepped forward - before the Rabbi could do so - and recited the Kaddish. It is difficult for me to describe the surprise, the happiness, the elation - and let me confess also the awe - I felt at that moment. I was

deeply moved. I could not prevent my eyes filling with tears. I noticed from the faces of all others, that they too were in the grip of similar emotions. This applies also to Carol, as far as I could judge.

I can say, without fear of sounding exaggerated, that my four friends had greatly changed during this year. I mean to say that their attitude to religion in general and to Judaism in particular has changed. I may have changed too, although it is difficult for me to judge. Neither can I say whether the encounters with us had an impact on the Rabbi too - but I heard him at times base his shabath morning sermons on material which we had aired during an evening of that or the preceding week. This indicated to me at the least, that the Rabbi had been pondering what he had heard - and, yes, had learned - during that evening.

A year has passed since we terminated our "discussion course" (This is the name Avner had given to our meetings). In the course of this year I could welcome also other changes in my friends. Rinat - sometimes accompanied by Asher - is a regular attendant at the services in our synagogue. She tells me, that she "runs" now a kosher kitchen; that she has been able to interest her two children to enlarge their horizon to encompass an interest in matters of jewishness; that they attend courses about jewish history and jewish tradition; that Asher is contributing the "jewishness" he had known in his youth to the ambience in her house. I learned from Avner, that he and Carol visit regularly a conservative synagogue in the vicinity of their house. And Avner quite matter-of-factly told me, that he attends now lecture courses in jewish culture at the University.

I must, however, confess that otherwise - except for an occasional invitation to a shabath meal - I have not kept up a regular association with Asher and Carol, with Avner and Carol, and with the Rabbi.

Our age difference is too great for us to find other common interests than those which had concentrated on - and which had been consequential to - our association with Chaim.

In the course of my reading, or when attending lectures, I thought back on what we had aired in our "discussion course". This induced me one evening to listen to one of the tapes. This made me decide to listen to all the tapes. And this strengthened my at first vaguely formed plan to write up the content of these tapes. And whereas I was going to undertake this rather heavy task purely in my own interest and for my personal entertainment; and whereas I have not, had not, and never shall have the intention of publishing or otherwise making public what I was going to write down, I did not have to tell my friends about my program - and had certainly not the moral duty to request their consent.

In the course of the last year I have spent my free time on copying and editing the tapes on which our discussions were recorded. It was inevitable, that I had to edit these seventy odd tapes extensively, if not radically, because so much is usually talked about during such meetings of friends; and so much irrelevant matter comes up in the course of such kinds of discussions.

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7/5

Hermann H. SELZER Coll.

A story, a tale, a narrative
about your God, your world
your people and about you

1984-86

pt 1 (p. 1-99)

AR 25045

Hermann N. SELZER Coll.

A story, a tale, a narrative
about your God, your world
your people and about you.

pt. 1 (p. 1-99)

1984-6

A Story, A Tale, A Narrative

about

Your God, Your World, Your People

and

About You.

Jerusalem: 1984 - 1986

What the world's million lips are searching for
must be substantial somewhere.....!"

W.B. Yeats

" If you doubt you live; if you doubt you will remember
what it is you doubted; if you doubt, you realize that
you doubt; if you doubt, you look for certainty; if you
doubt you think; if you doubt, you know that you do not know."

Descartes: "De Trinitate" X)

Chapter 6	- And what came later	
	And how they suffered	170
	Some words about Enlightenment.....	176
	A few additional Remarks about the Bible	179
	And what of Emancipation ?	183
	Assimilation and Misinterpretation	187
	And now some words about anti-Semitism	193
⊗	Karl Marx, the Jewish Saviour	197
⊗	The thorough German Brand of Anti-Semitism	199
	A philosophical Credo	204
	To return or not to return	207
	The Zionist Impulse	210
	The Holocaust - its Effect and its Meaning	216
Chapter 7	- We and our Duties	
	A few Remarks ABOUT Morals and Duties	218
	And there is a Lesson	222
	What some believe	227
	What. and how they react	230
and how some react	232
	Galuth Jews inside and outside Israel	235
	Crime and Guilt	239
	The Church and We	240
	You and your Destiny	245
	Your and my duties	250
Chapter 8	- What it is all about	256
Chapter 9	- An Epilogue	273

Introduction	5
Chapter 1 - About Storytelling	8
Chapter 2 - About Creation	
The Creation of the World	11
The Creation of the Universe	14
The Creation of the Shekhina	20
The Creation of the Angels	24
The Creation of Life	27
The Creation of Man	38
Chapter 3 - About God and Man	
About God and Man	45
God in Bible and Scripture	49
Chapter 4 - About the Human Race	
The Development of the Humans	51
The Angels' Deputation	53
The Fall of the Angels	55
Noah and the Flood	59
Chapter 5 - About the Chosen People	
The progressing Vacuum	63
Abraham's appointment	65
A Philosophical Intermezzo	71
The Theologians' Calisthenics	77
And Abraham planted the Seed	83
The Story of Moses	89
An Intermezzo about Miracles	101
Israel in the Desert	102
An Intermezzo about Holiness	104
The Chosen and the Blessed	106
A nation in its infancy	111
12 The Birthpangs of a Nation	113
13 An Incursion into the Science of History	120
14 "We want to have our King"	122
15 David the Great and Solomon the Wise	126
16 A short lecture about Prophets	133
17 The Heritage of Solomon	135
18 Exiled in Babylon	139
19 The Return from Exile	140
20 Of Politics - The Jewish Weakness	143
21 An Intermezzo about the History of Religion	148
22 Ahaul-Paul, the Organizer	150
23 Agape - The Church's Love Feast	156
24 Another Exile - Explanation and Excuse.....	161
25 An Intermezzo dealing with Theology and Religion	164

A.

About storytelling.

My dear Children:

You are still possessed by the blessed urge to address us, the to you so limitless clever elders with numerous and often also so very wise questions; and your eyes and minds are in constant search of the source of the wonders which you perceive so vividly all round you. But you have by now reached also that degree of maturity which drives you to query the fairy tales with which we elders try to brush you off, those primitive explanations embroidered with colourful fantasies with which we think to satisfy your curiosity, while in fact in your mind, in your heart, in your eyes there begin to crystallize that same complex of questions, that very mixture of wonder and doubt, of hope and fear which have since ever been fuelling the onward drive of mankind's spiritual aspirations and intellectual activities. It is one of the first mind-boggling building-stones of the edifice of biological sciences that the human being, from the moment it forms in the mother's womb until it is born as a completed infant, passes again, in a compacted history of development and evolution through all the main stages of development and evolution through which the human race has had to pass from the beginning of life on earth, beginning with the one-celled structure, pass through that of a fish, of a mammalian and so on, until it has acquired the to us regular appearing human shape of today. And in all this evolution and evolution all the fears and hopes have been preserved which have afflicted the original humans, no less than the other living beings, since uncountable millions of years. In this process of developing and changing, of building and of perishing, of creating and of reforming, there is activated within every new generation afresh an ever new and effective source of intellectual energy

which will keep alive also in your hearts the eternal questions, directed also to regions outside the borders of our knowledge, as far as these limits are acceptable and the knowledge available to us; but this questioning will provide you also with the curiosity and the inspiration to work and to strive for the continued expansion of our knowledge and of our comprehension of matters beyond the provable and the visible.

Every child, every grown-up, every thinking living being in general interpretes in an entirely individual way the meaning of life and the purpose of existence; views his or her or its world from a purely personal angle and from an entirely subjective viewpoint. The expanse which the answer covers and the depth which the explanation comprises depend very much not only on the expertise of the instructor but to a no less degree also on the perceptiveness of the instructed. So much has been conceptually damaged in the life of everyone of us, young and old, and so much in all the people, small and big has been morally spoiled by the assumption of the philosophers and the arrogance of the theologians, who assume that they alone know the right answers and that only they have the right to spoonfeed mankind with the filtration of their particular conclusions and the products of their peculiar beliefs.

Far be it from me to act as they do. I do not want to stand before you as a teacher and present you with a list of dry facts which any teacher who is keen and diligent could have selected and collected from his books; nor as a preacher who funnels into your minds the rigidly shaped and ever unchanged dogmas which have been supplied to him wholesale and well packaged by one of the organized religions. I want you to see in me nothing but a simple storyteller who is insofar distinguished from most others who also claim to rank as storytellers that he has in his possession an elixier, by the use of which a feeling of wonder is born in the hearts of children, young and old, and by the application of which he transmits to the listener a specific current, from whose spark that luminous light of happiness is ignited which for the fortunate among you makes life truly worth living. And do you know why I, the storyteller, claim to have this power and potency? It is so because I myself believe in the stories I tell, in the tales I spin and the narratives I produce.

When children are told a story by their father, they listen to him full of admiration; and there is a shine in their eyes because they find in the way he is telling the story a further confirmation of their father's superior wisdom. When children listen to a story told by their grandfather, they sit back with a happy smile and a sense of credulity because they are about to learn how the world in which they themselves live, and which relates so strongly to that of their father, is seen from the angle of a more experienced age. And when children are told a story by their great-grandfather, they listen to him with a condescending smile and with an indulgent mind; but they nonetheless welcome him in the knowledge that they are about to listen to a lived passage between the fables they love and the realities of life which, they realize, cannot be theirs anymore.

When the children themselves grow up they acquire the trend and the capability to criticize. They begin to absorb the knowledge that they are not perfect. They are exposed to the fear that they are liable to fail. Along with this negative attitude doubts begin to creep into their minds, and the tales which they had known as children so full of truths not too long ago, appear to them now too fanciful and unrealistic to be honoured as before with the stamp of trust and faith. By all means be it so ! Let doubt be your spontaneous reaction. A well-tempered and disciplined doubt is a gift of God; but at least benefit from the wedge by which it may open the entry to a fuller faith. Take the words of Descartes in trust. He was a wise man and a great philosopher:

" If you doubt, you live; if you doubt, you will remember what it is you doubted; if you doubt, you will realize that you doubt; if you doubt, you look for certainty; if you doubt, you think; if you doubt, you know that you do not know. "

(De Trinitate)

CHAPTER 2

About Creation

1. The ~~CREATION~~ OF THE World.

My children !

In the following pages I am going to tell you about the creation of the world and all it contains. But before I set out with my story a few words about God. And even though many things may appear to you unusual in my way of introducing God to you, because in the past you may have been given a quite different description of Him, and although something may strike you as strange in the way I am going to present God to you, because you may have formed for yourselves a quite different picture of Him, and although your parents, your teachers and your books have described to you God in a quite different form, you cannot fail to recognize Him at once and with absolute certainty whenever He appears in my story. Let me point out to you already now, before I have even started on my tale, that you have learned already your first fundamental story-lesson, one of the many I intend to convey to you in the course of my narrative, viz:- that God is invariably the same, whatever language you may use, whatever name you may give Him and through whatever religion you may speak of or to Him. Only the description, the form of address, the image used do vary from one individual to the other, may differ between peoples, may change between religions and cultures.

As I want to tell you about God all I think I do "know" , I have to start from the very earliest beginning; and therefore, I am going first of all to tell you about the creation of the world, about the creation of our earth, about the creation of life and about the creation of man. You must always remain conscious of the fact that I shall do my best not to feed you fanciful, unproven, unrealistic stories which would be unacceptable to myself even, but that I shall make every effort to coach my language and to paint my pictures with material which I know as truth and which science has proved

to me to be truth. Where this is not possible, where faith and belief have to take over, i.e. whenever we go beyond the known and proven I have to use a regular palette of colours to paint a picture of unusual dimensions so that you can at least have a visual aid, get a visual impression of what will never be visible to comprehend to some degree a conceptual space which has no limits.

My story starts at a point so long ago that the distance between then and today cannot be measured with the ~~even~~ most sensitive instruments at our disposal, nor can it be fitted within the range of our human perceptions. However, I want to make an attempt to give an idea - crude though it may be - of the immensity of the time factor which we have to view here. If you can imagine yourselves standing at the shore of the Sea of Kinnereth (you must have heard already of this big lake ; most likely you have been there already) and you remove every year, on your birthdays, a drop of water from this sea , and you continue thus until the lake is emptied - if you protest that this will take many million years, you are wrong only insofar as it will take many thousands of millions of years - then, during that unbelievably long time it takes to dry out the sea, the hands of the time-clock of the world would have moved forward by only one second. Yes, only one eternity second from the time you have started until the lake is empty. Unbelievable ! Unimaginable ! you will say, but it is true ! You have every right to be impressed, to be over-awed even.

Let me invite your imagination to accompany me some more.

During all that time, right from the beginning, there was God. At the beginning of everything there was God, and He will be there always. One day the end of our world will come - this will be the case when our sun dies and our earth will be destroyed - but you have no reason to worry about this happening in the next few years. Experts predict that this occur in another 5 million million years . Imagine 5000 000 000 000 years ! There will possibly also come the day when the entire Universe will collapse - but I assure you, you do not have to worry about this either. It will happen when the entire Atlantic Ocean between Europe and America will have been emptied in a similar manner and at the same pace which I have mentioned with regard to the Lake of Kinnereth, i.e. one drop a year. But even when this does happen, God will continue to exist.

You can also take my assurance that there is a purpose and a plan in everything which God does, in everything which is and exists. I shall try and make you learn more about this later on. For God can do everything - He is everything. There is also another factor which potentiates whatever I have said before.. I venture to say, preposterous as it may sound and impossible as it may seem to you, that God is wiser today than He was in the beginning , when He was already the most in wisdom there ever could be. I cannot avoid the feeling that He is today also more depressed than ever, for He cannot but be disappointed in mankind. And still ! Sad,depressed,disappointed though He may be, He is in no way less benign and loving than He ever was, since that time when He created our world and our world's planet Earth. Neither does He appear to me less determined than ever to see that the plans He has decided upon for the fate of the world, for the earth and for mankind are going to be executed in a satisfactory, in a perfect way, exactly as He had predetermined. God could, of course,bring about at once a solution, any solution He wants and which, after all, He has foreseen as His ultimate aim, with what one may say in our language of today " a movement of His finger or the lifting of His eyebrow ", but this does not accord with His way of working: for God will never, or better, no more impose any drastic or enforced solution on mankind or on anything else on this planet, or for that matter on any part of the Universe, because it is now, since He created the Universe and the Earth the specific divine plan to see that all and everything proceeds and develops within our own world in a logical, in a sequential and in a directed way, nevermind if at times all that goes on around us may appear to us mortal beings illogical,haphazard or inconsequential. Fundamentally and in accordance with this divine plan and rule mankind is made to bear full responsibility for everyone of its actions. I am glad I could discover that this indicates clearly and decisively God's intention that man should never have an opportunity to blame with any degree of justification whatsoever, a superior force or an uncontrollable instance for what is in fact and in truth only his own sin, his own failure, his own responsibility - be it by commission, be it by omission.

2. The Creation of the Universe.

Be this enough of preliminary remarks ! At last I am now beginning my story about God, about the world, about man. I want to engulf as much eternal time and as much universal space as possible into my tale. I shall start therefore my story with the very beginning of the Universe, of t h e Universe. I shall thereafter proceed to tell you about the birth of our own world and of that of our Earth; and finally I intend to give you a description of the manner in which life was started on our planet. From there my story will finally lead on to the creation of mankind - and to you !

Here we go !

In the beginning there was God and there was also the universe.

I cannot tell you in any even approximately exact words what the Universe was like in the beginning. As a matter of fact I cannot even describe to you sufficiently well what the Universe means in these our own days, when we can look around us, when we can see the sky above us, when we can penetrate with ever more powerful telescopes and ever more expanded stratospheric explorations very far into the infinitely great and overwhelming vast universe.

But what we call today the ' universe ' was not the same kind of universe at that point in time which I want to start talking to you just now. It was not a large infinite space with so many stars everywhere above our heads, with innumerable galaxies in the distance, one of which is the ' Milky Way ' which we can observe " nearby ' in the nightly sky. In the beginning the Universe was an enormous compact mass, unbelievably compressed and therefore so incomprehensibly heavy, that a particle the size of an apple must have been heavier in weight than all New York with all its buildings and people, its trains and its bridges. Such, my dear children, was the "Universe" in the beginning of time: a large, heavy, compressed massive ball which was composed mostly of gas and energy.

Do not think that this heavy massive ball was by any means a quiet, peaceful and lifeless mass. Just the contrary ! It was a mass of pressure. It was very, very hot. It was quivering with power. It was trembling with compressed energy. That mass wanted to expand. Its energy was fighting to get out, to break out, to be freed. It was incessantly trying to explode. God, the Almighty, had, of course, all the power, all the strength, and all the force to keep that compact ball, to keep that not-yet-universe under control, to keep it constrained, to keep it in the state in which it was then and had been for all eternity , so full of power and energy, and to keep it from exploding.

It appears to me that this was more or less all with which God had been occupied for all that time, for all that eternity, for all the many billions of years. Apparently it had been a sufficient task to keep him busy. However, you will agree that " in the long run " this was not much of a job to be busied with, even for a God as Almighty as ours, - especially not for such a Supreme God whose essence is also to such an extent made up of wisdom and beauty. With all the reverence and respect I can muster I mean to say that although in itself this must have been a terrific feat, that job of keeping that enormous quivering mass reined in for so many billions of years must have been quite a monotonous affaire. Don't you agree ?

Is it, therefore, any wonder that there came a time when God felt bored ? Yes, I dare say this in plain words, even though I am fully conscious of the Almightyness of God, of His strength and His wisdom - as well as of His patience. But there it was ! God was bored ! Of course, I have no proof for what I have just now said, nor any specific knowledge in and of such matters divine, but I am sure I can conclude by the use of hindsight from what happened thereafter. But let me assure you again, that my words do not imply any disrespect. And let me also add another fundamental lesson here: God is to anyone of us, who believes in Him, such and thus as we visualize Him within ourselves and as we want Him to be in our hearts.

I would like you to tell me now what you would have done in such a situation ? I cannot say how exactly and in what detail each one of

you children would have reacted, but I suppose that majority of all of us, small and big, would have said: " If I had been in God's position, I would have decided 'Enough is Enough '! O.k. ! Let me see what will happen if I let that compressed energy which I have restrained until now, lose all at once. Let me see what will happen if I tell those powers contained in that mass, those energies confined in that balled universe to get on, to do what they want to do most at that moment, to do what they must have been wanting to do all along. I am going to say to them ' Go on and do what you want to do. I am not going to hold you back anymore. "' That must have been more or less what God must have told to that massed universe. I think this must have been the way in which we all would have reacted. Do you agree ?

And it appears that it was exactly this message which God must have addressed to whomever or whatever He would have had to communicate these words or such an order or such a grant. I have the feeling that it was most likely to Himself that God spoke. God's thoughts or words must have been shaped somehow like this: " Let me see what happens when I let this energy-loaded universe do what it wants to do."

From one moment to the other God let go His curb on the terrific forces, and thus did He let go His hold on the constrained energies of His universe,

Try as you may ! Make use of you utmost fantasy and imagination and still you cannot have the slightest idea what happened after that. It is absolutely impossible for a human being to imagine it even with the help of the greatest imaginativeness. It started with an enormous ' B a n g ', with a terrific explosion, with a blinding flash. Everything flew apart. Explosion ? Flash ? You must have heard what happened some 50 years ago when the first Atom Bomb was exploded over Hiroshima. Now imagine a billion billion billion such Hiroshima Bombs exploding all at once. The explosion of the 'Hiroshima Bomb' can perhaps be compared with the 'Big Bang' which sundered the universe apart, if you place the light of the match which your father strikes when he lights his pipe, with that produced by the 'Hiroshima Bomb' itself when it exploded. Unbelievable ! Terrific ! You agree ? But let me confess to you that this my description is most likely an understatement.

"And what happened next ?", you will want to know now.

It is simply impossible for me, even with the best of will and even with the right colours and words to paint for you the result of that 'Bang' in a few sentences. Even the innumerable astronomers, who have written innumerable books about his phenomenon have not succeeded to find the right words. But I want to give you at least an idea of what happened. If you write the number ' 1 ' and add for an entire day in a rapid sequence one ' 0 ' to it after another, you may perhaps come nearer to that number of years which have passed since that explosion took place. And take notice in addition that the explosion, which some conservative scientists think took place " only " some 15 billion years ago, had been so enormous and so powerful that its effects continue even to this day and that it will continue for billions of years to come. Imagine ! For that big mass of the universe burst into a trillion million globes of gas and dust - some small like a football field and others a hundred million times bigger than that - and they continue still today to fly into the ever expanding infinite space. So strong was the explosion !

You will say " How wonderful ", and I fully agree with you with regard to the exact meaning of the word you chose. It was indeed full of wonders. And going along further with the word's meaning, we wonder how great and perfect all this is. For simple people like you and me, who are not capable of philosophizing, 'wondering' is the characteristic philosophical emotion. The great Greek philosopher Plato has already said something of this kind - but in a nicer way than I can do.

I imagine that God was very pleased with what He saw was happening, because the ensuing spectacle must have been so impressive that even God had to be surprised. He must have been kept busy for a long time watching the enormous clouds of gases and the huge blobs of dust flying off into all the directions, white-hot all of them, and each of them, while burning away, carrying now in themselves the power, and sending off now their own energy which they had taken along from the original massive ball. It was a continuous firework of incredibly majestic proportions. God watched how some of the massive clouds of gas and dust collected into spiralling formations, how some of these condensed into formed bodies, how some had

become suns, how some had turned into huge balls of hot burning masses compacted with the same kind of energy which had been quivering in the original ball of the 'universe'. He saw how over the ages parts broke off from these suns and began on their own to revolve around them and on their own axis; how also from far away distances such bodies were attracted into the orbit of the suns, and that in turn parts broke off from these, the planets, which then began to circulate around them as their moons. He saw that in the course of all these stages of development within the Creation huge 'holes' were opened, caused by the collapse of so many stars into a renewed compactness, and how millions of nearby stars were attracted and swallowed into these 'holes'. He saw how on the firmament, the heavenly sky space, became filled with an uncountable number of bodies, some of which formed into 'fixed stars' while other fragments continued to fly and to fly.....

Do not conclude from all which I have described on these pages that the Creation had been a chaotic event. On the contrary ! Although all continued to proceed in an apparently uncontrolled manner, it still and in truth represented the execution of a definite and eternal divine plan. It cannot have been otherwise ! The Creation must have been based on an eternal law because it indicates the ingredients of an eternal wisdom.

Let me explain to you that the stars you see at night, even if you use a most powerful telescope, are only a minute fraction of the 'particles' which were sent off flying when the universe exploded. The stars are far away, very far away. The light which their white and red heat produces, and which is formed by burning off the energy which they still store in themselves, takes a long time to reach us. It is very difficult to make non-physicists and non-scientists, like you and I, realize these distances with our own limited concepts of space and time. The 'nearest' star to our sun, the 'Proxima Centuri' is 40 million million kilometer away. If you try to reach it with the fastest sports car you can get hold of, it may take up to 50 million years of day and night driving. Or to supply you with another measuring rod: light which moves at the speed of 186 000 miles or 300 000 kilometer a s e c o n d (!) will take 4. 3 years to arrive from Proxima to our planet. If you want to calculate the distance from that

nearest neighbour of ours in the Milky Way to the porch on which we are now sitting here it is: 300 000 x 60 x 24 x 365 km. I have tried but my pocket calculator does not suffice. Let me finally also add that in our own galaxy, the 'Milky Way' or a 'galaxy' is a huge concentration of suns and stars - there are 200 billion (200 000 000 000) stars like our own sun, and each of them has most likely in addition a number of planets and moons.

Our own sun is 3000 light years away from the centre of the 'Milky Way'; and if you complete these 'astronomical numbers' with the information that next to our own galaxy there exist in the universe at least another 100 billion other galaxies, and that each of them contains at least 100 billion stars, your head is most likely to reel and your eyes to pop. Imagine all this if you can ! I cannot - although I have tried. You might be interested to know that most of the stars in the universe are still clouds of gas, and that they are steadily moving away from us at a velocity of 100 miles every second. Can you in addition also imagine this ? Try ! I can't.

As I have mentioned just now, our sun is one of the hundred billion which make up the 'Milky Way' Our earth, on which you walk, is the third in the line of the nine planets which revolve around the sun. On nearly every night you can see our own moon revolving around the earth. We, the earth and the other eight planets form our own solar system. Of course, also our earth had once been very hot and burning, but "in the meantime" it has cooled down to such a degree that it can sustain life. Life on our earth, not only for us human beings but also for all the animals and plants is only made possible because the sun above us is still very hot and provides us with the warmth we need. As an additional truly unique and marvellous gift with which God has also endowed this newly originated world, you must value that indispensable factor, the 'force of gravity' which had originally helped Him to keep the great primordial mass together, and which keeps now our planet Earth at a reasonable distance - about 93 million miles - from the sun, and thus saves us from being roasted or frozen to death. The same factor of gravity forces also all other planets to maintain a controlled circuit - and let us in addition gratefully acknowledge - holds us to the ground on which we stand and prevents us from flying off into space.

It was indeed a beautiful spectacle which went on expanding before God. The Universe proved to be a creation full of marvels. The Greek knew what they were doing when they called the world the 'Cosmos', for the meaning of this word is "good and beautiful" and it is indicative of their acknowledgement that the world is in perfect order.

I have painted for you a picture, or better said, I have produced for you a short film about the way our world must have been created. And although a scientist - there are so many species of these and I do not want to cite any one of them in particular - will object to my description, or will at best will point at the least one error in every sentence I have written, you may rest assured, that for simple people like us these explanations are sufficient and also exact enough, to give you and me an understanding of, and a preparation for, the next chapters which are to follow now. Consider the few pages you have read so far only an introduction to what I have the wish to tell you now in greater detail.

However, I beg of you not to get impatient if my descriptions are somewhat superficial and if they go only rarely into details. There is so much to tell, that I have to keep the various chapters in the narrative and the various stages of the development at times very short, just enough in length to convey to you a sufficient understanding. Should I not constantly remind myself to adhere to this principle, there is every reason to fear that I shall not complete what is left of my story in my lifetime.

§. The Creation of the Shekhina.

I see that you are getting impatient, that you are about to ask "And what happened next?". You must have understood by yourselves already, that even though the majestic, impressive, terrific effects of the 'Big Bang' must undoubtedly have been a very grandiose and impressive spectacle and entertainment, and that even though all and everyone of the great masses of dust and gases - the latter consisting mainly of hydrogen mixed with helium - which had been thrown off into every direction, went on ex-

ploding, bursting, condensing for many billions of years more, there must have come the time when God had to reach the conclusion that by now He had seen enough and had watched long enough. There must have come a point when He decided that His time, His energies and His interests were not anymore sufficiently engaged. For this reason He was most likely again overcome by a sense of boredom. It appears to me, judging from the development which next took place, that He had felt the need of some kind of company, of something He would love, of something which would love Him, of something with which He could communicate and something with which He could share His wisdom and interests. You will agree that God could hardly expect that such a feeling, such a kind of response could be offered to Him by those hot and glowing masses of matter and gases rushing through the universe; and although they sent out an incessant display and bombarding of waves of light, heat and energy, one can with the best of will such a spectacle either a manifestation nor an object of love. Don't you agree ?

It was for this reason that God, by one of His divine acts, created for Himself a companion, the Shekhina. Henceforth the Shekhina appeared at God's side. She was His companion, His intimate, His friend. But you must not make the mistake to see in the Shekhina anything else but a part of God. She is not a separate or separated part or division of God. The Shekhina is not a portion of God, is not a second God, is not an additional god-like being. She is "nothing more" than a shadow, a reflection of God. God is ~~the~~ one single, only, indivisible unit. God is One and there do not exist different parts or separate portions of Him. The Shekhina is the radiant essence of God on earth and in the world. She is the light which emanates from God. She is what we perceive, what we realize as the Divine Presence. in and around us. She is the reflexion of God as He is perceived by mankind; for God is never seen nor ever directly perceived on earth. Whenever you read that God has been seen by, has appeared to ~~God~~, that He has spoken to man, that His presence has been felt by certain individuals, it was never God Himself 'in person' who had been sensed; it has always been the Shekhina which these individuals have perceived as the Divine Presence. She was and is the pure reflection of God into a manifest ~~existence~~, a radiation of His wisdom into perception, another manifestation of His glory. She is the all-

encompassing essence of God, His female aspect; but you should not see her as a mother figure which is placed next to the fatherhood of God. She is the ever-present and always easily perceivable manifestation of God's glory. You may see her also as the intermediary between God and man. Moses and the Prophets, who thought they were addressed by God, never saw or heard God Himself. The perception of the Divine always occurs only through the intermediation of the Shekhina. As the Shekhina is inseparable from God, is a reflection of God, she cannot leave, move, depart on her own; and whenever you hear or read that the Shekhina has left the Holy Temple, has accompanied Israel into captivity, has returned with the Jews to the Holy Land, you should replace the image of the "Shekhina" with the conception of God's love, God's interest, God's protection, God's presence.

Have you now understood what the Shekhina is, what she represents ?

After the Shekhina had been made manifest by the wish and will of God, she came to prove herself indeed a fit and suitable companion for God. But in due course God realized that fundamentally not much had changed, for the Shekhina was after all in every aspect only interacting with God. She did not provide a situation or an environment where a new field of God's creative interests could find fulfillment. Even with the presence of the Shekhina there existed no situation, happened no opportunity where God could apply His divine applications anew, where He could in any way make use of all His free interests and unengaged energies in any suitable manner.

God, while watching and observing the evolvement of the Universe pondered in His wisdom for quite some time what steps He should next undertake. You must never forget that whatever God desired most, was to find an outlet for His immense love and compassion. Whatever happened now, and whatever is going to happen at the various later stages of the history of the world, always remember that the main motive for God's action was the search for an object on which to spend His love. For a long time God discussed with the Shekhina, that means with Himself, as the Shekhina is part of Himself, how He should apply His great wisdom in order to find a suitable answer to the question what He should do next.

I realize how difficult it is for you with the limited perceptions of which we dispose all what I have written so far, and to understand, within the frame of our own references, how matters ever were and how they were going to be. I must confess, I do not understand them either - and you may rest assured that I do not know of anybody else who has ever understood them. Otherwise all the wise and clever people who have lived during the last thousands of years and all of whom thought they knew everything, would not have felt it necessary to produce all those millions of books, those scientific and theological treatises, and they would not have evolved all those innumerable philosophical ideas and schools. You must accept it as an absolute truth, once for all, that we human beings do not and cannot understand how God reasons and acts, and how He manages the world, because the range of our knowledge and the dimensions of our intelligence are restricted with **INCERTAIN LIMITS** of understanding and comprehension. Let me remind you that we live, measure and see all the technical, visual and similar related spheres of our existence by fitting them into the three dimensions which are known to us, viz:- those of height, length and width. Only a short while ago a further dimension, that of time, has been added to the field of our vision. By bringing time into our calculations and formulas, we get now a better, wider and more coordinated concept of space and of being, for time is the happening which is placed in orderly form and in sequence; it is the rhythm, the systematization, the repetition, the measurement of the Universe, and our existence is expressed in a more exact form. This conception is not new; it has already been sensed by St. Augustine who said: " One can with closed eyes withdraw from the visible world, perceive in oneself the decourse of time, its now, its past, its future."

This newly introduced of the conception of further dimensions has considerably enlarged our horizon of understanding. Let me explain this point to you still further in the very simple terms by which I myself have understood them. God is a living God who acts and reacts. This is a concept which is taught by every religion, every theology. But we cannot ever understand how God acts, as the ' divine time factor ' is so very different from ours. The point in time where the world was created, how long the process of creation took, how long it is going to last, are not measurable with our scales of time, for these latter are in no way commensurate with ' cosmic time '. We do not know when time began, because it must have begun before that point which we ourselves call the ' beginning of time '.

You can be absolutely sure that there do exist certain other dimensions of which we do not yet know the kind and character. We cannot apply them, cannot use them, but we can imagine them - at least some of them. You must rest content if as an example I do mention here

that modern physicists think that there exists a ' curved space ', i.e. a cosmic space which is not an open vast straight endless expanse extending in a straight line and encompassed in the three dimensions we know to apply, but one which is bound to return to its starting point in the same way as a curved line will return to its starting point while forming a circle. Knowledge of such a kind of dimensions is needed to give us only just an inkling of an understanding of the things which are still far beyond the range of our intelligence. We must recognize once for all that such are our shortcomings, and we must continue to think and to work with the help of the hypothesis, that such additional dimensions do exist. There is nothing left to us but to be satisfied with this hypothetical knowledge - at least for the time being.

4. The Creation of the Angels.

(Do you know, I was just about to write " God is after all human ", but I realized in time, how stupid and irreverent it would have been to use such an expression. I am , therefore, going to express myself in different words),

God was dissatisfied, not with His reflexion in and on the Shekhina, nor with the evolution of the Universe. He was dissatisfied, because everything continued to go on smoothly and according to the rules and laws which He had established forever for the functioning of His Universe. He must have felt a craving (I am afraid also this term is quite inappropriate, but I have at the moment no other ready, and you know quite well, ~~that~~ I do not intend any disrespect,) He must have felt the wish to get engaged in some kind of ongoing work, in some regularly to be watched and supervised administrative occupation of His time. He must have looked for an uninterruptively evolving process in which He would direct and control an organizatorial system of proceedings, of which He would develop at least the early stages, and which in its further evolution could offer a constant variety of interests and would, once it had been started by a divinely elaborated program, could be certain to run its course smoothly on its own, and would only have to be watched and

supervised from becoming derailed. God did not want to weave a rigidly faced scheme with undeviating lines and unchangeable rules. He had thus ordained the Universe and had thereby deprived Himself of a continued interest and involvement. He wanted now to create something which would face Him with a state of affairs which He could now and then change and influence. He had spent an infinite time observing the way in which the developing Universe had formed according to His architectural plans, how the celestial bodies were taking shape and form in correspondence with the geometrical rules He had laid out, and how the cosmos was regulated by the laws He had ordained with respect to the interrelationship He had established between the reciprocal effects of the liberated terrific energies. And viewing and reviewing His creation and its functioning God and His Shekhina felt the desire for the company of some kind of beings who might express their pleasure with his creation and might be as interested as He was in observing its perfection and its wonders. He wanted to populate the Universe with such a kind of creatures. He wanted to be surrounded by formed, moving, thinking, reacting, living things whom He could observe, and whom He could, whenever He thought it necessary, direct and control. You might even accept the possibility that God had also thought, that while observing how such creatures reacted to their surroundings, He would be provided with material, which could be usefully applied in any future scheme He might develop, with ideas which He could suitably shape with His wisdom. I am afraid, I have not expressed myself very clearly just now. Let me repeat in plain words what I see as background for God's next creation: He wanted to surround Himself with living beings who would have their own independent ways of acting and reacting, and by the observation of whose interests and the study of whose psychology, He might not only be entertained, but might also gain a source of material and ideas for any future planning.

In retrospect I think that God wanted above all an outlet for His unlimited faculty to love, a target for His boundless goodness. You might say that such a wish should not have bothered God as there was the Shekhina always near and in God. Should you reason in this manner, it will only show that you have not understood the fundamental characteristics of the Shekhina, for she was not a different and separate 'personality',

another godhead nor that what the Christians call the ' Holy Ghost '. The Shekhina is, as I have already described, the reflection, the female side of the Almighty, a part of God Himself !.

For all the reasons which I have enumerated above, God created the angels.

All at once , in one "stroke" , as you say, did He create a countless number of them. He made them in various shapes and sizes, big and small, He produced them out of His own inexhaustible and never diminishing Essence, i.e. out of His ~~own~~ inexhaustible divine substance did He create them and with His own Essence did He animate them. He never cared to know , how many of them He had created. He never counted them. They were everywhere, in every corner of the Universe could one find them. They did not procreate, they did not increase. From their beginning, from the moment of their creation their number has remained constant, for they are not mortal beings as we are and, therefore, they live on and on. Angels are indestructible and unperishable, as are all the things which contain something of God. (In us human beings only our souls are part of God, are of His essence. Our soul is not ours, it has only been loaned to us by God, and whenever our lives come to an end here on earth, everything but our soul will cease to exist. Our soul, however, is indestructible and will remain intact.) Do not misunderstand me ! God did not create the angels for any specific purpose. He wanted to have them about as His companions - that is all. He did not give them any special task or duties nor any specific instructions. He let them do whatever they wanted. He let them spend their time in any way they wished. He created and appointed in addition a small number of very smart ' Archangels ' whom He placed as supervisors over the vast army of angels, to check on them, to direct them, and to keep them in good order.

" But what did the angels do all day long ?", you will ask. As I have told you already, I cannot point to any specific duty to which they may have been allotted. They certainly did not have any hard work to perform. As a matter of fact, they were permitted to do whatever they wanted, and they spent most of their time singing and playing - and at other times they enjoyed pushing each other around. For God it was great fun to watch them frolic

and revel incessantly around His throne. The only ones, who caused real problems for themselves, and to some degree also to God, were the Archangels, who were soon fighting among themselves for a higher place in the archangels' hierarchy, which means for a place as near to God as possible to God. It makes me think that their main interest had been to attract God's attention to themselves. Can you imagine such a mentality ?! They even complained about each other to God and behind each other's back ! I think they must have been not only the first courtiers but also the first politicians in existence.

Do you think that the kind of Universe which I have described to you in the foregoing pages and which was now populated also with a worldful of playing and singing angels could in the long run have been sufficient to keep God's interest and energies engaged ? I do not think so. I cannot but feel that after a few hundred thousand or million years God was bored with His environment. All the time the angels, whenever they were not fighting among themselves, were crowding around God, trying to amuse Him with, and hoping to receive some award for, their truly lovely music and songs. Even a most benign, kind and patient God must after a certain time get fed up with hearing day and night His glory, His wisdom praised in songs and poems. Everybody would soon have enough of this. Even you and I would have come to the conclusion that these angels were nice playthings, aesthetic creatures, good musicians, excellent singers, but nonetheless uninteresting and boring, especially if one has to have them around all the time.

5. The Creation of Life.

I am not at all surprised that God was again bored and on the lookout for something interesting to do. You can well understand, I am sure, that the angels could not absorb all the immense love and all the unlimited goodness which God had available and wanted to dispense, and that they could not become the target for all the brilliance and inspiration which incessantly flowed from His never exhausted source of wisdom. Somehow there

was nothing yet in existence near and far in the enormously expanded Universe to which or into which God might have bestowed these His gifts, and whereon He might spend all His bounties.

It was at this stage of the still ongoing creation of the Universe that God decided to create l i f e .

He decided to make living things which would develop and grow according to the definite, perfect and wise rules which He was going to lay down from the beginning and which would result in the course of time, never mind if it was going to take billions of years, in a kind of being whom He would endow with godlike features and qualities, whom He would make to harbour something of His own divine essence, who would become a vessel into which He would pour some of His inexhaustible wisdom, and who would have the freedom to choose his own ways to do justice and to achieve perfection. Above all God wanted to bring forth a creature with whom He would be able to converse by some suitable method, with whom He could enter into a relationship of reciprocal love and respect, and whom He would grace with a degree of ultimate perfection and beauty. Do not think that God was all of a sudden in a hurry ! He was not in a hurry to produce that ideal creature with whom He had decided to form such intimate bonds. This was not at all the case, He did not want to repeat His performance and experience of the angels. He wanted to see His plans and His creations develop slowly and steadily, logically and systematically by their own impetus and in their own tempo. He did not want to produce them by a ' Fiat ', by a divine order with which He could have so easily have brought into existence such living things all at once in their final shape and desired form.

Of course, had God wanted to do so He could have produced such a suitable environment, such an ideal creation, such a perfect living being by just wishing it, by just saying so, by just ordering it. But there would not have been ' much fun ' in doing so, don't you agree ? If under such a kind of circumstance a wise man might have set in motion a slow process of development, would have advised as a preferable and truly perfect method of creation the elimination of the inevitable outcropping of imperfections by a steady and progressive evolution, how much more would this

have been the case for God who has so much time at His disposal. to have decided on such a scheme and procedure. And indeed, it took billions of years, as you will hear, before the type of human being God wished to see, did emerge, began to take shape. This slow and steady process of evolution, of maturing, of perfecting has indeed been God's intention. The specific interest, the main attraction which such a plan had for God was due to the fact that He is not only the Creator, the Ruler, the Architect, the Geometrician of the Universe, but that He wanted also to be the Great Biologist, the All-knowing Physicist, who intends, directs and watches how things become, develop, change, adapt and perfect themselves.

The moment has come at this stage of my tale to make a statement which I consider fundamental for your understanding of all that follows : I am not going to adhere to the description of the events as you read them in the Bible and as the teachers of religion like to depict them. At the same time I want to make it clear that I am not going to deny the value of the biblical accounts, that I have not the intention to "abolish" the Scriptures. On the contrary ! I feel that I must say some words in defence of the way the Bible describes the Creation. I expect that this will also help you to overcome some of the difficulties and the doubts which you must have experienced when you were confronted with the picture which the Bible has painted of the creation of the world.

The sequence of the Creation as it is described in the first chapter of Genesis, is certainly contrary to all and any of the established scientific facts and rules, and contradicts also the simplest biological and astrophysical laws. Don't yourselves be affected by the kind of discussions which the Bible critics are wont to raise. Their arguments will lose much of their sting if you realize that the creation of the earth, of the firmament, of the living things as they are chronologically depicted in the Bible apply to the planet Earth only and not to the Universe as a whole. Let us not be upset by all the arguing. Events may indeed have happened as the Bible describes them, or as the 'scientific mind' of the original scribes believed them to have happened. But for the overall picture of the events, and for the fact that we have to perceive in all creation the "Hand of God", it is without importance how the various stages of the Creation are described, classified or formulated. Likewise it would be childish and an exercise in futility to point out again and again that the world of ours has certainly not been created within six days. Everything will fall into its place, however, if we view "a day and a night" as an evolutionary period, as a developmental stage, as an aeon (the latter to mean an age of the Universe, an unmeasurable period, an eternity.)

After having, hopefully "cleared the air", I am now going to continue with our story.

God's first task was to find to find the right environment within the Universe and a suitable piece of 'real estate' in one of the galaxies where He might set up His experiment. He looked around the Universe. He checked on the billions of stars and planets which He saw whirling around, shooting onwards, colliding and burning, to find among them one which had already cooled down to a sufficient degree, one which was keeping to a well established and suitably regulated orbit around a still very hot sun from which it would receive the right kind and amount of warmth. And God saw that our planet ~~EARTH~~ was in every aspect right and well fitted to serve His plans.

I sense a strong feeling in me same way as also scientists usually proceed, did at one and the same time set up a series of similar experiments in various other planets, in order to take care of the variables and imponderables, of the accidents and mishaps which are likely to change the course and alter the outcome of anyone of the various planetary experiments. Such a scheme of parallel experiments going on at the same time on various planets in solar systems situated in various galaxies all over the Universe was sure to make things all the more interesting to God. But I have no supportive proof for this idea not uniquely mine, nor has until now any of our scientists come forth with any evidence to this effect; and there is no person anywhere in the world who knows about such divine experiments more than I do. Perhaps we may one day learn more about such such a kind populated worlds as much search and research is going on today to find out, if there are "within our reach" other worlds like our earth harbouring living things.

The first thing God did before starting His experiment on our ~~Earth~~ was, as you might expect, to arrange for a suitable environment. Scientists think that this happened some five billion years ago! He consolidated the land masses in islands and continents. He confined the waters within rivers, lakes and seas. He surrounded the earth globe with a mantle of air, made up mainly of carbon dioxide and nitrogen, into which He mixed also some oxygen. To close of this atmosphere around the earth, He enveloped with an isolating zone of ozone. He arranged for the earth to rotate around its own axis once every 24 hours, and around the sun every 365½ days, thus

ducing day and night as well as the four seasons. When our planet was thus made ready, it was, however, still dead and bare. Now, as the next step, God scattered certain elementary chemicals, the amino acids in particular, all over the surface of the earth. He arranged that huge amounts of clay, a material which was available everywhere, could concentrate and accumulate the heat and energy supplied by the sun, so that the various fundamental elements, in combination with the water and air available everywhere in abundance, assisted by the right degree of heat continuously provided by the sun, could be made use of within the protective clay bed, to become the building stones out of which all living things were ultimately to grow. You can be assured that the 'creation of life' was by no means a chance event, but that it was entirely due to divine intention and intervention. You may remonstrate that I am not the expert nor the learned mind to create such a picture of the creation of life. Of course, I am not an expert. But you will agree that Albert Einstein was a great mind and a clever scientist. Here is what he has to say: "I believe in God, Without Him the Universe is incomprehensible..... and the sciences do not exclude metaphysics". Let me add, that Einstein was and is not the only scientist who has this firm conviction; I venture to say that a majority of our leading scientists of all branches think like him.

The evolution of life must have occurred as the outcome of a large series of a number of successive chemical reactions. Simple non-living substances like water, nitrogen, ammonia reacted with each other, and they may have finally formed the original biological cells from which the first single-celled living beings developed, like bacteria, viruses and amoeba.

You may possibly one day be told that biologists have succeeded to produce in their laboratories the basic substances, those amino acids, from the primitive chemical materials originally available on the still lifeless earth, out of which the first living cells have been formed, under the most favourable conditions which I have described above. Do not allow these scientists to conclude and to convince you that they have thereby provided the proof that life on earth was started by a concatenation of "chance events" and by a combination of unusual unintentional happenings. In other words that life on our earth came about purely by coincidence. Only the contrary is true! The many 'ifs' and 'whens' which these biologists need to succeed in their

experiments, which so far has not led them to the creation of a single living cell, should make us think and believe that the creation of life could not have been a chance event, that it must have been due to divine intervention.

But on the other hand we must not take it upon ourselves to say that even though the sciences make enormous discoveries, they still remain far away from findings any true proofs or even only an indication of the way God has managed the Creation. Scientists search for an understanding of how things have happened, and they hope to bring proof for whatever they have scientifically established by demonstrating that they can produce, repeatedly and visibly, the end results of their discoveries. They have indeed every right to be proud of their achievements. Our world will surely progress and our life style will certainly improve thanks to their work and due to their endeavours. But if the philosophers of science try to ignore the empty spaces which appear in their systems of thought, or if they try to prove their hypotheses by producing other and newer hypotheses, we are justified to tell them that they have overlooked Einstein's implied advice that such empty spaces can comfortably be filled with metaphysical material. This implies, expressed in other words, that they should be reluctant to grant God His important share.

After God had in this manner laid the foundations for His experiment, and after He had created the basic favourable conditions for a series of very interesting reactions and biological processes, and after He had arranged the programming of an ever more complex genetic system of development and evolution, He could "sit back" and watch what was going on in His 'laboratory' on earth. You will understand that these divine experiments have started here on earth quite a long time ago - but you will be flabbergasted to learn that according to the nearest estimate which our scientists can supply, it all started some 3 500 000 000 years ago. Yes, three and a half billion years ago. Imagine !

You must picture it for yourselves how all this went on here on our earth as if in a slow-speed film. It was fascinating indeed. First, from the materials I have already mentioned, a few simple cells did form under the clay layers; dispersed here and there they found ideal conditions in which to grow and to multiply. Then these cells, by dividing themselves,

doubled in number; and again they divided themselves, and again they doubled and so on, and in this ~~number~~ the ~~number~~ of the cells increased very rapidly indeed. Here and there cells perished while others united with other cells nearby and formed themselves into single units. Others bound themselves with other cells into chains; they formed into groups of the most varying shapes and formations. In the beginning they gained their nourishment from the soil in which they were embedded, protected from the rains and from the heat of the sun. Later on they became mobile and began actively to search for food, thereby discovering and selecting by trial and error what suited their wellbeing and what helped them in the growth of their cell blocks; and in the latter single cells took on specific functions.

In due course the cells were induced to develop along favourable lines with trends which had been built into them in the form of instincts, and they became advanced enough to look for an ever more complex form of nourishment and for more ideal living conditions. If you think that this was a regularly proceeding and steadily progressing process, you could not be more mistaken. The by far greatest portion of the experiments ended in failure; some of the cells, which had combined and grown into units, fell apart because they had put themselves together in an unsuitable and wrong manner; some others, although they had been functioning well for some time, could not continue to survive due to changes which occurred in the environment. But many of the primitive living beings were lucky to overcome all the dangers and difficulties which they encountered because they had found the right place and soil, the best combination of heat and water, the most suitable form and shape, and - which is most important - they had found or adapted to the right kind of nourishment. Do not think that all this evolution was a matter of a few thousand years only. All this growing and shaping and forming, of adapting and eliminating and disappearing went on for billions of years. Yes, literally for billions of years. And this process is not ended yet, it is still going on today. However, there came the time, when everywhere on earth there were growing the most variegated forms and types of plants, and on these the at first primitive living and moving things could feed, while in their turn these same plants came to depend on their being pollinated and fertilized by those very same living and moving animal things to which they presented the main source of nourishment. The basic rules and methods which characterize

processes in nature were developed in the course of time as an eternal cycle of growing and disappearing - but also as a system of interdependence of all living things which exist on earth. Only those among the great varieties of living things on earth could thrive which had learned to adapt themselves best to what was available, to what could serve as the right nourishment, and to what had evolved as the best possible defence against their numerous enemies. All of them, big or small, be they of the animal or of the vegetable world, be they the humble fungus growing on the tree trunk or deep inside the soil, be they the majestic tree stretching upwards and bearing fruits or flowers - they all benefitted directly or indirectly from the life-supporting warmth of the sun.

I may have given you the impression that animals and plants developed at the same time and independently from each other. This was surely not so. Only when the plants had acquired their assured existence and had built up a 'sophisticated' structure, did some of them turn into animal-like movable beings. Their 'metabolism' was based on the same original elements then available; they lived on the same kind of nourishment as the plants, and they existed by the same processes of breathing and growing as the plants. The advantages they could acquire was their capability to select what suited them best as nourishment among the existing plants. In the beginning it was difficult to differentiate between the outer aspects, the appearance and the functioning of the plants and the animals; this applies even today to many specimens. The original primitive type of animal developed into an unbelievable large number of species and into an incredible multitude of shapes. They ranged from the simple amoeba to the huge dinosaurs, from the fish in the water to the birds in the sky. The greater availability of food in certain parts of the earth, the higher degree of sexual attractiveness in a newly appeared strain of a species, some sudden change in the genes of a bird or a reptile caused by an outburst of solar energy or coming from a source of some other radiation, could at times change fundamentally the appearance and the structure of some species of animals and contribute to the appearance of others. By the continuous - sometimes frequently, sometimes rarely - occurring changes in their genes great variations would appear within the same species, and from these would be in time created a totally different strain of the species, which would have to fight with the other species and among themselves, if not for their plain survival, at least for a leading place to prevent the danger of

being otherwise condemned to perish. Should you ever be inclined to study biology or any of the related sciences, you will learn of the ways of which an unbelievable number of every possible kind of animals developed from each other, and you will hear that even to this day these developments can be followed in their embryonic stages which are very similar for fish, birds, animals and man, and which are independent of what their final shape is going to be. In other words : all the various animals, from fish to man, developed from each other, one after the other, and this process, which lasted billions of years, can be found repeated in the few weeks or months it takes for the embryo of animal or man to grow.

I think God could not but have been fascinated, could not but have been satisfied when He saw that functioning so well, that they had taken on their own rhythm, and that life on earth had grown and had adjusted itself in conformity with the rules of adaption, of selection and of all the other biological laws which He had ordained.

Everything continued to function well in the living world which God had created on earth. Plants grew to feed each other and the animal world. And when the soil was starved because rains failed to descend, or when big fires destroyed the green plains and the forests, with the consequence that the plants failed to survive and the animal life was destroyed, most life ceased to exist in the affected parts for a certain time - sometimes for a long time - but as a rule it returned again to the affected zones. In the meantime, in other parts of the earth, the usual life cycle went on regularly and uninterrupted until its turn came to be destroyed and to reappear. Hardly ever did God have cause to interfere in all that went on. It would have been against His rules and His plans to have interfered. He had from the onset, after He had created the world, ordained it to run efficiently and independently according to the pre-ordained scheme He had laid down. But you must not accept what the so-called ' deists ' preach, viz:- the once God had completed the Creation and had set it on a well-regulated and proscribed course, He did not have any further interest in anything which was going on here on earth, that He did not any further care what happened on earth, and could not anymore be bothered by what may affect the living beings on earth. The absolute opposite

is the case. We know only too well that God did interfere, care, intervene. Things did not always function as they should have and as God had wished for. Nature did now and then need a correction and mankind now and then a warning. At other times God must have felt that some encouragement was necessary for struggling mankind, but the occasions were very rare when real help was required, or when mankind was presented with an unsurmountable obstacle which could only be removed by divine intervention. I can without difficulty explain - and this to my own satisfaction - such continued correction of and changes in the human fate and development, by reasoning that for God it was all an experiment which continued to evolve since the many aeons when He had started plant and animal life on earth. And I think He had cause to be well pleased with the developments He could observe. These developments showed that in the course of time all and everything that existed on earth had learned to live in relationship and in relation with each other, to adjust to whatever situations and changes which inevitably did occur now and then. The primal law of nature had become established which ruled that whenever such adaptations were inachievable or unsuitable, were too late or too little, the affected animals and plants had either to perish or had in some suitable manner to reconstruct themselves. When I say "reconstruct themselves" I mean that the changes of which we know, of which we have fossil or genetic proof, had become necessary or unavoidable, that they were the outcome of an adjustment to the changed situations and to the altered conditions which arose now and then, and which presented themselves as the inevitable effect of the evolutionary process. Let me give you an example: about 600 million years ago certain animals had made the waters their living space, others the air; some lived on the ground, others beneath it; some wanted much light and others little of it; some had to gain their nourishment from the plants and the bushes on the ground, others preferred or were forced to eat the leaves and the fruits of the high-growing trees. These latter - to give you only one of innumerable examples possible of the successes of failures of adaptation - had, therefore, to grow themselves to great heights and had to develop, in addition, also long necks, in order to reach the food-bearing zones of the trees. There must have occurred catastrophies when the climate changed, when the waters disappeared or when the earth dried out or when the land flooded over, when meteorites

struck the earth or when for the many other possible circumstances the living conditions and the adapted environment disappeared. Inevitably, when this happened also the animals and the plants which had existed in that environment ceased to exist. Or the time must once have come, after many cycles of growths and adaptations, when there was no more sufficient food available for the monsters among the animals of which I have just now made mention, or when they had become too heavy and could not anymore ~~balance~~ their weight, or had become too slow and could not anymore ~~avoid~~ the predatory tiger or the prowling lion. The outcome was that this class of animals, which had become classified as 'dinosauri', perished for ever! but of this species a smaller sized and quicker moving genre of creatures has survived which we know as lizards or salamanders.

Do not conclude from what I have said that chaos and haphazardness prevailed. Far from it ! All these living things, the animals and the plants, began to live and to perish, to exist and to struggle, to fight and to overcome according to the biological rules and evolutionary processes, which God had in general and from the onset programmed for them and for our world. As soon as He saw that there was no further need for His intervention and His control, He could proceed to the next stage which had originally been the most important, the truly compelling reason, the fundamental motive for the creation of life on earth, viz:- God's desire to develop a superior, a god-like creature which He could supply with the right kind of intellect and the suitable amount of wisdom, so that he could be able to communicate with him. on a spiritual and intellectual level to be ~~raised~~ or changed by and in the course of the evolution. God wanted a living created being to whom He could entrust the government over the plants and animals on earth. Above all He must have wished for a vessel which could contain some of His wisdom. Quite clearly He had decided to create life on earth ~~in~~ order to have grow up from out of all the living things on earth a creature who could and would reciprocate His love. God wanted a specimen of being for whom He could provide, to whom He could feel near and whom He could love as a father loves his child. Do not make the mistake to think that God had wanted to create a playmate for Himself. He had decided, after observing the way in which the angels behaved, that another kind of creature had to be reproduced,

a living thing whom He could respect as well as love for whatever this creature did or achieved. God wanted to produce a being whose maturing and perfecting was to be the outcome of a long drawn-out process of selection and evolution. On such a creation He could bestow the faculty to think and to love, to create and to progress; and this being would in its own turn recognize, come to love and learn to communicate with his creator.

6. The Creation of Man .

Therefore God create man.

Let us be clear in our minds ~~that~~ for all that God created the world and that He created man. The Bible tells us that God created the world out of nothing by virtue and by force of His word and will. That He did so for the sake of man whom He wanted to place over all the creatures and all creation. The Greeks were of a different opinion, and also modern thinking refutes this concept from the point of view that it contradicts man's right to self-determination. If you take now your time to study again the Old Testament, you will find that it only and quite clearly states that the world has been created for a purpose, but it does not specify this purpose any further. Only mention is made that man has been created in the image of God. However, we must be clear in our mind that God did not create the world for the exclusive sake and benefit of man, as so many theologians and philosophers want us to believe. It is true that He created mankind to rule and to govern whatever life existed on earth, and , as much as he has the power to do so, to bring nature under his control; but the presumption that the world has been created for the sake of, for the accomodation of man is wrong. To this day such an idea is spread from the pupils - but you should not accept it. The world has been created for God to see life in all its forms and expressions, in all its manifestations and reactions, and for mankind to work in such an ambience and to develop as the greatest and highest exponent of life ever more purified in ethical form. I am not alone in this belief. Descartes, Leibniz too doubt that the world has been created for man-

kind's sake, and Spinoza is the most outspoken one who denies us the right, even the capability to discuss at all why God has created this world: " We cannot for the purpose God had in mind to created the world; this should not be anymore the subject of our philosophy", he says.

As I have just now - and quite unequivocally - explained, God did not created man all at once and from a mound of clay; this is only a fable, an allegory. I have already mentioned some pages ago that the clay which had been so abundantly available on earth, had most likely served as the bed in which the growth of the first cellular combinations had taken place, but when it came to the creation of mankind, God's ultimate aim, He wanted him to grow up slowly and logically in successive evolutionary stages. He made one model of man grow up after the other. In the course of some 50 million years, setting out from the newly evolved mammals, He eliminated by means of innumerable series of changes in one or the other of the never absent inadequate and unsuitable features, and made them evolve into others more suitable ones. Contemporaneously and progressively God provided also an environment in which life could be sustained by a human being with ever better physical and ever higher cultural characteristics. In this manner, and over the millennia, starting some two million years ago, man was created out of uncountable series of models, each of which was always more perfected than the previous one. Not only the Bible, but also the tradition of most ancient peoples say that God, the Creator, has created man with a purpose in mind. From the time that Darwin has put forward his theory that man has developed from the lower range of animals, doubt has arisen regarding the directed evolution of the human race, and chance was made to take on the formation of man. You will see from what I am going to tell you that Darwin's theory not only not discredits buty on the contrary, confirms and sharply circumscribes the postulate that one moving force and directing power organized and orchestrated the development of the human race on pre-arranged and pre-ordained lines. Other recent discoveries are adduced to contradict my above conclusion. I, on the other hand, find in the new material excavated only further proof for my postulate. The recent findings of the Leakeys in Africa's OLDUVAI GORGE have produced clear proof that primitive man and ape had a common ancestor, and instead of debying it, you should fully

accept this conclusion. The location of Leakey's findings is by many a quarter misinterpreted as indication that man has originated in Africa. However, similar bones, skulls and habitats have been discovered in Europe, Australia, Burmah etc., and you have every right to refute the postulate of the scientists that the one and only ape-man ever evolved has migrated from Africa all over the world and has left his bones here and there as evidence of his migratory urges. This has not to be, this cannot be thus. The only logical and acceptable hypothesis can be the one that humans originated in different parts of the globe, that they developed separately and that out of the ' various types ' evolved the best suited anthropoid which was then allowed to survive. This fits well into a directed programmed system and process of evolution, arranged for and aimed at by a Creator.

Man - the human being of whom I have been talking here -who had originally begun to evolve from a very primitive animal-like stage, had started to walk upright. He watched and observed. He grew in size. No other animal grew within such a short time into such a different way and shape, habit and size. This should show you that God, once He had determined to do so because the moment had appeared appropriate, had started to help man's development along in an active way. Most of all it was man's brain which grew in size and volume. Do you know that already nearly a million years ago the human brain had reached about the same size and form which the human being possesses today? And do you know that other animals, like the shark, the wolf and certain other animals have today the same shape, form and brain which they had many millions of years ago? This must make us think that God has favoured and supported man's development and maturation, although biologists try to explain the examples I have mentioned by the fact that these animals were strong and agile enough to overcome all their enemies and to be always assured of enough food, and had therefore not to change or to adapt to changes.

It was in the so-called Pleistocene Age of the earth - thus is the period called in which some millions of years ago bad weather conditions, ice, floods and draughts had started to prevail - that man enjoyed a sudden spurt in his developmental process. For at that stage the creatures which until then had been more an animal than a human being, began to develop definite human characteristics, outdistantiating all other animals. It was then that his brain grew and that he began to use tools. And above all he began to think. It was mainly the use of his tools and the application of his intellect some two million years ago that have allowed man to survive, as he had not the physical strength nor the agility to stand up to the predatory animals. Man had also learned to use his tools as weapons. Poets say that God made man walk upright, not only because this enabled him to make use of his hands, but also, as the great Roman poet *Virgil* wrote,

"...while all other living beings have their eyes fixed to the ground, God gave man a forward directed face and told him to look skywards and to direct his gaze to the stars" Neatly expressed, is it not ?

By such a steady and controlled evolutionary process did God create man. He wanted mankind to form a superior race above and among all the living creatures in evidence. Let me again underline that God did not create mankind in its completeness all at once and within a few hours, as the Bible describes. < Let me state already here in general terms that most of all that is written in Scriptures about God's "saying" and "thinking" has to be treated with a certain reservation - but I shall enlarge on this later on. However, take it for granted and as definite truth, that everything which is said and described in the Bible, even if you are told that it is nothing but myths and fables, contains or hides a very definite meaning. Never forget this. > Up to a certain stage did God allow man to develop as he did, along with the other living things, in the way I have already explained; but then came the moment when He made him progress from the simple type of animal to an ever more clever one, though he was already distinctly a human-like type of animal. God chose this method as if He wanted that man should never forget his animal-like origin and background, so that he should never become too arrogant. In the course of his 'growing-up' into a higher form of creature, God made man's brain not only bigger but also more complex. He gave him intelligence and instilled into him reasoning. Above all He endowed man with curiosity. It is quite clear to me that the patience which God had with the evolution of the man-animal into a human being was in the main connected with His own curiosity as He wanted to find out if such a creature would, in due course, all on its own, develop into a being with whom God could communicate on an intellectual level, whom God could educate to an ethical standard by which man would be capable to sort out for himself what is good and what is bad. As I said before, God wanted above all that mankind should become an object on whom He could centre His love, whom He could consider His children. God wanted to populate the earth with a type of human beings who would react with love and understanding to their own surroundings, and who would learn to respect morality and decency. He did not want mankind to react only spontaneously and instinctively, but also that

it should ask and query. He wanted to develop a race of people who would not steal or kill in their quest to achieve an aim or to gain some physical satisfaction, but who would strive for whatever they wished with honesty and decency. At the same time He did not want any docile and submissive living beings on earth, the kind of creatures into which the angels in the heavens had turned; but neither did He want mankind ever to be unworthy of the divine soul which He was going to incorporate into them on loan for as long as they were alive. In the course of many many thousands of years man did indeed evolve a culture which elevated him from his early animal-like ignorant and utilitarian existence. But the ideal type of human who has forgotten, has totally freed himself from that animal-like and utilitarian past, has not yet evolved.

You know the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Paradise, I am sure. Of course, this too is a myth, but a very important one. You must interpret the meaning of this fable in the following way: Man was created by God to live in peace with himself and the world into which he has been placed. Even though very early in the history of mankind such a paradise on earth in which man and animals frolicked together might have existed, the story of Adam and Eve should not be taken literally. It is an allegory, as you will have understood. It means, when man began to observe and to watch, to think and to reason, when he became knowledgeable of enemies and death, of God and of life, he began to disregard and to neglect what was good and to do things which he should have avoided. God had left it to man to choose between life and death, between good and evil. Man was asked to find his sustenance without the need to fight other men. The first serious serious moral problem arose for mankind from the fact that when the facts of life and sex were not anymore accepted as natural phenomena and as normal physiological conditions, and had become affected by sentiments of envy and jealousy, of pride and of anxiety, the outcome was that badness and hatred, hostility and bloodshed came to prevail. One can say with justification that all of man's conflicting and often asocial motivations, his instincts and his urges have grown from this situation, this dislocation of values, be it his wish to be more successful, be it his greed for more

money, be it his envy of others, be it his ambition to gain ever higher positions. When the incisive stage was reached, when the human beings became conscious of the power they could gain by their victory over the next man in the struggle motivated by jealousy, greed and hatred, by applying in addition an excess of force on that physical force they had used so far to obtain their daily food and other needs - that was in truth the moment which is described in the Bible and in many other ancient tales as the "eating of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge". Henceforth mankind became involved in its first and since then ever-present and uninterruptedly proceeding struggle between the good and the evil which it has to face.

This is the true meaning of the statement in the Bible, that the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, became "conscious of their nakedness". They realized the 'naked' danger lurking in and around them. They had henceforth to face the realities of life.

My dear children ! Before I close this chapter which deals with man's entry into the history of this earth-planet, let me add a few remarks referring to the early representation of mankind, before I take up my narrative and proceed with the exposition of my viewpoint about the Bible.

You are told by the Bible that there were occasions when God was angry, furious and so on. On such instance was when Adam and Eve disappointed Him. But such statements occur also many times after that. The Bible and the prayerbooks are full of such hints and statements. This sounds rather petty of God, don't you agree ? You must have often have been made to feel uncomfortable by the thought that a God like ours could be angry or pleased, furious or revengeful in the way any one of us human beings may behave at times. You must also have been surprised, as I was, to hear our elders or teachers tell us, or read in the literature, that we can change God's mind if we cry loud enough for His forgiveness, and if we beg long enough for His pity. We cannot prevent ourselves from gaining the impression that such a kind of lip service will suffice to influence God in His decisions or the range of His beneficency, as if He would not know only too well when you do not at all feel truly sorry for the bad things you might have done. Should you ever ask your elders about this strange 'philosophy', you may be offered the explanation that as man has been created in the shape of God, this has to imply that whatever man, woman or child feel, think and experience must be the same kind of sensations

which are also experienced by God. Of course, this is not true ! Equally do people talk nonsense when they refer to God's eyes, ears, hands and so on. But, nevermind, even if this is so inappropriate and unseemly, you may by all means go on using such descriptions and images as long as you do so in the knowledge that these are only figurative expressions to make us understand Him better, approach Him easier. You may be faced by people who tell you that what I have just now said is wrong, and is evidence of a profound misinterpretation, and that the biblical statement that " man was created in the image of God " has only the meaning that man has been made to acquire a sense of beauty, a way of understanding, an approach to wisdom, i.e. that God has endowed mankind with the attributes which are exclusively divine, and that God has shared these with mankind. For it is only man among all creatures who possesses such qualities and qualifications; animals have not been granted access to these divine and heavenly faculties. It is possible that in His earliest program God had had hoped to see mankind evolve without ever knowing of evil and sin, but it appears that He had soon come to the conclusion that such a state is only possible in theory and that in reality it is impossible and inevitable in a world, where a survival without a fight is unrealizable, is almost a contradiction. When the human development reached the stage which the Bible describes as when man ate from the " Tree of Knowledge ", it meant to indicate not so much that he experienced the meaning of evil for the first time, but that he had learned to recognize evil for what it is, how it affects him, and that it was imperative to discover ways and means to fight, to overcome it.

According to the Bible - and this is an important item in the teaching of Judaism and Christianity - God stands above and beyond the world. He is the Supreme God and the Creator, i.e. He is 'transcendent'. But God is also 'imminent', he is in this world of ours, and He gives mankind direction, tasks and promises. Those who take the Bible as the literal pronouncements of God, believe this relationship of God with mankind continues to this day, is effective every moment in a person's life. I have hinted already that I do not share such a viewpoint - and if you have patience you will soon be able to learn how I see the " situation ". However, I do agree that God's direction had in the beginning of organizing and programming placed man in the right path and into the right direction. God in His omniscience knew quite well that in order to guide the development of this world which He was in the process of creating to reach a state of near perfection as possible, He had to add also a good portion of that beauty and love of which He had such an inexhaustible abundance. He was rendered conscious of these precious gifts when he became conscious of evil. As soon as man became conscious of evil trends, of uncontrollable instincts and of the dangers of uncontrollable hatred, his fate was intrinsically associated with his ability and his will to keep love and goodness always alive and sufficiently effective, so that they can keep evil in

all its expressions and manifestations subdued and rendered ineffective. We must have no illusions: evil will always be with us. We recognize evil in the way its manifestations and urges contrast with goodness. For only if we recognize evil shall we be able if not to eliminate it at least to keep it in check. Only by knowing of evil, and by thus controlling evil, have we the possibility to render it powerless. As soon as mankind has acquired this knowledge and ~~abused~~ exercised this faculty, will it also have accomplished a world of peace in a saved and redeemed world.

CHAPTER 3

ABOUT GOD,;

1. God and man

My dear children !

I think, in order for you to gain a clearer idea of " what it is all about ", you should permit me to help you form an idea of God. I have already on more than one occasion told you something about God, but I want now to round off the last chapter, and the following one which I intend to be most of all a narrative about God, with a few more pages describing my personal conception of God.

You must have understood by now that any person who perceives the things around him with eyes open for the wonders of nature, who has some knowledge of the creation of the Universe, who has learned about the history of mankind and the evolution of man, cannot be left in any doubt about the existence of God. You do not have to be very learned to know this; it is sufficient to have, or better still to be sensitive to an inner comprehension of this fact. But let me assure you that many if not most of the eminent scholars of this our rational age deeply and firmly believe that the world past, present and future is unthinkable without God. Notwithstanding this, and to my and most likely also to your surprise, there are so many people all over the world, who do not believe in God. I am sure that the majority of those who do so, have only been repeating what these doubters and unbelievers say, have themselves not been thinking to any extent about this matter, or at best have not been thinking deeply about it.

I simply cannot imagine that there can be any person alive who wants to maintain himself in a state of spiritual equilibrium, can do so without some mind of religious belief or a degree of religiosity

by which he can balance his doubts, soothe his desperations or quieten his anxieties. A person can be religious without having recourse to an organized religion to prescribe him permissible limits or to restrict him into inflexible rules. No religion can, however, satisfy without a God at its centre, and at that a God who is allmighty, all-knowing and eternal. An allmighty God has no other god beside Him. Such a God has to be absolutely holy, must be one who decides and orders what is and what is going to be.

The God who created this world once upon a long time ago, has defined and programmed its decourse and course for ever. These were not the outcome of or the reaction to certain dangerous losses or some perilous mishaps, but were based on a vast mathematical scheme which allowed, included and induced all possible variations and adaptions. Their number of possibilities and probabilities are enormous, truly astronomical and they have undoubtedly provided for every possible deviation and chance, every selection and mutation. How else could you explain the enormous provision, supply and waste of seeds and semen, of eggs and pollens everywhere in living nature since life began on earth. They are produced in such excess, so that there is the assurance that not only the right number of the species will survive, but also the best possible and the fittest specimen. This process is not left to coincidence only, as whenever the necessity arrises, a selection makes forther evolutions possible. What to you and many a scientist may appear coincidal and accidental happenings may very often be that ' push ', that rare divine interference which changes the fate of nature and nations, which appear to mankind as events and miracles otherwise not explainable. Many of the deviations of the course of history can only be explained in this manner. Let nobody tell you that we humans are not masters of of ourselves and our fate. We are, but we are also under a kind of protective tutelage through the established rules of nature which are steadily maintained and checked so that they can never ' run away '. Therway man acts and reacts is not fixed, does not proceed according to fixed rules; they are not recognizable and analyzable as natural events. Although we wannot interfere - except destructively - in the processes of nature, our actions and our thinking can be influenced by logical as well as unexplainable happenings. Nobody's fate is predetermined nor is anybody's future fixed beforehand, neither is anybody's reactions predicatble. We are involved in and influenced by natural events beyond our control, by human machinations testing our defences - but how we react, what our duty is and how we benefit, what share we gain and how far we get involved is still within the domain of our own willing and deciding and will be dictated by our won power of discrimination and measured by our own ethical standards.

You have been told by your parents and teachers that God protects the innocents and that He loves children; that He does not

permit evil and that He rewards the just. This is true , but not because He watches everything you do and not because He registers and acts upon every wrong you permit. He watches everything you do, that is true, but not in the way you imagine. He exerts control on all our actions because He has built in, because He has inserted into the program all the possibilities of your actions and reactions, into the extensions of good and in those of evil. He has also provided for the consequences which may result immediately or in due course in rewards or punishments. Try to understand well what I do present to you here, otherwise you can impossibly imagine a God of the kind and nature I want you to know, a God who could only indirectly be instrumental in killing off large populations by wars and famines, by storms and other natural disasters. He does not arrange every single event which occurs ; they are mathematical-psychological decourses in a fate-like arrangement. God watches and observes, and He intervenes only when the alarm goes off in indication of some malfunctioning of the program or its escaping into an unretrievable situation. God allowed, therefore, the Temple of Jerusalem to be destroyed because they had become luxury structures without any spiritual content or meaning. He permitted Jerusalem to be raised to the ground because that formerly holy town had in any case already been turned into a pagan place - but throughout He has kept His 'protective hand' over the exiled Jews; and above all He has programmed into the minds and the hearts of the Jews an unperishable love for Jerusalem and the Holy Land. He made the mighty Roman Empire grant importance to the Jewish people even though this was expressed in a hostile and negative manner. He made the Christian Church fear and fight the Jews, thus destroying her own credibility and by thus also sapping her spiritual power and annulling Christianity's final victory. I could give you so many more examples which indicate God's planning and programming for Israel and the world. You may one day record and complete your own list, if you so want. Yes, God did permit all the many sufferings to be inflicted upon the Jews in the knowledge that this would result in an ultimate benefit for them and mankind. This is to my mind a certainty; and I am sure that the fate of the Jews can never go astray under His watchful eye. Or do you believe those stupid rabbis who tell you that God in a fit of anger or in amoment when He lost His self-control destroyed Jerusalem, and that He was, thereafter, full of regrets and angry with Himself ? Or do you accept the oracles of some demented rabbi who dared to explain the death of a busload of small children with the malfunctioning of the magic supposedly emanating of the 'mezuzoth' affixed to the doorposts in Jewish homes ?

I can only understand myself and all that was and is, if I reason that God does not exert a direct and immediate rule over the fate of mankind. He has outlined man's fate and future, and within the

perimeter of total human freedom He allows mankind to shape its path and destiny. He provides guidance through His once for ever defined and established aims, and through the consciousness of these, which He has implanted into the human Self. The evil which man does to man is programmed within the human path and direction. **MANKIND'S ACTIONS** result from a concatenation of circumstances which man has created within the probabilities provided - and which are nonetheless limited by nature.

Allow me to say also a few words about how I view the relationship between God **AND** man. The difference between the various religions is an expression of the various ways in which the encounter between God and man is viewed and interpreted. The outline I have given above of the relationship between God and mankind, between God and the world of man, has been established from the beginning and its validity persists to this day. I do not agree with André Malraux who expressed himself in an interview ('Encounter' 1969) that "...in certain earlier civilizations ...there was an identity between man and the cosmos, between man and God. In our generation, of which machine is a great symbol, something is happening that has never happened before - man has no more meaning". On the contrary ! The world has no meaning without God, and for God the world has no meaning without man .

In Judaism's teaching God meets man and seeks his companionship. God was and is for the Jews a truth , a quasi-pantheistic reality. The Jew does not need express his knowledge of God in figurative representations. He is encouraged by God's approaches and by His invitation to reach upwards to know God. Though man harbours the divine spark, some of God's essence within himself, he is himself not divine, can never become so. Every man can feel god-like by knowing his acceptability to God. He knows he is welcome. He knows he can reach upwards without the need of mysticism's tools.

There will be some who will tell you that my explanations and descriptions smack of 'deism'. This is only possible because those who accuse me of this, do not know what they are talking about. Deists deny that God and man can ever meet, while this promise is specifically offered in Judaism. It is not only through mystic experiences - as Luria, Maimonides, the Bal-Shem-Tov have known - but every Jew , in all his finity, can encounter God in His infinity. It is such an encounter, or even the straining for such an encounter, which gives true meaning to life.

I am afraid I have somewhat confused you, but I could not omit these explanations, nor could I concentrate my thoughts in fewer sentences. I shall have to condensate my ideas and thoughts in as few words as possible, as otherwise I shall never complete my story. But have some more patience - I have not done yet with my ' remarks'

2. God in Bible and Scriptures

I am afraid I have to add a few words about the Bible and about 'Scriptures' in general , as otherwise so much of what I am going to tell you in the following chapter would not register with you in all its meaning. Have some patience, please !

You You children - but also whoever gets these pages into his hands - should make it a point to read the Bible. The Bible reports history. It is a history in form of revelations passed on through lines of prophets. The Bible is full of legends and myths, but - but in contrast with other religions, revealed or not - the Jewish religion is not structured on myths. You should , if possible, read the Bible more than once from beginning to end. But when you read the Bible, you should keep the fact in mind that the succession of facts are not always in the sequence as they are reported, that they have been arranged in an only approximate or apparent continuity. This should not mean that they could not be historic facts, but only that the history and the facts and the events which have occurred over generations may have been condensed into one person or into one single episode. There are theologians and Bible experts who conform in the opinion that the Bible is a composition of various manuscripts, that it is a mixture of the writings of various authors who have combined their various traditions, personal viewpoints, contemporaries ideologies into a unified version; they had to prove to themselves and to their readers that the Bible is holy and emanates from the ' mouth of God ". Be that as it may, and I have no objection to accept their conclusions, but the way in which they do formulate them do at times jar. They were and are mostly philosophers who tended to explain the meaning of a biblical passage in the manner which suited them personally.

The Bible has had a great impact on the social development of mankind. It has given direction not only to the theological but also to the philosophical conceptions which prevailed anywhere at any time during the last 3500 years. Philosophers, theologians, legislators have found clear indications of divine guidance in their duties and tasks, the promises and the blessings with which God has endowed mankind. There, in the earliest part of the Bible (Gen. 2:15) a very basic law and ordinance is outlined. There you can read: "God took man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to take care of it". This is interpreted as a profound ethical command; it decrees that work is the inseparable duty of mankind, that working means producing and providing, comprises thinking ahead and planning, invited progress and success, and aims at perfection and satisfaction. By work man is differentiated from asocial elements, because it confirms man's belief that he harbours within h

within himself godlike capabilities. You may point out that this is not a uniquely human quality, that there exist also animals which provide food and shelter for themselves and their offspring, and who make arrangements for the winter months; but you must not overlook that these animals have by and with their instincts been programmed for this specific purpose that they should work at and not beyond these achievements. They do not like, like man, work to gain a steady progress in their perfection-directed aims, and they are not motivated by the hope that their work will contribute to the advancement of the species and will lead them to dominate nature. From the beginning man was set on the path of achieving his own and by his own efforts a civilized environment and a cultured atmosphere. Whatever man does achieve he owes to himself. His achievements were and are not gifts of God, or of the gods as the Greeks have been taught by their religion.

The history of the world, with particular care for that of the Jews, as it is described in and by the Bible, was originally transmitted by word of mouth, as was the case with most all early histories of the world. This took often on the form of poems and songs. The inevitable consequence was that the true facts and feats were not only elaborated and decorated but that with the help of poetic fantasy they were also condensed, transposed, distorted and coloured. It is wrong, therefore, to conclude as so many do, that the Bible is nothing but a mythological narrative. Next to clear and definite historic reports many moral truths and much penetrating moral ordinance accompanies that which can be defined without reservation as a revealed religion. To express all this in a different way: the Bible may have much mythological content, it may contrast with today's scientific conceptions, it may be historically inconsequential, but there is the undeniable fact - a fact never to be lost sight of - that for large sections of Jews it is a revealed truth, that it contains a real inner message which has come from a divine source.

The first composition of the Bible into written form was begun around 1100 BCE [BCE = Before the Christian era or Before the common era]. Bible experts label the first edition with the designation of the " Yahvist Text ", because the Godhead is therein called 'Yahveh'. Later on the " Elohist Text " , so called because therein the appellation of God is 'Elohim', was added. And soon also the " Sacerdotal Text " was intermixed with the former two sections.

The " Yahvist Text " is supposed to have originated in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It is mostly concerned with the first part of the Pentateuch, ranging from the Creation until the death of Jacob. In the 9th Century BCE the " Elohist " portion was interwoven into the story of the PATRIARCHS Abraham, Yizhak and Jacob, and the books of Joshua and the Judges were added. When between 721 and 705 BCE the

Kingdom of Israel came to an end with the fall of Samaria, the Kingdom of Judah took over their religious heritage, and it was during that period that the " Elohists " and the " Yahvists " texts were consolidated into a united section. The 5th Book of Moses, Deuteronomy, dates from that time. In the 6th century BCE, at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem by Babylon, the Book of Genesis was rewritten and the so-called " Sacerdotal " version was added to the " Yahvist " and the " Elohists " portions.

That what I have described to you just now is an explanation, a catalogization which is nowadays accepted by most all Bible experts, but which is anathema to the orthodox Jew and is sure to induce him to rage about heresy - for the orthodox Jew is convinced that the Bible, exactly as it stands and reads, has been literally, factually and physically been handed over by God to Moses at Mount Sinai.

Chapter 4 .

About the Human Race.

1. The development of the human s.

After the preceding explanatory chapter let us return to our story.

The men and women on earth went on multiplying and they grew in numbers. In the course of their development the human race was constantly exposed to the great dangers and physical threats which lurked all around them. They achieved their survival as a human race, although large segments and sectors did disappear here and there, because they an ever greater experience and knowledge of the ways and means to protect and adjust themselves. After a very long period of evolution a definite human society became consolidated.

The first human beings lived in groups. When they became more numerous, they formed into clans which then associated into tribes. From these tribes peoples and nations came to be formed. From the beginning of their existence the fight for survival had made up man's main interest, and in this he did not differ from other animals or other living things in general. This daily struggle, this ongoing effort was not restricted to the hunt, and later to the cultivation of the garden and the acre, but there was also the search, ~~the~~urge to penetrate the secrets of nature, and to learn how to harness the unlimited powers which nature could be made place at the disposal of mankind. Do not think, children, that in this searching, in this arranging and in this experimenting God did act as a kind of manager or dirigent., or that He did at any time arrange matters or circumstances in such a way that things might be easier or at other times more difficult for man. God never interfered. He left it to man and beast to solve the arising problems for themselves; they had to learn on their own how to adjust to the laws of nature and to the rules of biology. Mankind's main task, however, and also its ~~main~~ difficult lesson was that they had in addition to learn how to adjust to each other. God looked on and watched. As a rule He never interfered. Only on very rare occasions, when there occurred a combination of events and circumstances which , though they had resulted from the scheme of things to which God had programmed nature, had made existence too harsh or unexpectedly unmanageable, and whenever there developed a combination of unforeseeable or dangerous situations which did find mankind excusably unprepared, did God introduce a shift here or a change there. By such occasional and rare interferences could and did from time to time the course of events, the decourse of history take on one of those unexpected turns which we view with puzzlement and which we are even induced to call a miracle.

God had created man for a purpose, as I have pointed out before. God had wanted man to learn from his own experience, so that he would come to cultivate in and for himself ever higher ethical values. God raised him above all other living things and gave him the power to observe and to think, to reason and to remember. This was by no means so easily achieved ~~because~~ man as he had originally evolved, was a very clumsy creature, far more so than most other animals. Physiologically, constitutionally and anatomically he was not well prepared for survival. He had not yet learned to use

tools and weapons to their best effect. This must have been one of those occasions when God interfered, because God appears to have realized man's impediments, a handicap which might have ended in man's total elimination. As this would have been contrary to God's original and basic plans, He must have decided to help man along. I do not know how He came to decide on His next step, on the method to help man on earth, what induced Him to such a specific decision. But you can be absolutely sure and certain that God's intervention was due to the love He felt and the care He had for mankind.

2. The Angels' Deputation.

The first human beings which God had created about two million years ago were primitive and uncouth creatures - let me state this in straight and simple language. In the course of time they had increased considerably in numbers, and the earth had become more and more populated with these human beings. Along with their number also their evil trends had more and more increased. Brutality had become an enjoyment, killing and entertainment. They should have seen in the floods, the epidemics, the famines to which they were frequently exposed a warning; but they did not realize these afflictions as warning signs and they did not improve in their behaviour. They may have interpreted such dangerous situations and such threatening natural phenomena as warnings, as indications that they were being punished, as omen that they were not conducting themselves as humans but were behaving not better than animals - but they did not draw the right conclusions. They were far too primitive, far too unsophisticated to do so, and they thought that they were being punished by the whim, by the unreasonable rage of some powerful spirit. They did not know, nor did they reason that God never punishes the small misdeeds as long as they are understandable errors, but that He sends, whenever necessary only sounds and warnings. They could not know this because they did not yet know of God and His ways. These primitive human reacted with fear and they tried to escape by hiding in their caves. They

offered as sacrifices prisoners they caught for this purpose from other tribes or even their own children in the hope that this would satisfy the angry natural forces which they called gods. I do not know if God was disappointed or hurt by all this, but He must have been concerned because He had from the beginning been so much involved in everything which concerned His creatures on earth. The angels in heaven suffered along with God, for they saw that He did not evince as before that pleasure and that joy when listening to their songs. After the angels had thoroughly discussed the matter among themselves, they approached God with the offer that He should send a group of them down to the surface of the earth, where they would take on human shape, mix with the inhabitants of the earth; they would make it their task not only to bring the humans to their senses and teach them an understanding of what God expected from them, but they would also instruct them in the use of tools, would introduce them in the use of fire and would in general help them to advance into a higher cultural direction. God accepted their plan. He dispatched a selected group of His angels down to the earth with the instruction to mix with the human beings, the primitive men and women who lived in caves along with their animals. You may be sure that God had His Archangels select the most serious and the most qualified angels from among the myriads who were lounging about all over the heavens, and that they were provided with exact instructions and suitable advice. When the large contingent of the angels reached the surface of the earth, they had, of course, to take on human form and this was the reasons why the humans never realized that the newcomers they met on the plains and in the mountains and whom they invited to become part of their clan-life, were angels from heaven. In due course the angels could, by their steadily and delicately applied influence not only elevate the human beings' ideas and concepts onto a higher moral and cultural level, but they taught them also many an important technical method and procedure, particularly in the fields of agriculture, engineering and architecture.

3. The Fall of the Angels.

A new era had begun on earth. For some time everything appeared to go well. Then something unforeseen happened. I do not think that these events could really have been unforeseen because nothing occurs in heaven and on earth which is not known in advance to God, which is not planned and directed and controlled, at least foreseen as a possibility by God. You will recall that a short while ago I explained to you that God had endowed man with the free will and the liberty of action by which he can decide on his own what he wants to do, and that for this reason God had determined that He was not going to supervise every detail of the daily events in man's existence, and that He would not automatically intervene unless some serious and unforeseen malfunction occurred and would force Him to do so. I suppose that God had applied this very same policy of His also to the angels who were "on duty" on earth. And do you know what happened? These angels, who had been chosen for their special qualities of cool judgement and incorruptible honesty, who had been the cleverest and sagest among the angels, who had been the most reliable ones, discovered one fine day to their own surprise that they were having a jolly good time on earth, that all in all and in comparison they had in the past they had been leading a pretty dull life among the other angels in heaven. They were suddenly confronted with the facts of life on earth, and they realized that life on earth was far more interesting, attractive and eventful than anything they had known before over the millions of years since they had been created. Above all, it appears to me, they had in their guise as human beings had the chance to appreciate also the pleasures of sex. In short, many of them had fallen in love with the earthly women; they married them and produced children with them. As you can well imagine, the personality, the physical characteristics and the intelligence of the offspring of a marriage between an angel and a woman on earth were in every aspect quite different from those of other mortals. They were giants physically, giants intellectually and giants technically. No wonder that the historians have given them in retrospect the name of "The Titans". And thus it happened,

that when the angels' tour of duty on earth was declared over, they refused to ~~obey~~ and to obey the orders which God sent them through one archangel after the other. And finally God Himself called to them and demanded of them that they pack up and return at one to their headquarters in heaven. But every time they were ordered home they obstinately refused to follow orders, and the told the archangels, and finally God Himself, that they preferred to remain for ever on earth with their wives ~~and~~ children and were willing to forego all the privileges of angeldom.

I don't have to explain to you in detail that this was something unheard of. God was quite definitely in a quandary. This God had most likely not expected to happen. It was for God , of course, not that kind of difficulty which we ourselves, unfortunately, do so often experience in our children, and not one of the situations in which we are faced no less unfortunately with temper tandrums, with tears, with curses or with nibbling of fingernails. Of course, God is never exposed to such a kind of helplessness, nor does He ever exhibit such a kind of anger; but it appears that for some time He has been undecided how best He could help all those who were involved ~~on~~ this unpleasant and complicated situation, how He could best let them get away with as little damage as possible from the misfortune caused by their folly. You will have to take in account also another problem involved; viz:- that the angels, who were, as you know, made up of God's own essence, could not be simply destroyed, could not be done away as God can any time do with human beings, who are made of a destructable, disposable body. The fact that the mortal hull of the men and women harboured the soul, that eternal part of God Himself did not present any difficulty, as it had been loaned to us and it will , after our death, again return to the source when it has come, i.e. to the Divine Essence.

The situation which presented itself , therefore, to God was , that ~~although~~ He could simply destroy mankind in taking from them their souls, and although He could use His power and authority to imprison the recalcitrant angels in some distant part of the Universe, He had to deal now with the new brand of the living beings, those which had been created by the cohabitation of the angels with the humans. These could not be dealt with as if they were either angels or humans, for they contained next to their souls also an additional, a divine element within their body and spirit.

And as if this was not enough of a problem, at this stage of the history of the world, an additional problem became acute. It had since quite some time been disturbing the peace in the heavens. God had so far not wanted to handle it in the hope that things would get smoothed out by themselves. God had since some time been aware that a considerable degree of jealousy had developed among the archangels because they resented the interest which God had shown during the last many millions of years for the goings-on upon the earth. He had not to be told that **THERE WAS SUCH A GROUP OF** rebellious angels, because they had become quite conspicuous already by their mutterings and by their biting remarks. There came the day when these angels approached God and demanded of Him that they be granted similar rights and opportunities as been granted in such abundance to the humans. But God was in no way agreeable to make any of the concessions which the angels demanded; neither could He bring Himself to punish the large array of archangels and angels who were involved in what looked more and more like a rebellion. But now the time had come when God realized that He could continue to listen to arguments anymore, that He could not postpone acting anymore. He knew that He had to do something now. And He did.

First of all He called the ringleader of the rebels, the Archangel Lucifer, before His throne. He demanded of Him that without any further arguments he apologize and change his behaviour, that he stop exciting the other angels, and that he desist from undermining any further the peace in heaven. Lucifer not only refused to do any of the things which God had demanded of him, but, what is even worse, he dared to challenge, with impertinent hints and dirty allusions, God's manifest love for mankind. What I have just now explained to you regarding the indestructibility of the angels applies, of course, also to the archangels. God could not simply destroy Lucifer, wipe him off from the surface of the heavens. I have some faint suspicion that God did not mind, did even welcome some kind of a challenge, some form of embodiment of the evil and the wrong which God could not carry in Himself. At times, and later on to a greater degree, and still later as a permanent institution, evil and wrong were a required gauge not only to make goodness understood but also contrasted and measured. This divine reasoning may have saved Lucifer and his impertinent gang of followers among the angels, as God could surely have

found a solution, would have removed them drastically for ever from His presence, and could have made sure that they could never again become a nuisance. Only by taking all these points in view will you understand what God did do now. He banished Lucifer and his followers for ever from His presence and from all the heavens. He sent Lucifer down to the earth and made him take up his residence below the surface of the earth where he could - and indeed did - henceforth represent and incorporate all that which was evil and bad, dark and rotten. In addition God made those angels who had been Lucifer's most ardent followers and who had refused to repent, as well as those angels who had been ruined in their angeldom during their mission on earth, into that type of evil spirits which we humans here on earth have come to know as " daemons ". These daemons He placed under the command of Lucifer whose name God finally changed into that of Satan.

I suppose, judging from what happened next, that God must have been quite upset by these unpleasant events. He must have realized that He had miscalculated, or better said, that His complex programming of the earth-system had gone awry due to the unforeseen and unprogrammed rebellion of the angels. He must have concluded that there was then no other way out of the imbroglio than to start afresh. That God could have confessed to Himself that He had made a mistake, is one of the imposing features of His great wisdom and is, in a very pale reflection, one of the most important gifts He has also transferred on mankind. Hence you can count that person among the truly wise and perfect men and women, who can frequently and frankly confess to themselves and to the world whenever they have sinned or erred.

It had been an important program point in God's original plan that mankind be taught in a slow and gradually proceeding process moral values, selfless behaviour, lofty thinking and just acting. But the revolt of the angels, of those who had mixed with the humans, had lived with them and who did 'beget' the Titans with their womenfolk, had instilled the new human race with the uncontrollable aspiration to become gods themselves, to gain for themselves a place in the heavens, and to live there alongside with the angels. All this had made a change in God's plans necessary. A great problem was presented by the Titans, who had learned from the fallen angels many new techniques and mechanics. They intended to bring the earth under their control

with the help of their superior technical knowledge, and having achieved this, they planned to make themselves masters of the Universe. They began to construct ever higher buildings, towers, ladders in their childish hopes they might reach heaven by these means. You will remember the Bible story of that generation of mankind which built the "Tower of Babel". This story is not only identical with what I have just now described, but you must see in it in addition an allegoric expression of the foolish high-flying plans of those peoples of which I am talking, the conceited half-angels who dreamed that they could through their own efforts acquire for themselves the status of gods. The Titans had acquired great power. They took control of everything on earth. They soon also demanded the human race, those who did not carry the genes and the essence of the angels. They wanted to replace the humans and they began, therefore, to exterminate, slowly but determinately under the guidance and instruction of Satan, whatever 'pure' humans they could find.

4. Noah and the Flood .

You understand that this state of affairs could not be allowed to go on. Not so because God was angry or impatient - it would be ridiculous to think thus of God - but because He concluded that it would be easier to start 'from scratch' and with some new human material, than to patch up and to correct, to shift and to change. It does not come as a surprise to me that God decided to destroy the entire sinful and uncontrollably drifting human race which had taken over the earth, and to start on a new one. He did not want to begin all over again; that means, He did not want to begin with newly forming living cell complexes or with a single pair of innocents like Adam and Eve in a newly laid out Garden of Eden. He did not want to have to bother with the initiation of a new process of creation or with a repeat of the evolution of a human creature, because with the exception of the mishap with the angels and the disorderly conduct of the Titans the developmental process had been quite promising and the selective outcome entirely satisfactory. I cannot but agree if in addition God should have

thought that a new start of the entire procedure would have been far too monotonous.

God, as you might expect, had a better plan. He was going to select from among the racially pure humans still left on earth, a decent and simple man in whom there was none of the angels' genes, and evolve from him and his family a totally new human race. Everything else alive - man and beast - would be destroyed, would be eradicated. Among all the people of the world God found in a man called Noah a suitable person to become the founder of that new race. God had apparently not many families to choose from. He had to take along with Noah also his sons and daughters who, from all I have heard, must have been quite a rough and mischievous lot. Noah himself, however, appears to have been a decent chap. Throughout his life he had striven to be honest and straightforward in his private and business dealings. He had under the most trying circumstances never failed to show his love for goodness and hatred for evil. God knew, of course, that this Noah was a rather primitive man and lacking in strength of character - and He knew also that there was not much reliance to be put in the morals of Noah's daughters - but God knew quite well that good and intelligence, cleverness and decency are not always, and also not of necessity, found combined in one and the same person - and even much less so at the same time in all the members of a family.

In that direct way which was still possible and not at all unusual in ancient times, God established contact with Noah. Directly or through the Shekhina He gave him the necessary instructions how to build a sea-worthy ark-like structure; and in the same manner He communicated to him the required advice how to make a complete selection of specimen of each one of the living things on earth, the animals and the plants. & You may be surprised to find that the Bible mentions in one place that Noah was instructed to take one pair of each species into the ark while in another place in the Bible mention is made of seven pairs of each to be accommodated. I mention this discrepancy - to which I shall return on a later occasion - because it illustrates so well that here a later source has intervened, i.e. the "Sacerdotal source" of which I have told you a short while ago. This correction must have come from the priestly class which was so very influential in later Jewish history, because the priests wanted to anticipate the question which some clever talmudist might raise in later times, viz:- "wherefrom did Noah

take enough animals for the sacrifices he had to offer to God all through the journey and later as thanksgiving to God after he had landed. The matched pairs of sheep, goats, cows, doves etc. were after all needed for breeding ?

Noah and his children were not gifted with much intelligence - they had indeed not benefitted from the genes of the angels - and God appears not to have placed too much reliance on Noah's intellectual capabilities; for He taught him in minute detail how to accommodate the animals, how best to store them inside the ark along with the foodstuffs which had to be provided for the multitude of the animals for a possibly long time in what was after all a relative small houseboat. When everything was ready - you can imagine how long a time all these preparations and arrangements took, especially as all these goings-on had to be kept strictly hidden from the neighbours - and after Noah, his daughters and his three sons with their wives - nothing is said whether Noah had a wife or not with him - had sealed themselves inside the ark, God opened all the floodgates of heaven, emptied all the clouds which He had concentrated over the course of many months, made overflow all the springs and wells. The earth was soon flooded with so much water that all the existing living things were drowned with the exception of those who were safely accommodated in Noah's houseboat. Of course, the floods and all they implied, never presented a danger or any great discomfort to the fish and all those things which live inside the waters. I can understand why this was so. God had in His all-embracing condemnation of all living things this exception, as one can hardly imagine that a fish or a frog could have committed any sin so that He did not have to destroy them; their survival was hardly endangered by the floods. In addition, although God had insisted on a real 'clean-up', a 'tabula rasa' He would have caused Noah great logistic problems, which that simple man would have hardly been capable of solving, had he had to install and to service innumerable sets of aquaria in the ark.

You know already from your story books that Noah could open the gates of the ark and descend from it after the terrible rains had stopped, which was the case after 40 days and nights had passed. And was he happy to get out of that houseboat ! Imagine the smell with which he had to live all that time ! But as you know, when the dangers were over, he could at last put his feet on solid ground. You know also that more or less all the arkful of living things had survived the ordeal. Now God's former program for the earth

system was reactivated and everything began again to proceed and to grow according to the former but now in certain aspects adjusted and re-arranged plan. In due course the earth was afresh repopulated with humans and animals of every kind, from the primitive one-celled amoeba to the most complex and perfectly structured mammals. Humans, animals, plants continued to multiply as ever before. At no stage nor at any time in history was the earth ever as densely filled with living beings as a few generations after "The Flood",, but they were concentrated in small groups and centres here and there, in such parts of the globe in particular, where the plants and the trees could find rich soil and the animals in them and along with them the right kind of food.

CHAPTER 2
ABOUT THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.

1. A progressing vacuum.

It did not take long - of course , measured by the ticking away of the cosmic clock , and God had to take notice of the fact, that A new set of problems had arisen in the new set-up and with the newly instituted programming. Things had changed a great deal. God had to decide now, how He was going to face them. Mankind had reformed into new family groups and had settled again into tribes. They had united into peoples and nations and each of these had developed its own language and culture, its own tradition and its own beliefs, its own origin and moved now towards its own ultimate fate. And last though not least every one of them had evolved its own religious interpretation of a divine presence. It was inevitable - and also provided for in God's program and plan, as well as in the newly established laws of nature - that those who were strong would subdue those who were weaker, and that the latter in turn would inflict on others still weaker tribes and nations those very same cruelties and crimes of which they had been complaining in such bitter and tearful lamentations to their idols, the hand or naturemade images in which they perceived their gods.

You must not think that God could have interpreted this as His failure when He saw that the peoples of the earth had begun to build for themselves images of non-existing gods and goddesses. By far not ! First of all and once for ever you should know that God can never fail; only we humans do. God did not feel affected or offended. It was of great interest to Him to watch what went on in the human mind, how the qualities with which He had endowed mortal man were applied to perceive and to express their concept of a Supreme Being whose existence they instinctively accepted, and to

whom, as they knew, they owed their existence. You should also realize that God is the quintessence of objectivity, that He is never biased nor unjust. He was certainly interested to observe how that spark of divinity, that intimate relationship with God which all human beings harbour, was being misapplied and misappropriated. But notwithstanding all that misinterpretation God was pleased to see - at least this is how I read it - that all the men and women, the primitive ones no less than the sophisticated ones, carried within themselves the instinctive knowledge that all they were and had, all they saw and observed was due to a Divine Being Above, who directed and governed, who gave and took, who was to be adored and to be loved. The Bible writes that there were times when God became jealous, but this is something which I cannot visualize with the best of wills; this is something which I consider to be an absolute nonsense. I say this clearly and distinctively even though you may remonstrate "who are you to doubt what is written in the Scriptures?" "Don't you remember that you can read there with your own eyes that God had so Himself?" "That He had said so more than once?" But whatever you say and whatever is said in the most holy and most authentic writings, I cannot be persuaded to change my opinion. But be it as it may, even if He was at times "angry, jealous, disgusted" in His essential goodness He every time has decided to give mankind another chance to learn the truth. He has again and again provided a channel through which He would teach us human beings, then as well as now, that there do not exist multitudes of gods but only a Single God, Himself. He has created the world with only that one plan and intention, viz:- to make mankind happy, to have it acquire full knowledge of the divine essence it carries in itself and by which it is entitled to an ultimate redemption and salvation. That promise is, however, limited by the proviso that we humans learn to spend the little which is only needed of our large supply of energy and our to us sufficiently available willpower to overcome the left-overs of our primitive past and to cultivate that seed of goodness which has been implanted into us, into our destiny; that we push aside our greed and suppress our envy; that we overcome our hatred and give up our cruel streak. If we strive for the achievement of such ethical concepts, we shall open to us the gates of a new Eden which will encompass the entire earth, it will be a paradise in which all humanity will be allowed to live in peace and harmony.

2. Abraham's Appointment.

Whatever I have written in the last page can be expressed in the sentence that God knew well that the humansbeings could not be blamed for their shortcomings, as they had never been told in any clear words what their relationship with the Eternal was, what their destiny and duty on earth, and to which standard of values they should aspire. God knew quite well, that mankind had by far not matured - then no more than today - to act as a whole and by itself without a leader, without a guide, without an example and without an inspiration. Therefore also this time did He decide to select from among the humans on earth a suitable man, in whom and through whom He intended to create a new strain of human beings which He might form into a special people to be thoroughly educated and constantly improved, and which in turn would carry forward the lessons which it had learned and the message with which it had been entrusted, in the course of the ensuing ages, to the nations in all parts of the world.

"God looked around" among all the men living in the world of that day, in search of an individual who possessed the traits necessary for such a difficult task; a man who possessed the right purity of heart and the required charity of mind; a man who harboured that sensitivity of intuition and was endowed with depth of inspiration by which he could inevitably be granted the recognition of the path which was leading to the One God.

He found such a man in Abram, the son of Terah of the country of Ur. Abram was an introspective type of man. He was wont to spend hours at a time in deep contemplation of the natural phenomena he perspicaciously perceived. From his earliest youth onwards had he searched for an understanding of the facts and the events which he witnessed in his daily life, and which he could not explain either by the use of logic nor with the help of the interpretations supplied by his elders. His father Terah was a relatively rich man who lived in a large and comfortable house surrounded by many tents. He had filled his housings with a multitude of figures of gods made from clay, wood, stone or bone, and he added to them

more and more in gratitude whenever his flock grew or his family increased. Abram could not find a reasonable explanation, why such man-made figurines - among them even an occasional plain black meteorite which, he was told, had been seen to drop from the skies - could be strong and powerful deities. He did not understand how one could demand of an average intelligent person to adore them and to pray them. He could not bring himself to follow the example of his father and to prostrate himself before these 'gods', although his father angrily reprimanded him whenever he refused to do so. The incongruity of the entire conception appeared to Abram still greater, and it caused him at times to laugh out aloud, when he saw his father spit upon such figurines, slap them or throw them to the ground and trample on them whenever the household of Terah had been affected by some bad luck or whenever his herds were afflicted by some epidemic, or whenever he personally did not receive that for which in his usual overbearing manner he had prayed to the gods.

Inevitably the day had to come when Abram, whom his father loved most among his many children, could not control himself and his criticism any longer. He told his father what he thought about the gods crowded into every corner of the tents and on every shelf of the house. He told him that to his mind such a cult and such a religion were nothing but ridiculous. You can imagine how much of a shock these words were to his father, who had such complete trust in the effectiveness and the efficiency of these gods. When his father reacted with anger and disbelief, and even with fear, Abram took a piece of wood and within a few minutes he had smashed to pieces every one of his father's idols. Nothing happened, of course. There was no earthquake nor any lightning. Neither did anything happen to Abram himself. But notwithstanding this demonstrative proof his father was not convinced nor consoled. For Abram himself, who for a few moments had been surprised about himself and even somewhat apprehensive, this experience meant the watershed in his life. He required no further proof that the voice which had spoken to him, which had inspired him, which had in fact addressed him directly, had indeed been the voice of that invisible, unique and very powerful God, who had told him that He had created the world and all which existed therein, and whose spirit and power continued to permeate, to dominate, to control all which made up the earth and all which is around it in the world. That soft and insistent voice, at the same time so powerful and frightening, had told

him not long ago: "Abram ! I have watched you since quite some time. I have admired your perception and cognition of a Supreme Being you have reached by yourself with your intellect and your heart. I am the Great and Supreme Being, the Master of the Universe. I am the only God in existence, the One and Only God, and there is no God besides me. I have chosen you from among all the peoples and nations on earth, I have selected you and appointed you as my messenger, as the medium to make me and my wishes known to the living world. I shall lead, guide and educate you. I shall show you how to live in a moral and honest man, as a decent and just man; and you will accordingly teach all the men and women you encounter the principles of morality, the tenets of ethics, the laws of decency and the rules of justice. In short, you will adopt and live those high standards of life which I want all the future generations of mankind to embrace. I want you and all mankind to make my laws and my ethics a part of your conscience. Do not delay any longer and set out on your task. Assemble all your immediate family, collect all your personal property and leave your father's house for ever. Go forth towards the land which I shall one day hand over to you and your descendants after I have built them into a great and strong nation. Live and practise from now on that which you have realized as the truth, and avoid from now on all that which you will realize as evil. Teach these principles to your children, who will thereafter continue to carry on and spread the knowledge of Me and My message for ever and ever through the generations to come. This knowledge and duty will not only make them into a great people but they will turn them also into a happy people. Among all the peoples of the world yours will be my most beloved one. The day will come when I shall officially appoint your descendants to be my specially chosen people, and I shall entrust them with a great and holy duty. They will be the guiding star which will lead mankind over the ages to reach perfection, to gain a higher knowledge and to achieve a true contentedness. As a sign of this covenant which exists now between Myself and you, I shall combine something of Myself with your name: I shall henceforth call you Abraham - and you will answer me when I call you by this name."

I want you children to realize that this appointment of Abraham, that God's intention to create a special people from among the offspring of Abraham, that God's decision to entrust the descendants of Abraham with the task to educate mankind, that the fact that He chose from among all

the peoples of the world one particular one through whom He was going to educate mankind to a higher level of morality, was an advent of decisive importance not only at that momentous point in history, but also for the future of mankind in general. The Bible reports that Abraham had been appointed by God to become the founding father of that special people. You may be surprised to read here and there that many a Bible expert doubts whether Abraham had in fact been a historic figure at all. I ask you and myself in all sincerity if it matters at all whether he was a single figure within the historic record of human spiritual development, whether he represented a school of philosophy which carried this message forward through a series of generations through men endowed with a higher intuition and a specific ~~san-~~sibility, through sensitive individuals who had on their own perceived the knowledge of an exclusive God and Creator ? There is no doubt in my mind that at that point in history the time was ripe for such a spiritual revolution, that this was one of those rare occasions when in the decourse of the historic evolvment of the Jewish people God's place in Jewish history became evident by His direct intervention. This may have taken place by God add~~d~~ressing Abraham directly, or by inspiring him with a burning desire for knowledge or by making him reach the right conclusions all by himself. But we shall not go wrong if we are assured by our inner knowing, that God had directly intervened at this stage in order to guide mankind decisively into the new and true channels. For God had found to His dismay - this is how I read this developemant - that notwithstanding all the facilities which He had placed at the disposal of mankind, His expectation that after the Flood there would appear on earth a race of decent people , had not been fulfilled. What He saw going on among the manifold peoples and races led Him to the conclusion that His optimism had not been justified, that His expectations had not been realized. He had expected that the program He had set for mankind would result in the development of a decent world and that His intervention was not going any more to be required. He had hoped that the human beings who were now populating the inhabitable world in ever increasing numbers, would show at least a trend, an intention to adopt an ethic way of life. It had by now become quite evident that the humans had again only one interest in mind, viz:- to satisfy their own greed, to work for their own personal good and advantage, and not to care in the slightest if others were going about

without food and clothing. This selfishness, paired with an increasingly unchecked ruthlessness was leading the peoples of the earth ever more and more away from the path of decency and the aim of perfection which God had traced for them to reach the goal of their ultimate destiny of grace and salvation. Steadily and perceptively the human beings, the contemporaries of Abraham, were controlled by the asocial instincts which they should have lost long before in accordance with the principles of social and genetic evolution which God had inscribed in their program. It had been God's expectation that the new race of men and women who had evolved after Noah's survival of the Flood, would have realized how much it was in their own interest to overcome evil and to avoid bloodshed, how beneficial it would be for them to care for others and to love their neighbours. God had further hoped that man would by now have realized on his own, that there is a Supreme Being above them who had created the Universe, who continued to govern and rule it. If all humankind would feel compelled to render account to the Supreme Being for all they do and do not do, they would automatically free themselves from their primitive instincts and asocial trends. Man has since long been granted the knowledge - which he did not interpret as a gift but as an instinct, as an inborn feeling - that the sun, the moon and the stars in the sky, that the changing seasons, that the fertility and growth, that life and death had to be accepted as full and sufficient proof for the existence of a divine directive of all which ever happens in the world. Early and primitive man had already in the infancy of humankind understood that a Supreme Being had ordained all the events in life and all the processes of nature, that a Godhead had ordained the creation of all that makes up 'Nature' in its widest sense, and that the fact that this program was clearly seen to continue its functions unchanged and uninterrupted, whatever happened, could only be explained as an absolute and definite proof of God's work. It had been God's wish, the plan He had expected to result from the program He had established for mankind's evolution, that man should acquire and possess such knowledge, be one with such knowledge but that program had not been fulfilled. Man had never matured enough - and you may say this also of today's humankind - to think along such lines. Instead it chose an easier, a simpler way of living and reasoning. It preferred to declare itself free to conclude that all the events one can observe in nature, and that all the processes

which make up life, were created and directed by a great variety of gods who had to be respected, who had to be revered, who had to be feared and who had to be pacified, as they might otherwise refuse to function for the benefit of mankind, and might by their ill-feeling bring about the collapse of the world. These primitive religions taught their followers that it was appropriate to bribe the gods, to soothe their ire by flattery and sacrifices. It will not surprise you that these primitive religious ideas tempted and induced their adherents to cheat their gods or to lie to their idols - at times to make the drunk - in order to avoid their rage or to gain their favour. The ancient people of the ~~time~~ I am telling you here, perceived gods everywhere and in everything, in every tree and stone, in every mountain and river. They knew of no other ways to interpret the facts of life and nature. Nobody had told them yet differently. For them the sun and the moon were visible and movable gods, who might one day disappear for ever if they were not suitably loved and flattered. Should such a catastrophe occur, night and winter would inevitably continue for ever and men and animals would have to die.

This , my children , is the background which I thought I had to describe in detail, so that you can better understand the great step forward in the evolution of the human race which started with the call of God on Abraham, to take on the future education of mankind.

It will also awaken you in you the comprehension, that God had concluded that the program He had worked out was not giving the right results, that a certain correction was required, and that a leader, a guide was needed to show the way to the human beings who had not been able to find on their own the right , the only way.

3. A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERMEZZO.

After much hesitation and pondering I have come to the conclusion that I shall have to provide you with some detailed explanations, with some more background, with some more clarity my picture of the world.

What I am going to say now may possibly be difficult to understand. If this is the case, if on reading the first few lines you consider it "stuff far too intellectual", stop right away and do not continue. Do not think that by jumping over the rumblings of the next 3-4 pages you miss something which is vital for the understanding of the story in general or as a whole. By all means, skip what I am going to write now about the way the philosophers explain things they think they have themselves understood. After all, it was one of the important modern philosophers himself who had said that "philosophy does not change things at all".

Before I continue with my story and my theme, I think it necessary, even though I have already on previous occasions much about it, to clear up in your mind - and possibly also in mine - how I have come to form for myself the concept of 'G o d' and what, apart from my personal interpretation, we human beings in general should understand and know of God. As I have already directly and indirectly made you feel, I know that there is a God, primarily, purely and simply for the reason that I cannot imagine the Universe, all nature, my life, today's mankind, you and the world in general without God. It is as simple as that. You cannot understand yourself unless you know that there is something divine within you. Notwithstanding all the denials emanating from so many quarters I assert that every human being harbours some kind and form of religiosity within himself. He can only live with it and within such vaguely perceived or consciously acknowledged amorphous religiosity. There is no need that one actively engages in demonstrating a relationship, or has to develop a specifically inherent theology. A person can believe in God without being 'attached' to a religious organization. A man can be religious and believe in God without confessing a circumscribing religion. But a Jew cannot consider himself a Jew if he is not a religious individual; it does not suffice to accept 'Judaism as a tradition', as a history, as a nationality. He can be a Zionist, an Israeli, a Socialist of Jewish descent, but without accepting a religious basis for whatever his beliefs are, he cannot call himself a Jew.

Until Enlightenment enlarged mankind's horizon, and the 'Scientific Revolution' of the 17. and 18. centuries provided the tools, you could hardly find educated or intelligent persons who would have thought of denying that the world owes its existence to a Creator. Any dispute which might have been raging at that period - and many were the disputes indeed - affected the nature of the Creator and the attitude one should adopt towards God. The Scientific Revolution liberated thinking and reasoning humankind from the prevailing religious doctrines.

The impetus came from the great physicist Isaac Newton who had discovered that our planet is put into motion by the force of gravity, but he is quite clear in his opinion that without the additional impetus of a divine power gravity would not suffice to start and maintain the movements of the planets around the sun. "This proves to me", Newton concludes, "that the structure of the solar system is due to an intelligent Creator". Let me explain to you in simple words that Newton intended to make it absolutely clear that, although he could prove that the planets within the solar system move according to certain mechanical laws, he was unable to explain how the solar system, the energy and the gravity have originated unless one attributes them to a Supreme Being, the intervention of a divine Creator. In these our days the very existence of a Creator is disputed, and the mechanic concepts of Descartes are accepted which claim that it is possible to explain all natural phenomena exclusively through the laws of motion and matter.

Many Christian theologians have insisted that God, by His inherent mysterious supernatural powers has created the world 'ex nihilo' i.e. out of nothing, that there has not been any primordial gaseous material of the kind I have described in the early chapters. There are other theologians, however, followers of Swedenborg, who insisted that nothing can be created out of nothing, and whereas God was the only substance which had existed at the beginning, He must have created the world out of and from Himself.

To help you over the confusion which inevitably presses on you, I should have to add a large section here to give you more details regarding the attitude of the Church to these discussions. However, I shall content myself with a few remarks only. You must know that the Church - in the same way as orthodox Judaism - view biblical cosmology, the creation of the world, as a revealed truth, as absolutely factual. This has induced her to make every effort in the past to suppress all the discoveries of the natural sciences. In the past the religious establishment of the Jews could not equal the Church in identical efforts, but with the power they have acquired in the State of Israel they are successful in imposing their ideas - most likely to the envy of the nowadays weakened Church.

Hardly a year passes without the presentation of a new philosophical or scientific interpretation of the cosmological puzzle. Whatever the theories which our philosophers produce, they cannot support them with scientific facts. I think our principal difficulty is caused by our attempt to understand and to know God with the help of our five senses. This is clearly absurd because of the impossible anthropomorphic ideation with regard to God which results therefrom. Let me point to one aspect only: How can we talk of 'knowing God' in view of the fact that our own knowledge embraces only incomplete records of the past and insufficient experiences of the present and can never encompass a knowledge of the future without which any definition of the Divine Essence would be incomplete.

If we accept the tenets of a religious faith without having gained a sufficient degree of comprehension, we can hardly expect to find in the faith which we profess to accept a fundament on which to find support. Religion should not be taken as a self-centred instrument by the use of which we try to perceive the meaning of the world; we should search instead with its help for a truth about things outside us. Schleiermacher called it the "feeling of absolute dependence" and Otto the "mysterium tremendum et fascinans".

In most religions the approach to God is taught as possible by means to the prayer. By prayer a line of communication is established with God, the gods, the Holy, the Supernatural Power. In most historic religions prayers have a predominantly liturgical character; its presentation, its timing, its expression are strictly regulated and fixed. Through much study, great effort, innumerable tractates details have been established when and how to pray, when to stand when to sit, when to bow when to kneel, when to move and when not to move. Any unauthorized change is liable to be labelled a blasphemy.

Collective worship is the rule, but the individual prayer is considered of no less value. Both these methods express the wish to enter into a relationship with God. Prayers can become rigidified into schedules; they may be offered in private; spontaneous vocal expression of the prayer is not an essential feature and a silent prayer is certainly as valuable, if not more so, than a loudly pronounced one. Else Lasker-Schueler wrote in one of her letters to Franz Marc: "Yesterday I was in the synagogue, but left for home soon. One should not remain in the place of God any longer than the duration of a heart's prayer."

In most religions God is the object of worship; the prayers are mostly laudatory recitations of divine qualities and past miracles, invocations of past promises and reminders of an indebtedness of the Supreme Being to the praying individual or the congregation. The liturgical communal prayers, often supported by fasting and prolonged by the recitation of psalms, are believed, in the rigidified arrangements to satisfy a craving of God for love and His desire to grant forgiveness.

You may ask me now what I personally think about prayers. I hope you will not be too surprised, and you will also see futility of entering into a discussion with me on this subject. But I am going to tell you my attitude to prayers here and now, although I might at a future stage of my story take up this theme again. I do not see any reason to follow the customs which prevail in all the organized religions of today which think they are successful in their duty to God and man if the synagogues, the churches and the mosques are filled with chanting, imploring, frightened and angry congregants. Prayer is a dialogue with God, each person's individual approach to God. God is everywhere, but for me this 'everywhere' is within us. We should address our prayers to God within us. A prayer has only sense and meaning if it is addressed to the Supreme Being that He assist us to recognize our defects and to mobilize our resources and energies so that we may find the right ethical path and the suitable moral reactions to the

inside and outside pressures to which we are exposed.

By all means ! Let prayers recall the past - individual, social and national - if this serves as a guideline and as a measuring rod. By such remembrances prayers may influence one's own, and thereby no less also one's environment's future. A fatalistic common among Indian and other eastern religions preaches that the prayer should concentrate only on one's present state and should not be concerned with changing the future, as the future is determined in every individual case and thus unalterable. You will agree that such a 'philosophy' is liable to deprive a prayer of every value and to remove from it one of its most important gains, the search for an insight into one's defects and aspirations.

I have already touched in this chapter on the question why I cannot visualize myself and the world with God's existence. If you try to enquire what far more wise and intelligent people than I think, you will discover that all the philosophers have had to struggle hard to find the right answer, and they mostly come to their conclusions by way of reasoning and with the help of logic. We ourselves are not as clever; we have not to adduce reason, have not to search for proof in order to reach a positive answer. Let us spend a few minutes on listening to more modern philosophers, i.e. the great thinkers of more recent times. Let us see what their thinking has produced about and of the theme which I have "opened for discussion" .

I have already told you on previous occasions that the philosophers and the theologians have since ever busied themselves with God, be it to prove His existence, be it to disprove it. Whatever answer they offer to this question, you may take it for granted that what they tell you is either wrong or insufficient. Nothing but the question they raise is truth, and the fact that they feel the need to put such a question at all contains already the confirmation. We are told by them that God is infinite but that we human beings have not the slightest comprehension how to relate with the 'Infinite', where the border is between the physical and the metaphysical. < You might want to know what "METAPHYSICAL" MEANS. As it is possible that I shall have to use this word later on again, let me already now define it in a very simple way. I shall not offer you the at least to me with difficulty understood definition of the philosophers, but would like you to think of it in supernatural, visionary, theoretical terms. You may go even further and say that metaphysics come to your help whenever we ask ourselves, where the border is between the perfect and the imperfect, and whenever we ask ourselves what is the true Essence of God. >

The representatives of scientific philosophy wanted to change over from the imposition of religious 'duties' to the deduction of the truth through the essence of reason. They concluded that a philosopher cannot have a God but only a concept of God. Some went even further: to the question which role God was supposed to play in the world, Le Place replied that there was no more need of a hypothesis of God. You should know, however, that many or most philosophers and physicists of the modern era, men like Kepler, Copernicus, Galilei, Newton, Leibniz, Kant, Einstein

and many more were deeply religious people; their scientific minds did not did not think it a contradiction to believe that a Creator had established the world and had determined its physical laws and rules. This is a long way from the cosmology of the Greek philosophers of old - whose impact has never ceased - who excluded a Creator God. The philosopher Descartes taught that although man has to rely on what he can perceive with full clarity, he has to render himself conscious of the fact that the certainty and the truth of all knowledge are totally dependent on the indisputable certainty of the existence of God. " I cannot possibly exist", he wrote, " with my particular nature, i.e. my concept of God, if God did not exist too, the God of whom I know, who is perfect and knows my weakness". For Descartes and most modern philosophers, with the exception of Spinoza, God is much nearer to man than to the world. They conclude this from the transcendental doctrine of the Bible which states that man and not heaven nor earth have been created in the image of God. For Descartes, Leibniz and others this does not mean that the world has been created for the sake of man. Spinoza is the most outspoken among the modern philosophers. " We cannot know the reason God had in mind to create the world; this question should not anymore be the subject of our philosophy ", he wrote. For Kant a world without God is unacceptable as this indicates a world which does not in some form or sense or purpose relate to man. He denies God as the Creator for purely theoretical reasons but he accepts the idea of God from the standpoint of practical reason. Kant postulated that the biological interpretation of the creation of life does not explain the spiritual uniqueness of man and his freedom of self-determination. But if we accept that God created man in His image, and if He has endowed him with the freedom to turn and act against God's will, this presents us with a puzzle which is difficult to solve. And indeed Kierkegaard was to comment that the philosophy of modern times could not find an answer to the problem without the support of the Bible. For Kant God is not a 'fictional substance', but the 'highest idea of practical reason'. Hegel taught that it is within the essence of God to remain silent or to manifest and reveal Himself. The existence of human beings is something additional, accidental, coincidental. He refused to accept the doctrine of evolution because man is a divine being unlike all other living things. Hegel declared that the original christian dogmas and beliefs can survive the Bible critics of the Enlightenment, since the latter have made explanation and justification of the Bible and its revelation by means of philosophy a necessity. Greek cosmic philosophy has been turned into a christian anthropomorphological theological one with manifestations of God in the human shape of Jesus, Hegel declared. The logical consequence of this kind of theology may be, he warned that every human is made to acquire a divine nature. Hegel confesses himself unable to find God by faith and religiosity, only with the help of the concept of God as a 'logical being' can he succeed in this.

It is Nietzsche more than any other modern european philosopher who reaches the metaphysical view that God does not exist. He eliminates God. " God is dead ", he said, because his philosophy makes him conclude that we have, by our way of behaving and thinking eliminated God for ever. In stark logical consequence he called Christianity " the lie of the last two

millenia ". He has a companion in Sartre who insists that " Dieu n'existe pas ...He spoke to us once upon a time, but He is dead now...." Spinoza never accepted that he was an atheist. He taught that it was indispensable that we adopt a philosophical concept of God. He could not imagine a world without God. He said that he could not find in the Bible any speculations on a higher level, nor in fact any philosophical ideas whatsoever. The Bible is full of plain things which even the simplest man can understand. " I can wonder enough about those who try to detect in the Bible so many deep secrets that they cannot be explained by human language, and who have, in addition, introduced so many philosophical speculations, that the Church has become an academy and religion a science or better perhaps, a dispute ", he writes. While Descartes only refuted a faith based on revelation, we see Spinoza attack directly all biblical tradition. He sees God in nature, and his logic concludes that man can, therefore, not transgress any laws of God because the laws of nature cannot be transgressed. The laws which man can and does transgress are man-made laws. The laws of nature are at any time stronger than those of man. Leibniz too has reservations as you can see from his words: " I agree that the happiness of reasoning beings is the main object of the divine purpose, but I do not see how it is possible that this could have been the only purpose of God." And let me finally also mention Darwin, whose "Theory of Evolution" explains the development of man but not his origin and essence.

Like some of his contemporaries also Heidegger thinks that philosophers should not get involved in theses involving God, religion and theology. For this reason he was branded by many an atheist; but after his death in 1976 a paper was published in which he declared that " Only God can save us ". I find it remarkable that through all his active life he never mentioned the word "God" but preferred the appellation "Being". Barth insisted that the creation only reveals a 'hidden God', and because the sinfulness of fallen mankind God's nature is completely veiled. Teilhard de Chardin writes enthusiastically of the revelatory character of nature and humanity/

Where lies the truth ?, you will ask. The philosopher looks for a mathematical definition and an exact formula into which he can fit his ideas. The physicist wants an exactly circumscribed and measurable concept of the Universe, which he can express in a single and definite equation. They do, however, realize that they cannot get along without making use of metaphysically loosened borderline which are beyond the rational exactitudes typical for physics and mechanics.

You do not need any further material to find out that innumerable ideas and conceptions have been floated about God since the species of philosophers came into existence, but one can say with some justification that practically all the " thinkers " worthy of being classified as straight and clear in their deductions, believe in some form of the Absolute, even

the names they invented to circumscribe God can begin with 'The One' of the Neoplatonists and reach the strange concept of the 'Pregnant Emptiness' as it is used by the Buddhists.

I hope you have understood some of what I have written in this last chapter. If not, you do not have to be sorry nor ashamed. Maybe, I have awakened in you some curiosity and the decision, 'one day' to study these philosophers. It would be a good idea.

However, I have still a few words to say about the theologians, before I can continue with my story. Have some more patience, please.

4. The Theologians' Callistheniucus.

Do your best - and I assure you that not only I but also the wisest and most qualified among the men and women in human history have tried - to find an answer or a solution to the everyacute problems of the world, of life and of yourself. You will not come up with a satisfactory interpretation unless the latter is based on an inner assurance and certainty. We see that the world exists; we believe that God exists; we shall be on our way to perfection when we know that God exists. One is justified to say that the content and the purpose of all mankind's thinking, of all his studies and of all his searches are primarily, fundamentally and ultimately bound to this question. What is philosophy, what is theology and what, in principle, is also science but the search for an answer to the eternal question "What is God?".

As I mentioned a short while ago, not only does the primitive man see God in every stone, tree and so on, but many are the "learned and sophisticated people", who are certain that God speaks, hears, laughs, cries, gets angry, is jealous, has hands, has feet, has eyes and so on. Not only small children but also mystics and deeply religious people perceive God in human shape. In the Bible God is represented in clear anthropomorphic terms, although we are at no time offered a clear-cut physical description. The first and foremost opportunity could have been offered to us in the encounter of God with Moses. However, God refused Moses' request to let him see His face, for "no man shall ever see God's face and live". Moses was only permitted to perceive His 'goodness' and His 'glory' passing by. In Christian theology

the dogma dominates that God has taken on human form and has been killed as a human being on the Cross. Luckily for them the church Fathers have not seen in their theology a contradiction with the biblical veto and so the Christians can be happy be with their image. They have all justification to be happy as long as they do believe that this was the case. I am thinking now how great is the number of those men and women of all faiths and beliefs, including the Christians, who can only conceive God as a kind of benevolent patriarch. Why not ? They are entitled to do so, and they are blessed with a contented adjustment if this makes them assured and satisfied; but even among these happy people you will find a layer of intelligent individuals who know quite well that the conception of an anthropomorphic God, the figuring of God according to the shape of a human being, does not and cannot correspond with reality, and that it is only a vehicle for a deeply felt faith. You may call it a "working hypothesis in faith". As Scripture tells that God created man in His image - and as it also indicates that the world has been created for the purpose of providing man with special power and intelligence which so far only God has possessed - the Bible is unequivocally responsible for the so widely prevailing anthropomorphic conception of God. The God of the Bible associates with man, loves and punishes him, and in addition and in return demands to be loved by man. This theological system has become especially manifest in Christianity where it has been underlined and also strengthened by the appearance of God on earth in human form. It is impressive to my mind that this belief system has today definitely lost not only its former impact but has in modern times also contributed to the weakened influence of Christianity.

I shall later on take the time to tell you more about the Bible and how I read it, but at this stage, without going into details, I want only to point out that what has been explained, described, pictured by the ancient authors of the Bible or - if you prefer to formulate it in this way - by God through the ancient scribes, is the way the ancient peoples thought, pictured, imagined things. Today we would have different ways, expressions and wordplays to present a philosophical or theological idea. Therefore, in view of what I have just now said, when we are told in Scriptures that the early figures of the Bible, Moses and the Prophets, heard God's voice or perceived His presence, it is an experience which is perceived and described in a different way in every individual and in

each case. It is a specific, unique, individual response and impression in accordance with the character, the education, the mental status of the individual, and it is always reported and transmitted in relation to the state of culture and the degree of civilization which prevailed at that historical point. This definition applies in its entirety also to the mystics past and present, although their religious background would differentiate and accentuate any difference. Thus the Prophet Ezekiel, who had the mystical vision of the heavens and of God, did not see God; he had only a vision of God, of something like God. In monotheistic theology - especially in Judaism and in Islam - God is not like the gods of mythology who move among the mortals. In Judaism He communicates through the Shekhina which He radiates - you remember? I told you already about the Shekhina - or maybe through His angels. A Midrash says that the only time in human history, when everything indicates that God was Himself present, when we can speak of a true "Theophany", was the divine appearance at Mount Sinai.

It can be difficult to know God - and it can also be very simple. If simple people ask simple questions they will receive simple answers. There is a story in the Talmud: Emperor Hadrian demanded of Rabbi Yochannan that he show him God. The Rabbi asked Hadrian to look into the sun, which, of course, the Emperor could not do. "You are unable to look into the sun and yet you would like to look at God?", asked the Rabbi.

I know all this is confusing not only to you but to many people wiser and cleverer than you; but from my own experience I can confide in you that the true and best way to know and accept God is in the way you want to and how you know best. You may accept as truthful the prescription of the rabbi or the priest, the philosopher or the magician, of how and in which shape you would perceive God, but finally and ultimately it is entirely through your heart and with your soul that you will know God and of God. Pascal, who lived in the 17th century, has circumscribed this same recipe in clear and simple words: "God cannot be understood by reasoning, only with one's heart". You may in addition learn from the great Rambam who warns us not to see human forms and attributes in God, and that "only forms of actions can be applied to Him" You may also join hands with the Chassidim who will assure you that you can serve, love and know God best with a glass of brandy, a hearty song and a soaring dance.

In this context you will want to know my attitude to religion, how far it is of beneficial effect to an individual and to what extent it helps the relationship with God. It cannot be denied that religion has great significance for a large part of mankind; but there is a perhaps still larger number of individuals who care for the introduction of the religious element only in certain stressful situations like birth, marriage or death; in general and usually these people hardly care to remember their religion. But to those for whom their religion has a meaning, it is the intermediary in their relationship between the holy and the sacred on the one hand and the profane and the human on the other. Theologians may indulge in studying the background of the various forms of religious experience and expression, philosophers may interpret religion in terms of the Zeitgeist, priests may manipulate religion and its technical projection and how it is lived by the people, so that it can fit the social life, but the value of religion lies in its acceptance by the people. This is one of the reasons why to a certain kind of people God has to be made understandable in anthropomorphic form, and has to be projected as the Allmerciful Father.

To the Jew, the Christian and the Muslim God is the Lord and the Creator of the Universe. There are those who feel uncomfortable with this plain and straight formula of a definition but whose faith continues to remain anchored on a theistic base; they will find it satisfying to enlarge their perception of God with the additional features of the 'Ultimate' or the 'Divine' or the 'Transcendent' and various other similar components. God is for the Jews the central figure in their history. In the biblical narratives of the Patriarchs, of the Exodus, of the Revelation God is experienced and lived in a permanent relationship with man. To a certain degree the Jew of today experiences a similar intimate and personal contact during most all the Jewish festivals. Such a direct contact with God is in Christianity experienced and contracted only through the intermediary, the relay of Jesus, to whose domain is entrusted the management of the humans' sin and guilt. A Muslim has a more intimate relationship with Allah but he too relies to a certain extent on the intermediary and controlling function of Muhammad. The Hindus of the various denominations and the Buddhists experience the Lord Krishna in the legends, the elaborate mythic stories, in the great annual festivals, the plentiful scriptural projections and the manifold pictorial images. They have little interest in establishing the foundations and the traditions of their faith by means of histerography.

The theistic religions call upon the human beings to worship God, to adore and to revere Him. This is the only possible instrument available to man to pay tribute to and to indicate recognition of God's perfection. To a confirmed believer in a perfect God the world which He created cannot but be the best of all possible worlds, and it may with justification be argued that in such a case God could not have permitted also evil to exist, and far less even could He have created evil. You cannot imagine, how many philosophers and critics of philosophy have discussed this very point, but for us simple people it is not an issue to worry about and less even a point to fight over, because we have realized that God has granted man full freedom to act and to react, to create and to overcome by himself the pitfalls of evil, and to carry in himself or to evict from himself the seeds of evil.

It is a favoured theme of the theologians that a deep understanding of our own nature and the ruthless recognition of our faults can bring us nearer to an understanding of God, as we have been created in His image. Such an argument, inviting and justified as it sounds, could lead us logically to the absurd conclusion that God carries in Himself the same defects and the same deplorable characteristics as ourselves. Even though nobody believes in the truth of such a 'logic' and this discussion is usually raised for the sake of a discussion, of the kind which theologians and philosophers love more than anything else, it will be interesting to you to learn with what answers the philosophers have extracted themselves from such a discussion. As a rule they do so by saying that goodness in general and particularly in God can only be understood, circumscribed and classified if it is contrasted with evil or badness, as otherwise goodness would not become evident. The good is not so much in need of evil as a measuring scale than vice versa. Thus is the reasoning of the sage people in their effort to teach and to educate us.

Let us finally also make mention of Buddhism. It rejects the existence of a Creator God who presides over the world He has created. In general it can be said that Buddhism does not care very much for the individual himself because the latter as such is of no great importance. The Buddhists believe that "all that we are is the result of what we have thought; everything is founded in our thoughts, is made up from our thoughts," says their DHAMPADDA, and the BHAAVADGITA confirms this doctrine in the simple statement: "A man is made up by his beliefs; as he believes so he is." The Hindus believe that people are not real but illusory.

If you are confused by all the things which I have just now said, do not despair - more or less everybody who has tried to make use of a philosophical or metaphysical terminology to explain, to prove or to disprove God, has had such an experience. The only possible and true

way to approach this question is by the realization that there is none but the explanation by an inner logic that there must exist an Almighty, Only God from whom has originated all that has been going on from the creation of the Universe to this day, that whatever has ever happened to mankind in general and what has made up the history of our people is to be thought of in association with a Supreme Being. As I said a few minutes ago, the fact that one raises this question at all, that one is dissatisfied with and in doubt about the hypotheses of the philosophers or the projections of the scientists, or just the fact that one searches for an answer at all, indicates that we are looking for more than a fixed formula, a wise sounding classification or an impossibly fitting description of what there is, of what we think we know there is.

Do not despair ! I do not think that there is for you the need to ask again for an exact outline, a detailed prescription how we should understand and prove God's existence. Don't you realize that we can impossibly understand and define, measure and imagine God with the help of our earthly, our human senses, with our primitive conceptions and with our simple tools ? Do you think that with the few senses with which we are endowed, and the few dimensions which we know, we can ever come to appreciate the immensity of God ? Have I not told you already that a large number of scientists have at last come to realize that there must exist more than the 3-4 dimensions of which we know ? That the dimensions at our disposal are not enough to make us comprehend the configuration and the function of the Universe ? And in the way this applies to the Universe and to our world, we have also to accept the existence of many more dimensions so far unknown to us, before we can truly comprehend who and what God is. In view of our being deprived of the required formulae, tools and measurements, we cannot but equally we have not to prove or to demonstrate that God exists. But as reasoning and intelligent human beings we should have no doubt in this respect. It is evident that God did not want, God did not consider it necessary, to give proof of His existence. He simply wanted you to know that He is a fact, as otherwise He would have supplied us with the physics and the mechanics to prove and measure such knowledge. When He encountered Moses - as you are going to learn - he parried all questions of Moses about His configuration and appearance by telling him finally and conclusively " I am who I am ".

You can safely interpret these words to mean " take this as all you need to know, and do not ask any further questions as any further explanation will only confuse you ". God ~~said~~ quite plainly and comprehensively: " I am ", and in my opinion it would be foolish and immature to argue about this.

It is , of course, understandable, when the sciences began their unbelievably victorious march towards a better knowledge of the world, when the scientists entered the world scene with their laboratories and their fantastically efficient instruments, their ever growing knowledge and their keenness to dominate nature, they did not feel called upon to try and explain that only God could have created, ordained and regulated the origin of the world and of man. Instead the majority of these scientists wasted so much of their time and energy, in often charlatanesque appearing endeavours, to show that with the help of their new discoveries they could achieve the same results as were attributed to a divine Creator, provided only they were given the means and the time to organize such experiments. But although the limits of our ignorance are ever more shifted outwards with ever more knowledge provided by the ever more successful scientific research, there will always remain one border zone which man's technique and science will never abolish nor penetrate. There will always remain a something which no human hand or mind could bring about and which only a Supreme Being could have worked and undertaken.

Let me close now this chapter. So much has to be said about this issue that you are justified to remark that it is preposterous from my side to attempt to make **ANY FURTHER CONTRIBUTION** in this respect. This will not keep me back from the opportunity to possibly take up this theme again later on when I come to tell you about the ' Scientific Revolution ' which has fundamentally changed the world of technique and has so enormously enriched the human mind.

5. And Adam planted the seeds .

At last I can now continue with my story.

You are entitled to be surprised that Abraham, a man so far away from what we know, who lived in an apparently primitive epoch, who had not been educated in a university, who had not even been to a school,

who never in his life had ever read a book, should not have shared the view common among his compatriots and should for this reason have attracted God's attention. I have learned long ago that Nature is itself the best educator, the greatest university, the most complex book - especially as it reveals itself to the man in the desert who is practically never disturbed in his thinking nor disturbed by people or traffic in his contemplations, and who spends nearly all his life beneath the open sky. A sensitive man must inevitably sense that he is near to something unbelievably incomprehensible; he must be gripped by an all pervading essence of the infinite. Such a man who spends his years all by himself in the vast open spaces of the desert with his dogs and sheep, his horses and his camels as his only company, will turn into a wise man, will become a philosopher. He will be a man who will be satisfied with his own well thought out and well organized conception of life. In everything which he perceives and cherishes, or whatever he observes or discovers, he will find an indication of God and His wonders, be it in the waterhole of a desert oasis, be it in the predatory animals he hears at night moving around his camp - but above all in the wide expanse of a clear sky with the myriads of stars going their mysteriously regulated eternal path.

This is the reason why I am not at all surprised that Abraham did not hesitate to acknowledge having heard the voice of God, that he blindly obeyed the order which God had given him on a certain day, viz:- that he should sacrifice to Him his most precious possession, the apple of his eye, his only son Yizhak. I cannot agree with the explanation usually offered by Bible commentators that God had only wanted to tempt Abraham, had done so to test his readiness to obey his God. In the days of Abraham it was the custom - if not the rule at least the accepted thing - for a father to sacrifice his eldest child to one or many of the greedy gods - be they called Baal, Murdok and so on - to whom every one of the ancient peoples submitted in the opinion that their favours could not be otherwise be gained. I think it most likely that God had in this manner wanted to find out if Abraham had advanced enough in the knowledge of the Supreme God, if he had progressed enough on his own to understand that such a

cruel act, that such a terrible deed could not be pleasing to a God of love and compassion like the one whom he had agreed to follow. In particular God had wanted to test Abraham whether he had already absorbed enough of the essential rules and of the ethical laws to realize, that a human sacrifice could only be abhorrent to the Supreme Being, to the God Almighty who had directly spoken to him, who had in such clear and unadorned words appointed him His servant and messenger. When Abraham found himself there on the hill-top, bent of Yizhak with the knife in his hand, he did in a flash understand that God did indeed not want his child, or any other children, nor any human beings at all to be slaughtered in His honour, that he wanted man to approach Him by other more suitable and more elevated ways. God indicated that He did not want man to approach Him by any kind of sacrifices, by any spilling of blood. He wanted instead an inner sensing of God's presence and existence, a demonstration that ~~God~~ wanted to make an effort to overcome evil; but as the people of that age did not know better, as their mentality was geared to the established crude practice of sacrifice, as they believed blood to be pleasing to a godhead,, and as mankind was not yet ready to be exposed to profound, to revolutionary changes, God did agree that animal sacrifices be continued as instruments and as media to address God Above. Abraham rightly interpreted the discovery of the ram trapped in a nearby bush as God's consent to the continuation of the established custom of animal sacrifices which at that ime prevailed among all the peoples of the world.

You children will surely want to interrupt me at this point in order to ask me, how God could at all ever have demanded or consented that any living creature could be sacrificed to Him, that - in addition - He could have prescribed in details, as we find outlined in the Bible, how the animals had to be ~~slaughtered~~ slaughtered and burned in His honour. You will be upset that He could ~~permit~~ permit or even demand that man should in such a cruel and bloody way express his adoration and his respect, his love and his repentance. Did a God of such a Supremacy really need such ~~evidence~~ evidence of devotion from mankind ? Did He not know without the blooding of the altars and the suffering of the animals, who among the human beings loved Him and who ~~obeyed~~ obeyed Him ?

You are absolutely justified in your criticism and your outrage. You can, however, only come to a true understanding of the reasons why a sacrificial system existed in ancient times, if you take into account that in every age and at every epoch - though often in a different way and varying from place to place - humanity has expressed its feeling, has manifested its ideas in the spirit and with the formulations which accorded to the concepts which were specific at their time. In ancient times other values and a different relationship to the gods prevailed. Thus in the time of Abraham, as it had most likely been the case for thousands of years before him, the offering of the blood of a living being in general, and in certain and exceptional cases the donation of the life of one's most prized possession, was to the human mind the only way the gods were supposed to appreciate humankind's expression of respect. The ancient Israelites were part of the ancient culture, had taken over the religious cults of their neighbours, and they continued this practice even in Temple times as a well established and indispensable part of their divine service. Prayers were not yet known as a way to communicate with God - only by the offer of a sacrifice could thanks or atonement, request or respect be shown. In the religious contemplation of that time a sacrifice had indeed to be a sacrifice in the truest sense of the word. It had to be something of value. It had to mean a deprivation for the donor: it could be the handful of flour given by a poor man, it could be as much as a valuable oxen offered by a rich man. You may rest assured that God did not like what sacrifices should be part of any religion, but He did not want to change suddenly and radically the scale by which mankind estimated the values. Neither could He yet forcefully abolish the deeply rooted system by which man weighed his relationship with the Infinite, because God wanted man to come to the discovery of the ethical truths on his own initiative and by his own reasoning. You may have noticed already on your own that no mention whatsoever is made of sacrifices of any kind in the Ten Commandments, the basic rules and laws promulgated by God at Sinai. In order to soothe at least in part your disappointment and anguish, let me anticipate at this point that later on in the history of Judaism the prophets could at last bring home to the Jewish people that they could hardly believe it possible that God would have been desirous of and pleased with blood of an animal or the smell of burning flesh as evidence of human devotion. I give you here an example: The prophet Samuel confronts King Saul with the words; "Do you think God has as much pleasure in your burnt offerings and sacrifices as He would have had in your obedience to His words? Believe me it is better to obey than to sacrifice, and to listen than to present the fat of a ram". Such a fundamental recognition of the basic values of life had to wait until mankind had reached a certain stage of maturation and - let me be honest - also until there was a reduction in the power of the priestly

class which had arrogated to itself to establish the scales of fines, to proclaim the rules of sacrifices and to prescribe the degrees of pleasure which could be offered to God. But on the other hand you must also have some sympathy for the priests; their livelihood depended on the eatable portions of the sacrificed animals, and on the influx of monetary fines which they so liebrally imposed on the people in the name of God. I have myself been unhappy with thenthought that these priests were allowed to go on for so long to organize such a good arrangement for themselves because they must have at all times had a loa of roasted meat to eat at times and in social surroundings where people like the Israelites, an agricultural and rather poor nations, could most likely only a few times during a year afford to eat meat.

After this long digression I can at last continue with my story.

God kept His promise. I am convinced you would not have expected otherwise. Abraham was blessed with a nice family, and his fortune - his flocks of sheep and goats, his herds of cattle and camels - increased at a steady rate. He was a nomade, i.e. he had no fixed abode. He never stayed long in one place, but wandered through the desert, along its fringe. He stayed for a longer time in places where he could find ample water and food for his animals. Wherever he travelled he was given a respectful reception by the people he met, not only because of his dignified appearance but also by reason of his widespread excellent reputation as a man of great wisdom and knowledge. He found interest and acceptance and even admiration whenever he discussed his religious philosophy with the wise tribal leaders and the learned priests he encountered on his migrations. In those primitive times, when too people did not agree with each other's religious beliefs, they would not resort to persecution and bloodshed. Such admirable tolerance was the rule because the type of organized religion which dominates nowadays ~~the~~ realm of faith was not yet known., neither churches nor temples did exist yet. It will be much easier for you to learn of the fate of Abraham and of his slowly enlarging family, if you put my story aside for a short ~~time~~ while and read up the relevant chapters in the Bible. There you will be told that from the time that Abraham was 'called' by God to His service, until Jacob died a happy man in the arms of his son Joseph, who had risen to the rank of a trusted official in the service of the Pharaoh of Egypt, only three generation had passed. You must not be confused by the hypothesis presented by many a writer that it may be equally true that

many more than three generations have been concentrated into this span of time. Now ever this may be, this hypothesis is most likely not true, as the Bible reports that the 'tribe of Jacob' which had entered Egypt on the invitation of Joseph had consisted of ' seventy souls '. This was in fact more a clan than a tribe, I suppose. Be it as it may, we can agree that during the lives of Abraham, Yizhak and Jacob there must have taken place a certain increase in the number of Jacob's family, and if only an increase of that family clan to seventy members had occurred, we may accept it as most likely that these seventy belonged to three generations only. On the other hand the descendents of Abraham may have been far more numerous and may have made up many clans, may have already formed into a large tribe, while those who accompanied Jacob may have been one single of many clans. In such case the historians may well be justified in claiming that many more than three generations had spanned the period between Abraham and Jacob. It is most likely that there were many israelitic tribes already living all over the desert. They did not form a nation or a people, not even a compact tribal unit; they were, as I mentioned just now, separately living clans and families, who maintained a loose relationship with each other. We may take it for granted that the descendents of Abraham, Yizhak and Jacob, who had settled in Egypt in the province of Goshen, continued to enjoy a favoured position and the special protection of the rulers of Egypt also for quite some time after Joseph's death; but when the memory of the latter's services and the fame of his achievements had faded from the minds of the Egyptians (or had been purposefully suppressed by a new set of rulers who had taken over the country), things took a turn for the worse. We can deduce this from the fact that when next we hear of the " Children of Israel ", i.e. the family of Jacob's descendents, they had been turned into a class of lowly slaves, deprived of all personal and legal rights, The Bible does not go into details how this had come about. It leaves so very much to be filled in and everybody is welcome to set his imagination to work. If you do so you have quite a competition in the Rabbis of the Talmud and the tradition carried by the people's legends of the folklore. But what I find so impressive in all I do learn and read is the fact, that at no stage has anything been painted out, or embellished in the biblical narratives. The Children of Israel and their world are made known to us with all their

faults, with all their defects, or as you would say today , "warts and all". This type of honest and factual histerography is by the way - at least in this respect - more or less typical for all the biblical literature. & There are certain exceptions which I shall describe to you at a later stage >. The Bible tells you of many an ugly trait in the character of the Patriarchs, but I am glad to say, that God took this into account, that He did not punish them, that He did not interfere with commands or threats, but that He left it to them to free themselves, clean themselves, improve themselves by making them recognize by themselves their various moral deviations. This is an indication and also a promise affecting all of us, because we are taught that we all can reach every possible height in life, if only we gain the required insight and develop enough strength of character, and adopt a persistently decent conduct, so that our faults are, not as the Rabbis preach counter-balanced, but banned, eradicated and avoided.

6. The Story of Moses.

Centuries had passed since that memorable day when Joseph had invited his father and his eleven brothers to settle with their families in Egypt. Bible commentators of today think that Joseph had reached his important position as Viceroy during the reign of the Hyksos, who had conquered Egypt in the 17th century BCE. The first centuries the descendents of Jacob, the " Children of Israel " spent in Egypt contrasted greatly with the nomadic existence they had known in the past. For the first time in their history were they enabled to live a life of, peace and plenty. They were not anymore exposed to the rigors of the desert and to the vagaries brought on by frequent draughts and famines. We do not know how long their quiet and pleasant existence as settlers in Egypt has lasted, but there came the time when profound changes took place in Egypt. The Hyksos were defeated and expelled from Egypt. New governments and new rulers came to power in Egypt. All the contributions Joseph had made to the benefit and the salvation of Egypt were forgotten, and his own people, now called the 'Israelites', the descendents of Jacob, found themselves exposed to an unfriendly, if not

outright hostile environment. From the scant biblical material available to us about that period we must conclude that the Israelites had never risen to a more elevated social position. They had, apparently, not learned or cared to adjust themselves to the demands of the higher civilization which was Egypt. Neither do they seem to have acquired any special kind of technical or other skills which would have granted them, by making them indispensable to the economy of the country, the status of respected citizens. I somehow find this sociological analysis which appears to result from the scant biblical picture available to us, not very convincing. It is my impression that the Bible deals here only with a certain underprivileged group, made up possibly by the majority of the Israelites; but there must have been another group of better placed, better educated and better endowed Israelites, who strove to, or had succeeded in becoming assimilated, and who did everything in their power to avoid being identified with the 'rabble' with whom they avoided all contact or denied any relationship. I concede that I may be wrong, but it would lead too far, should you make me to defend or to explain my theory. Try and reason it out for yourselves.

Under the hostile administrative attitude and adverse social conditions it did not take long before the plain and simple people were transformed from nomadic shepherds or small agricultural settlers into untrained workers. In ancient times an 'untrained worker' was nothing more than a coolie and a slave.. The Children of Israel occupied the lowest rang of the social ladder, and this meant they had to undergo great hardship. At the best times - you may believe me -and in the kindest of environments it is very hard and bitter to be a coolie or a slave. I do not think that the other peoples of Egypt, those who did not belong to the restricted number of aristocratic families, or those who made up the large court of the pharaos, or did not belong to the class of rich landowners, businessmen or industrialists were very much better off. There is not doubt in my mind, however, that the Israelites believed themselves treated far worse than all the other slaves in Egypt, not only because they may indeed have been treated in a far harsher way than any of the strangers or slaves, but because they still preserved the memory of the free and independent life they had led in the desert, and of the privileged position granted to them in the province of Goshen during the lifetime of Joseph, the Viceroy, and for a long time thereafter.

Even if we accept that the slave tribe of the Israelites was, as I have said, no better and no worse off under Egyptian rule than any of the other slave peoples, the fact cannot be denied that they had to work hard for the little food they received. They were punished for the slightest mistake they made, and they complained and cried no less (and possibly more) than all the other slaves in Egypt. There must have been something special, something unique in these Israelitic slaves, since they attracted the attention of a certain prince, a member of the royal family, a young man of great intelligence and willpower.

His name was M o s e s .

The moment has now come when I have to tell you in some explicit words what I have hinted at here and there in some of the previous pages, viz:- that I do not blindly and trustingly believe and accept everything which is reported in the Bible, as - historically, scientifically and physically - truthful facts. Nor do I accept the dogma that the Bible in its entirety has been revealed by God, that it had been written down at the dictate of God by Moses at Sinai, and that the Torah is, therefore, and for this reason holy, definite and unchangeable for ever. I do accept that there was the 'Epiphany' as reported in Scriptures, that decisive episode at Sinai in which God revealed to the Israelites His presence and His basic laws. I do believe and accept that the Revelation and the Theophany are that true miracle which makes the Bible so unique and the Jews so special. Within all I have just now said it does not matter to me in the slightest if "God appeared in person" and if He spoke with an audible voice to the assembled Israelites. It is sufficient for me and it should be so for all that the Israelites standing at the foot of the mountains believed that they knew that God was there inside the clouds covering the mountain, and that they knew that God spoke to them. For this is the way in which God acts and works. We do not know the 'how'; our ignorance of the ultimate truth being translated into searching and querrying, is the essence of our existence. Yes, I accept that there is certainly much truth, much significance, much meaning, that there is a definite divine factor and a divine message contained in the Scriptures, and it should not bother us nor make us hesitate because they are transmitted to us in the form of legends and myths of which the Bible is so rich. I am sure that you have already since some time been aware that this is my attitude to the Bible; and I wish that you may be blessed with the comprehension that biblical history is a marvel of symbolic wisdoms and a treasure chest of profound truths, all of them readied for consumption at various levels of intellectual digestibility. General history labours to give an account of what did in fact take place. Religious history on the other hand must be accepted as an interpretation

description of the manner in which man has adjusted himself spiritually to the impact of the never ceasing, ever newly shaped fears, in the control or interpretation of which mankind has progressed in its development. Both the interpretation and the rationalization may retain a relationship with social history, which is the study of mankind's dealing with the problems created by its surroundings while reporting on the way it is itself affected by them. For good measure let us also give recognition to the one-sided history of theology which is a set of tools and instruments by which a symbolic view of God's reaction to man and of man's view of God can be projected.

Now that I have 'cleared the air' , and have given you an indication of the view I have of the various 'departments' of historical reporting and interpreting, and also of how I explain to myself the Bible's imprint on mankind, I can continue with my story. But let me in conclusion make it clear to you that the 'human view' I take of the Bible - and I have to tell you more of this later on - has by no means reduced the respect and the awe I have for the Scriptures since I have first come into contact with them.

The Bible tells us nothing of Moses' royal descent; we are told instead that he was the child of an Israelite couple and that his clever mother , in order to save her baby son from certain death - for the pharaoh had ordered that every newborn jewish male child should be killed - had packed Moses into a basket and had him float in it down the river Nile at an hour and pass a certain place where - as she had observed - a certain kind egyptian princess was taking her daily bath and was sure to notice the basket. For many a reason it is most unlikely that this story is true. To mention only one of them: that very same story, or at least in a similar frame, is to be found in the legends, myths and traditions of many other ancient cultures. Don't , therefore , take this tale literally, but see in it a myth, a legendary presentation only. It is, however, important for you to know once for all, that this type of tale is never invented by a poet or a writer; such myths are always part of the culture, of the time and of the people, and they are usually woven into the life stories of certain superior personalities, of those who have exerted a decisive influence on the history of that people or that time, or on whom the people and the time wanted to bestow the mark of certain unusual qualities and even of divine qualifications. It will soon quite evident to you that this Prince Moses was one of those outstanding

personalities who arise on very rare occasions and in decisive moments in the history of mankind. They are those unusual individuals, whom God selects at certain times to act and to intervene outside the physically, genetically and cosmologically programmed order, so that He can make through them here adjustments and there changes whenever the state of the world, the need of mankind and psychologically unexpected situations or any unprogrammed and dangerous but justified human reactions demand such a correction.

When he grew up, Prince Moses, a genius if ever there was one, could not but be dissatisfied with the life he was forced to live and observe at the court of the king. He must have been repulsed by the political philosophy by which the affairs of the state were executed. He must have been troubled by the generalized social injustice which was the standard of conduct in the country. He must have been repulsed by the rigidly confined cults of the Egyptian religion. He must have found particularly ridiculous the fashion turned into tradition which prescribed the deification of every dead pharaoh. Moses' mind, ever keen and ever inquisitive, ever critical and ever innovative, began to form ideas and to formulate ideals about an utopian social order, about his establishing a new society which would live by higher ethic and human standards, which he would himself dictate and supervise. He dreamed of a nation, which he would make to live under the guidance of strict moral laws and under the direction of a just legal system. These dreams, these plans, these ideas began to ferment in his mind, and they took on a more and more concrete shape.

God who had called Abraham His friend, who had favoured Abraham's children and children's children., who had eased the life of Yizhak and blessed the existence of Jacob, had expected that the children of Israel would show the impact, would factually exhibit the heritage of such preferential and selected conditions in life. With justification He had expected the Children of Israel to have grown into a superior race of people, whereby this superiority was not meant to be that of technical skills or intellectual achievements but of higher moral standards, of larger humanitarian attitudes and of purer interpersonal relationships. Such a development, such an evolution, had however, not occurred in the descendants of Abraham. God noticed that they did not evince that motivation, that inner strength which would

have lifted them out of the quagmire in which they had landed. God perceived that He had expected too much too soon, that His program for mankind in general and for the descendants of Abraham in particular had proceeded at too quick a rate and had not plowed deep enough. God concluded that the Israelites had not on their own been able to absorb the advantages and to utilize the opportunities within their reach, that they were in need of a leader and a guide, who would take the program of their development into his hands, and who would lead the Israelites onto the path towards a higher and purer life of the kind which had been prescribed for them. Such a preferred future and such a selected destiny God owed to them, for He had promised this to Abraham, and He had repeated this promise more than once to Yizhak and Jacob, viz:- that He would make their offspring, the Children of Israel, reach a higher place among the nations, make them grow in number and in status. For such a purpose, to serve as a guide and leader for the Israelites to reach this aim and goal, God, therefore, sent this man Moses, this Prince of Egypt, so that he might take on the task of forming the Israelites into a compact nation, of providing them with a constitution and of leading them towards that future which God had decided and willed to allot to them. The fact that at a certain dangerous point in the history of the Israelites, when there was the most urgent need of a man to take over the leadership, and that at the right moment the right man was available, may appear to you a fortunate coincidence, but you may also unhesitatingly share my conviction that this was no coincidence at all. Do you know that such 'coincidences' are by no means rare in the history of mankind in general and in that of the Jews in particular? If you think about it, that the persons to whom this applies, the times when they came into the foreground and the results which they brought about are far too overwhelmingly impressive, that they fit far too well together to allow you to pay them off as coincidences.

Moses was a man bursting with a surfeit of energy, for which there was for him no outlet either at Court nor in the administration nor in the political organizations of the country. His head was filled with reformatory and rebellious ideas aimed at a new system of government; but he knew well enough that he would never be able to apply them in Egypt., He was driven by a feverish ambition; but he knew well enough that he would never be allowed to satisfy it in view of his minor rank in the hierarchy of the

country notwithstanding his elevated position. We can only guess at the reasons, why this man Moses was so strongly attracted, one can say fascinated, by the Israelites, whom he saw employed in the construction of the new towns will by Pharaoh. In many ways they must have differed from the other slave peoples in the country. Was it because they did not hide their unbendable pride and maintained a determined will even under the most adverse conditions? Was it because these self-asserting israelites never ceased their self-righteous arguing and their fury-charged complaining? Was it that they did not cringe and wail as other slaves did, whenever the overseers tried to subdue them with their knutes? Was there something in their past history which attracted him, something in their folklore which interested him, something in their tradition which impressed him? We cannot know or judge, but most likely something of all I have mentioned must have contributed. Moses appears to have made it his program to observe and to study the Israelites. He got into personal contact with some of their elders, and mixed with them socially as far as this was at all possible for a man in his position. When after some tentative approaches he succeeded in overcoming the quite natural suspicion of these elders, and when he succeeded in forming a special friendship with two of the leaders of the Israelites, Aaron and Mirjam, whom in witness of their friendship he called his "brother and sister", he could, step by step, also gain the confidence of a larger group of intellectually more prominent and politically more matured Israelites. I am convinced that Moses initiated these studies and developed these contacts because he had made up his mind to use this slave tribe as a kind of laboratory for his experiments in sociological and theological ideas and ideals. It seems that he had from the beginning the full assent of God Himself for all he undertook. Moses must have realized through some undefinable inner sensing - this sensation, this conviction, this assurance must have been instilled into him by God - that the Supreme Being of whose existence he knew with certainty, though without any detailed knowledge, had selected him to be the leader of the Israelites, had appointed him to fulfill a certain destiny which he, Moses, was to have in common with the Israelites, the slave people.

It was an unavoidable and inevitable calculus in Moses' programmed destiny that he would soon have to come into conflict with the authorities. The Bible says that he was denounced by some of the Israelites for

having killed an Egyptian slave-driver,,but I do not think that an Royal Prince who had killed in a burst of temper such a minor official would in ancient Egypt have had to fear any inconvenience. It is more likely that by his careless and conspicuous political activities he had aroused the suspicion of the security services of the state. Whatever it was, we know that his life was in serious danger and that he was forced to flee abroad. He spent long years in the desert, wandering from one oasis to the other, accepting the hospitality of one of the local tribes after the other. He learned with surprise that the desert was not as inhospitable and unfriendly an ambience as he had been made to believe, that large numbers of people and their animals lived in relative comfort and in undisturbed peace in the vast expanses of sand. And he was interested to learn that the desert and the adjoining countries were populated by many Semitic tribes, some of them even related to the Israelites of Egypt, and that they knew of the One God and venerated Him in their unique way, i.e. without the need of idols and without tending to represent Him in figurines of human-like form. Moses' eagerness to learn as much as possible in the world which had opened itself to him, was to be satisfied. He was a very perceptive pupil of the priests of these desert people, and he learned from them their long-preserved legends; he learned of the promises which God made to their ancestors Abraham, Yizhak and Jacob. He learned also with great interest of the myths about the origin of the world and the creation of man which these people told in the evenings around the campfire. He was very impressed by the ethics and the morals apparently so natural to these desert people. His earlier intuitive sensing of the One God grew into a full knowledge and deep certainty.

The turning point in Moses' life and the decisive moment in his mission came, when God appeared to him, addressed him and appointed him to his duties. The knowledge that God had never ceased His interest in Israel from the time He had spoken to Abraham, and the realization that the Israelites' centuries long sojourn in Egypt with all the ensuing sufferings had been programmed into the destiny of Israel along with and leading to their ultimate liberation from their slavery, gave Moses that inexhaustible strength and ultimate patience of which he was going to be so fully in need in the coming years of stress and disappointments. The years he had spent in exile in the desert were to prove of great benefit; his ideas and thoughts were given the opportunity to mature under the guidance and the instruction of the many

highly qualified priest-philosophers he met on his wanderings. They reinforced his already firm belief in a single God; they deepened his philosophical insight, they sharpened his already mature psychological understanding of himself and others, they trained him in the intricacies of leadership and educated him in the administrative intricacies of a nomadic tribe. They taught him in addition many a magic formula and trick which were then - and they are so no less today - guarded jealously and appreciated as very effective, and which were most essential for a leader who had to impress a rather superstitious people by his claim that he was in possession of superior powers.

Moses spent many years in the desert. He had ample time and opportunity to plan his future strategy. In his extended wanderings he made it his task to learn also the lay-out of the the desert, to map the waterholes and to study the localities and the seasons where food could be found for man and beasts. There cannot be any doubt that among other things he also studiously though unobtrusively collected as much information as possible about the Land of Canaan and its inhabitants which - according to the tradition kept alive by and in the semitic tribes of the desert no less than among the Israelites in Egypt - God had promised to Abraham as the final residence and property of Israel.

After what must have appeared to him a suitable interval and the right moment - most likely when he learned that a new pharao had ascended the throne of Egypt, possibly also because he was convinced that his outer appearance had changed enough to make it difficult to be recognized by his former associates - Moses decided to return home. In the meantime, during all the years of Moses' absence, Aaron, who through all the years must have been in clandestine contact with him, has prepared the Israelites that they might hope for a change in their position. He had also assiduously kept alive their belief in the God of Israel and their trust in Moses. The latter assumed now the leadership of the Israelites. He formed among them groups and circles; he solidified and strengthened their communal system and he organized their vaguely remembered tribal associations. He told them of his plans and of God's promises.

In the intervening years, during his absence in the desert, the living conditions of the Israelites had further worsened socially and economically. This must have greatly contributed to their willingness to

overcome their former so undisguised suspicion of Moses and his intentions. They were now quite willing to entrust him with their fate. Moses' imposing personality and his unrestricted identification with them, the stories which had been circulating about his person and his adventures, succeeded to break down the barriers between him and the most stubborn among the Israelites, and he had now no difficulty to persuade the Israelites that their salvation and their survival lay in their emigration, their escape from Egypt. He warned them that they would have to spend a number of years wandering as nomads through the desert until they had grown sufficiently in numbers, strength and expertise, and had become ready to take possession of their promised homeland which was now in the hands of the Canaanites and other tribes. Moses first of all did his best to arrange for an early and legal emigration of the Israelites. His application for a permit of emigration for the Israelites passed through the usual and complicated 'official channels' and not surprisingly it was rejected again and again. He knew the mentality of the Egyptian officials only too well and did, therefore, not ask for an outright emigration permit but only for a 'temporary exit pass'. He mentioned in his application that the Israelites wished to spend three days and nights in a part of the desert adjoining the border of Egypt, because they wanted - after many years of abstinence - celebrate a long overdue national feast in honour of the God of Abraham and Joseph. Tribal festivals of such a nature had been a yearly event in the past; they had fallen into neglect after Jacob and his family had settled in Egypt and had become urbanized. As I have already mentioned, all of Moses' efforts to gain the permission were in vain. Every application of his was rejected outright in the end although he was nearly always promised an early and favourable reply after the necessary bribes had been passed on to the officials in charge of such exit permits. Fortunately Moses knew how to act, how to handle the Egyptian leaders and their people. He knew how to go about in order to shake them, to make them afraid of the powerful God who protected Moses and his people. He made very clever use of a series of disasters which affected Egypt just then with unusual severity. He knew how to impress Pharaoh, his ministers and his counsellors with the claim that these disasters and calamities and catastrophes had been inflicted on the

Egyptians by the Supreme God under whose protection the Israelites were now placed. All this was of no avail, Pharaoh and his people were not so easily convinced; but still there were occasions when Moses and the Israelites could reasonably nourish some hope. At last a misfortune befell the Egyptians which broke all their resistance: it was a mysterious epidemic which killed off most of the firstborns in Egypt - children and animals alike. This time the Egyptians were deeply shaken by their misfortune. The Bible says that God had sent His angels to undertake this gruesome task, but I cannot believe that this is true. God did not eliminate all these victims in an unequivocal manner. He programmed this event in such a way that natural phenomena were made to occur according to the demand of certain given circumstances. God does not 'work' in the way the Bible pretends to know. God does not kill except when this is unavoidable, e.g. when He caused the 'Flood' or when He drowned the Egyptian Army in pursuit of the fleeing Israelites. I am convinced that the natural phenomena would not have occurred had any other outcome entered the calculation. In the case of the death of the firstborns it may indeed have been some kind of a natural disaster, an epidemic of some kind - and a gang of Israelite toughs might have played out a kind of supporting role. The thought is just now born in my mind that this story of a plague in epidemic form which affected exclusively the firstborn children and animals might have meant to indicate - in symbolic form and language - that the Egyptians had been frightened, or had been threatened, for one reason or the other, into offering as a sacrifice to their angry gods the firstborn among their children and cattle? In any case, this awesome experience was the last straw and it broke the pharaoh's resistance. He called Moses and Aaron before his throne and conceded to them that their God had proved more powerful than he and his advisers had thought.. He told them that he did not object anymore, that the Israelites could go into the desert and arrange their religious festival there. But he warned them that immediately thereafter they would have to return willingly and peacefully and would have, by working overtime, to make up for the loss in production. After the pharaoh had at last given his permission, and no sooner had the Israelites set out for their "meeting with their God" in the desert, it became quite clear to the authorities that the demand of the Israelites had been a ruse, that this business of a 'national festival' had been nothing but a pretext, because the long train of carts and

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A story, a tale, a narrative
about your God, your world
your people and about you

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pt. 2 (p. 100 - 199)

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flocks, the complete dismantling of every Israelite household, and the departure at night could not be explained otherwise than by the fact that the Israelites had no intention of ever coming back. Any residual doubt of any of the officials of Egypt was soon dispersed by the discovery that most of the Egyptians, poor and rich, low and high had to make, that the departing Israelites had taken along, on loan and with permission, but more often than not without any permission, as many of the valuables and jewelry, golden and silver vessels and so on, from the neighbours households and from the temples, as they could lay their hands on.

Within a short time the Egyptian army was alerted. I set out, spearheaded by its cavalry and chariots, to catch the escapees; and there is not the slightest doubt that in this situation, so desperate and so dangerous, God showed that He will and does actively intervene whenever a desperate and hopeless situation arises of the kind which the Israelites had to face in their flight from Egypt. And for this reason Moses could so miraculously save the Children of Israel from certain death - which instead befell their pursuers. I am ready to believe the rabbis of the Talmud, who said that God did only reluctantly destroy the Egyptian army, for however you view the events, the Israelites did apply some quite shady methods; and Moses himself, in that dramatic episode of the escape from Egypt, can certainly not be presented as a shining example of virtue and bravery. But do not overlook that he had been so greatly frustrated and that the Egyptians had behaved with such unnecessary cruelty. And foremost of all you should take into consideration that Moses was so totally sure that right was on his side. You may have heard that God forbade his angels, ever ready to burst out into flattery and song, not to do so on this occasion. I think, this illustrates so very well what I have wanted to convey to you.

The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and their salvation from certain destruction can certainly by any and every definition be called a miracle. As you will see as my story goes on, it is only one of the many which the Bible and the history of the Jews report.

7. An Intermezzo about Miracles .

Do you belong to those who think that miracles are impossible ? That they never occur ? I myself do think that miracles did and do happen. I am sure there are many among us who know personally of some miracle or other.

What is a miracle ? I do not know. What do the great of the past think about miracles ? The young Descartes saw the Divine Essence in the miracle of the "Creatio ex nihilo, the free will of man and the wonder of man created by God". Maimonides was very skeptic about miracles; he rejected most of them as superfluous. The only exception he admitted was the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the Revelation at Sinai.

So many things in one's life are otherwise inexplicable. I have looked for an acceptable definition, but have been disappointed by all I have read. It occurs to me that a miracle can only be understood, deciphered by the application, with the help of the so far to us known dimensions. You may be dissatisfied with what I have put forward as a definition, and you may reproach me that I may avoid stating my own explanation. You may be right in thinking thus - somehow I share with many others whom I have approached about their attitude to miracles, a kind of shyness, of embarrassment. But now that I have faced this subconscious inhibition, let me say in a few words that I believe that the God who has determined the laws of nature and has programmed the decourse of developmental probabilities, can as well suspend these laws and change the program whenever He wishes to do so and whenever there is the need to do so. Miracles of which the past has an ample record and which -as I said already - occur in our days, and have happened to many of us who are alive today, are to me a clear indication that God acts and interferes in man's and mankind's fate. I am not laying down a rule nor do I want to establish a law; many of the great thinkers past and present have been of the same opinion which has been so notably expressed in the words of Job: "I know you are all-powerful, what you perceive you can perform". Miracles represent direct interventions of God; they indicate that God 'suspends', when required for the performance of a miracle, any of the laws He has established for eternity. A miracle is a specifically directed, divinely guided, once only executed change in human affairs. I have no proof for what I have just said, as God acts within dimensions whose functionality we do not comprehend. Let me mention also another characteristic of the divine miracle: the power to perform such miracles can be delegated, can be temporarily entrusted to a human being, as is exemplified in the case of Moses.

Let us now continue with our story.

What was happening at the shores of the Red Sea was truly enormous, unusual, unbelievable. This was an unheard of happening. Imagine ! An entire 'mechanized army' was destroyed by some unusual natural phenomenon, apparently by a miracle, caused by the God of a miserable slave people ! You would have thought that the history of all the nations of the then civilized world would have reported this miracle, that there would have been transmitted to us records, memorials or at least traces of other evidences. But you will be surprised to learn, that while the Exodus had been for the Israelites of great importance, this episode has hardly made any impact on the rest of the world. It has not been recorded even by the Egyptian historians. Let us be clear in our minds that the Exodus cannot have been a fable, a legend or a myth, there cannot be any doubt that this is a historic fact. Did perhaps the Egyptians not want or dare to put such a to them shameful episode to papyri ?

8. Israel in the Desert.

Once the Israelites were safe inside the desert, Moses did not lose much time. He set out at once on his task to control and to educate his newly acquired flock of people. You will not be surprised to learn that it was a far harder job than he had ever thought possible, notwithstanding his past experiences with them in Egypt. Throughout the forty years which Moses and the Israelites spent in the desert, hardly a year went by without a crisis, hardly a month when something did not go wrong. The Israelite people, now free and on their own were never without a cause for complaint; they complained even more than they ever did in Egypt when they were slaves and life had been difficult indeed. They saw in Moses a man who had in the past so often proved how clever he was; who had overcome the mighty Pharaoh and his regime with the help of his powerful magic. They expected from him now that he provide them now with all the luxuries of life of which they had dreamed and which they thought Moses had promised to provide for them. Above all they soon tired of

the monotonous life in the desert and wanted to be brought as soon as possible to Canaan where they could live the kind of urban life which they had known in Egypt. The more time they sat around the tents in one or the other of the oases of the desert, the more they felt sorry for themselves. They siverely believed themselves wronged. Imagine ! They had even the chuzpah to say that life had been easier for them in Egypt where, whatever the physical hardships had been, they had at least had enough and more interesting things to eat. Imagine ! They even demanded to be taken back to Egypt from where Moses had liberated them at such great risk !

For a period of over forty years Moses kept the Israelites more or less isolated inside the bounderies of the desert. He was kept busy with teaching them the moral tennets God had communicated to him, with instructing them how to live peacefully with themselves and each other. He was constantly worried by the logistic problem how to find for them the right places where water and food could be found for the people and the flocks. Many a fight had to be won over other desert tribes for the right of passage and the supply of water. I have no doubt that during all those years God held His protecting hand over Moses and the Israelites. How else can you explain their survival and their steadily increasing strength ? How else the continued existence , under such advserse conditions ?, of an illiterate, downtrodden, cantankerous crowd of city dwellers which had suddenly been dumped into a hostile environment and was facing a series of stronghand implacable enemies ? You may counter that this success was due to Moses and his genius. Allright ! I agree. But do we not mean the same thing ?

And thus God guided Moses from one oasis to the other. He directed him in his decisions and instructed him in the governing of the people. At times He scolded him, at times He gave in when Moses could persuade God that He had been too harsh in His condemnation of the ZIsraelites. God spoke regularly and directly - I mean through the Shekhina - to Moses and once also to the assembled people. This was a phenomen unbelievable in its meaning and terrifying in its occurrence. Nobody has been able to explain it away. These things are not myths, they must indeed have happened. On the "Epiphany" , one the appearance and revelation of God Judaism is essentially based/ Whether God made Moses think he had heard Him, or if He truly appeared before him in some shape or form, or if it was only the Shekhina or God's reflection revealed or whether Moses was in a state of trance or not, I cannot say. How can I kr

anything of this for sure ? It is, however, a definite and interesting fact, that Moses could not leave us a description of God, that he never saw God with his eyes, for it is clearly mentioned in the Bible that God did not permit Moses to face Him or to look straight at Him. It is left to everybody of us , and this includes you, to explain for himself the meaning of these passages in the Bible.

8. An Intermezzo of 'Holiness' .

I am going to use now and then in the following pages the word "holy". It is most likely not the first time that you hear that word mentioned. You will discover that you need a clear though simple explanation of its meaning.

^a In the Bible it conveys the meaning that the Jews should feel and act as a people apart, that they should aim to live on a higher ethical level. The order to become a 'holy people' is the logical consequence of having been appointed a 'Chosen People'. Holiness can simply be defined as separateness from or opposed to the profane. It is a state free of sinfulness with respect to God. It indicates God's total 'Otherness', His absolute moral righteousness. According to the Old Testament God is holy and nothing else is holy. This indicates God's exaltedness and omniscience. No other God is holy (Ex.20:5), but in the 'Last Days' God's holiness will penetrate all things (Num.14:21). Also Israel is holy as it is sealed by a permanent covenant (Isa.51:4; Jer.31:33; Amos 2:3). Israel's holiness demands of her also a moral perfection (Lev.11:44; 19:2; Isa 41:14), but holiness without purity degenerates into ritualism (Isa 1:10; Jer.7). In the New Testament holiness is meant to be as pure as God, perfect and merciful (Matt.5:48; Luk. 6:36). Modern theologians, e.g. R. Otto , interpret God's holiness not primarily as a moral quality but that God Himself is His absolute dignity, in His infinite majesty, in His inapproachable transcendence and in His exalted essentiality exhibits infinite Holiness. In short: 'Holiness' ist the most fundamental description of God.

I am going now view the question of holiness from a far simpler angle. You know that God is holy; He has said so Himself many a time in the Bible. You have also heard that the Jews are a holy people, that the Temple was a holy place, that Jerusalem is a holy city and so on. There are Bible critics who try to equate the ancient biblical concept of holiness with that of ' tabu ', a word which describes a religious restriction institution in the social life of the primitive peoples of Africa, Australia etc. It means something which is pure and also threatening, something to be guarded but also something to be feared, something which varies in its appearance

and manifestation from individual to individual. I cannot go into details, but it is quite clearly wrong to try and to explain the concept of 'holiness' as a tabu-like institution. When God revealed to the Israelites that He is holy, He wanted to convey to them that He is superior to, purer than and removed from all low, mortal and impure things, that His essence is impossible to measure, compared to and viewed with everyday measures and conceptions; that he is different from and incomparable to anything in or comprehensible to humankind's perceptions within earthly dimensions.

The meeting with God at Sinai has set Israel apart for all times. The Jews are to this day somehow but definitely a "nation apart", a different kind of people. This definition of the Jews has been already used in the Bible and it is a preferred expression of elements hostile to the Jews; but you should view it as having been used as a compliment pertaining to the extraordinary events at Sinai when God proclaimed them holy. You are justified, as I do, to translate this expression as indicating God's preference - and not to be offended as many or most Jews do. The more we Jews render ourselves conscious that we are 'kadosh', that we are holy and not separate, that we are elevated and empowered in the confines of the meaning of the ancient priest who was 'separate' but still an integral part of the world, the sooner shall we be able to propel mankind forward by our efforts and our examples, to the final goal.

When God said to the Jews " you shall be holy for I, the Lord, am holy ", He raises Israel onto a higher level of morals and purity. Thereby He placed on them the duty not to pollute themselves in a moral and spiritual way and - as an allegoric and symbolic expression of this their special status - He ordered them also to observe certain definite laws of physical purity.

The Bible itself, and more so the Prophets, have applied the honorific title of 'holiness' not only to the Jewish people but also to the Temple, to Jerusalem, to the Land of Israel with the explanation that these are localities where "God resides therein". This allocation is, of course, not just nor justified, as " God resides everywhere " and nowhere in particular; but there is no illogicity nor any harm if you continue to apply this honourable, this imposing and demanding title, as long as you realize that it means the reflection, the projection, the specific resonance of God - by means of His Shekhina, if you want a more specific definition - or that it simply embraces the fact that you feel it so, that you know it is so, that you want it should be so.

Much has been written about the meaning and the significance of 'holiness' - what I have contributed here is only a very limited portion - and over the centuries its original and exclusive and proprietary content has been greatly watered down. Basically there is no religion which does not distinguish between the holy and the profane, but in most all these instances the original biblical value-scale has been flattened. Like the

Pope many other spiritual leaders and tribal priests demand to be addressed as 'Your Holiness', and the Catholic Church has taken it upon herself to appoint innumerable men and women to 'holiness' by granting them 'sainthood'. This cheapening and vulgarizing of an originally supreme and exclusive qualification is today accepted and interpreted as a kind of religious honour degree.

9. The Chosen and the Blessed.

There have been many events of great importance and persistent significance in the history of the Jewish people, but the greatest of all was the appearance of God before the people assembled in the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai. A voice was heard to announce "I am Yehova, your God". There was much thunder, lightening and smoke on top of the mountain, but the Israelites knew already from their past history and their tradition who it was who spoke to them; and they knew also that neither the smoke, nor the lightening nor the thunder were God. Humankind was made to know from that moment onward that God can only be known by the signs which He grants us, to know of His presence. This knowledge has, unfortunately, been abused by all the organized and no less primitive religions; it is responsible for the creation of a large industry which learned profitably to commercialize this relationship of God with man.

Did the Israelites at Sinai "hear God" or did they only imagine that they heard Him? You will be surprised to hear me say that it does not matter at all, if they heard Him or not. It is a fact that they thought they did hear Him, that they experienced a moment of awe and wonder, that this great day has been engraved into the soul of the Jewish people for ever, that the enormous impact it had on the destiny of the Jewish people continues to this day. Judaism has been created, changed and molded by the Revelation at Sinai. Judaism cannot be imagined without Sinai. Jewry would be without a content, would have no support without the consciousness of Sinai. It is a unique phenomenon insofar as it represents not only a decisive moment in Jewish history but has remained a sustained experience of every single Jew ever since. At Sinai God appointed Israel for ever and eternity as His special people. He entrusted them with the Ten Commandments to serve them as the

foundation of all their future laws. In that short list of statements and orders are embodied all the basic truths and all the intrinsic morals mankind should make its own. But God imposed on Israel itself the heaviest duty with which people can be charged..God obliged Israel that it should become holy. No particular reason is given for this imposition of an awful duty. We are told without any preamble that the Jew has to be holy because God, because who has appointed him, is holy Himself. This was a difficult demand indeed and all the future sins and failures of Israel derive from the fact, that they have forgotten or disregarded this exclusive duty of theirs.

On that momentous day when God appeared on Mount Sinai, when He pronounced the Ten Commandments and revealed Himself unequivocally as the God of the Universe, as the only God in existence, He transformed the migratory descendants of Jacob-Israel into a nation. He laid upon them the duty to carry forward His message for ever. The newly forged nation was ordered by that appointment to be the spiritual guiding light which all other nations in the world would have to follow. Israel was instructed to teach the entire world, where and how salvation was to be found. Israel was decreed to become the impounded national entity on whom the other peoples of the world would henceforth experiment with their own ideologies, on whom they would try out their own interpretations of the very plan which God had in mind for Israel, their variations of God's promise which they had usurped. The descendents of Abraham were to find out again and again that neither the promise God had made to the Patriarchs, nor the appointment at Sinai had not only not granted the Jews any special privileges but had, on the contrary, imposed on them special duties, special obligations. One of the main responsibilities this imposed was the rule that Israel could teach and guide the other nations only by demonstrating itself a people impeccable in its behaviour. Both, the Covenant which God had made with Abraham as well as the election of Israel as the trustees of the Torah had been planned by God for the benefit of all the world, as God had already indicated to Abraham in His words " in ~~all~~ all the families of the earth shall be blessed ".

A frequently cited story of the Talmud tells that God had offered the appointment to be His especially elected children to many other peoples before He approached IIsrael, and that all these various nations,peoples,

tribes had declined the offer, well knowing the awesome burden and duty, the great danger and responsibility which this honour implied; and that, finally and in full knowledge of all the troubles and difficulties in which it would involve them, the Children of Israel did agree to accept the task of carrying , of living and of fostering the laws which God had pronounced at Sinai, as well as the responsibilities and duties flowing from them.

I feel it necessary to repeat again that you should not think that as a remuneration Israel has been granted special privileges. Any advantage and blessing which Israel might have gained above those which are granted to all the other nations, it has had to earn notwithstanding its preferred position. Whatever advantages or preferences which may have accrued to Israel from her special appointment as God's elected people, Israel will receive and enjoy only in the final period of mankind's existence. However, there is no doubt whatsoever that God watches with special love and care over His Jewish people, and that He will always guide it away from all such dangers as might imperil its existence; and that He will nudge it onward into the right direction whenever there are signs that Israel tends to deviate. The 'nudges' may be mild, they may be hurtful, but they are effective - at least for some time. Whenever psychologically indicated God has never failed to repeat His promises and to offer His blessings; neither has He hesitated to have His prophets and messengers threaten Israel in His name when He knew this was indicated and useful. "If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rains in the seasons", He promised, and the Israelites will enjoy many of the blessings which are so important and welcome to a desert or agricultural people (Lev.26:3-13); " but if you reject my orders" Israel will have to experience many a punishment. And thus it did happen so many times. This was henceforth Israel's fate and destiny; however, there is the eternally valid promise that how much Israel might sin and suffer, God will never abandon it. "Yet...notwithstanding all this...I will not abhor them, nor destroy them completely , never break my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God." (Lev.26:44).

In every epoch in mankind's ensuing history Israel was to live in a moral atmosphere far more elevated with regard to, and on a human plain totally different from that of all the other peoples of the world. Don't take this to mean that they were to have from then onwards an easier or more

protected life, that they were going to enjoy favours and advantages which others were never to know. All in all you can say that the contrary is true. The life of the Jews was now filled with greater responsibilities and heavier duties. Israel was now placed under the obligation to live on an ethically higher level and to submit itself to stricter moral laws. In everything they did or abstained from doing the Jewish people had to prove to God and to the world that they could and should be judged and measured by harsher standards than those applied to other nations in existence. Israel has to live and act within the demands which God has imposed on them, in particular within the injunction to be a 'Holy People'. God never permitted Israel to forget this their special status - and neither did the world. While God remained the strict taskmaster, the unbendable ray of light along which Israel had to pilot itself, the exacting and incorruptable judge who measured and weighed every misdeed, and while He never ceased to be also the Father of all mankind who loves all living creatures, Israel had no doubt whatsoever that God loved His chosen people more than any other. They saw proof for this their inner assurance and conviction in what they interpreted as evidence that God understood their errors and mistakes for had He not on so many occasions overlooked and forgiven them? Somehow all the nations of the world knew - or they did instinctively perceive - of this special relationship between God and Israel. Unfortunately they did not react to this knowledge or to this realization in the way and in the manner which you might legitimately have expected from them. They did not show any particular respect, love or sympathy for the Jews; they did not take the Jews to their hearts; they did not cherish or thank the Jews for the special contribution they were expected to make to the final salvation of mankind. No, my children, at no time in history is there a record of a nation which had ever shown any degree of sympathy or gratitude. They knew only envy and hatred for the Jews, and they reacted to any consciously recognized or subconsciously realized knowledge of the special place Israel has in the "order of things" by inflicting humiliations and persecutions on the Jews living among them. Our history relates the innumerable occasions when this hostile attitude of the peoples to the Jews had resulted in bloodshed, in murder, in decimation. I have never understood, nor have cleverer and wiser people than I can ever be, succeeded in finding a satisfactory

explanation for the phenomenon that everywhere and at every time the peoples of the world feel justified to despise the Chosen People of God, the very people whom God had elected to help the world to gain salvation. Alas !, we cannot say that God made these enemies of Israel see that He kept the faithful among His people under His protection, for these murders and pogroms were inflicted not only on those who had already abandoned their faith in God, but far more often on the most faithful ones, those who have to be counted as the best human material which Israel has ever brought forth. What made the enemies of Israel behave thus ? Was it envy ? Were these persecutions only one of the many instances when the good in man fights and loses in confrontation with the evil he harbours ? Has it to be explained that it was the realization of the murderers of their own shortcomings ? Or were the murderers only tools of God, did God inflict these punishments from time to time on Israel to make it realize that it had failed again ? In the frame of my conception of which I have made mention before, this means that Israel's destiny has been programmed to have the outside world react with persecution and hostility whenever Israel tends to neglect its duty. Perhaps there is also to be argued that by reacting in this hostile and irrational way God has wanted to give to the sensitive elements among Israel's enemies and to the corrigible individuals among her slaughterers the opportunity to repent and to ready themselves to gain insight in their murderous inside once they have slacked it in Jewish blood ? Indeed I have often consoled myself and cleansed my mind of resentment and confusion with such a chain of thoughts as a suitable hypothesis. On the other hand you might think that these bitter and painful experiences would have taught the Jewish victims a useful lesson - but you are in error if you think so. Hardly ever did the Jews gain the insight that they had done something wrong, that they should see in their fateful experience evidence that they were guilty, that they were on the wrong path. They differed little from their persecutors, who, unfortunately, hardly ever did gain an insight that they had acted wrongly, and that it would be in their own interest, if they followed the ethical concepts which the persecuted had been ordered to perpetuate and which in their own religious teaching was undoubtedly given prominence. Do not blame the ignorant masses for their shortcomings. The Christian churches, their spiritual mentors and all the other religious leaders failed in their duties, for they were the ones who instigated the populace to murder the Jews.

10. A Nation in its Infancy.

After Moses had been invested with the plenipotentiary power to speak in the name of God, and when he had been entrusted with the task to educate the people in the ways which God had outlined to him, he could at last set out to activate his plans which had been since long ready in his mind, for developing, educating and even for creating a people from the dismal human material he had taken along into the desert. He started at once on the work which since many years he had cherished in his dreams. It was a hard and exhausting program. From the moment he had accepted the Ten Commandments and the commission from God, until the day of his death there was hardly ever a moment when he could relax, when he could let things run by themselves, when he could be sure that he had succeeded. But he must also have very often felt assured, sometimes by certain definite signs, sometimes by hardly perceptible indications, sometimes by truly astonishing results, that he was progressing on the right track. This extraordinary man must have been very sure of himself; this could only have been the case because he must also have been feeling sustained by God's assurance that, come what may, the day would dawn when the Israelites would justify their having been elected to their special status among all the other nations. I think that this must have been the reason why he never gave up and why he never despaired for long. This Moses, this great leader and psychologist, must have been encouraged by the great number of men and women among his people in whom he perceived the guarantee of his cherished hope that, even if it should take an uncountable number of generations, the world, with Israel as intermediary, was sure going to enjoy one day complete peace and full redemption. He knew that this was God's plan and intention for Israel and the world. He was certain that one day, far away in the future though it may be, a kingdom of God on earth would be the outcome, and it should not surprise you that in whatever Moses thought and believed, taught and demanded, he had been inspired by God.

To my mind this is the explanation why notwithstanding the unending setbacks, the never ending struggles, the incessant fights with inner and outer

enemies, and the incessant wrestling for the soul of his people, Moses persevered. During all the many hard years he worked and worried Moses never gave in. He did not spare himself and he was not spared by God. For forty years he travelled with the Israelite people from one part of the desert to the other until all those, who had been born in Egypt and had never lost their slave mentality, had been buried in the sands of the desert. The greatness of the man Moses is further indicated by the extraordinary fact that he applied the same rule of thumb remorselessly also to himself. He died shortly before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, just before the twelve tribes could find their permanent home in the Land of Canaan, where they could finally erect their huts, and where they could at last begin to take roots.

Why the Land of Canaan of all places ?

You will recall that at the time when God embraced Abraham as His messenger and had instilled into him the knowledge of the Oneness of the Creator and the Ruler of the Universe, He had also assured him that He would, in the course of the centuries to come, build up his descendants into a great and numerous people. In this promise was also included the reward which God had selected a suitable stretch of land which He would give to Abraham's future offspring as their permanent home, as soon as they were numerous and strong enough to present their claim. You may rightly presume that God had earmarked for the Israelites the best then available and for them from every point of view best suited piece of land, that it was a piece of real estate which had, as God was to confirm on many occasions, the potentialities to be made into a "land flowing with milk and honey". You may be sure that Moses possessed much information about the geography and the economy of the entire area. Such studies must have been included in the curriculum when he was a pupil in the "Academy for Princes" in Egypt. It is in addition also most likely that during the years he spent as a refugee among the tribes which resided in the desert, he had made it a special point to enlarge his knowledge concerning all the lands along the borders of the desert and beyond, and about the people who lived therein. The combination of all these various elements, promise and study, strategy and geopolitics, contributed to the deep certainty of the Israelites, when under the guidance of Moses they at last approached the borders of the Land Canaan, that they had finally reached their goal, their own country.

A new generation of hardened Israelites had grown up during the long sojourn in the desert. These men had been well trained by Joshua bin Nun the best among the leaders of his generation whom Moses had selected and groomed as his successor. The Israelites sent a message to the Canaanites, assuring them of their peaceful intentions. They made it clear, however, that they had proprietary rights to the country and that they had now come to present their claim. At the same time, they declared, they were ready to share the lands and the government with the actual inhabitants, that they were willing to collaborate with them socially and economically, that they would introduce them to the knowledge and the favours of the One God and would, in addition, make them partners of all the wisdom and experiences they had acquired. Not surprisingly, this quite generous sounding offer was refused by the Canaanites. When all efforts to reach a peaceful conclusion proved a failure, the Israelites stormed into Canaan, conquered it and claimed all of it as their own. A long series of wars with the neighbouring tribes ensued. The fight for the land and its resources was long and bitter. It was also merciless and bitter as battles were then and are now. Although the Israelites were far less in number, and were also less equipped with modern arms, they won in the end because they were in no doubt that the right - and God - was on their side. And the final outcome of it all was that the Israelites, after they had overcome their enemies in and around Canaan, took possession of the land which God had promised them.

11. The Birthpangs of a Nation.

With the help of God, a great deal of luck and not less due to the cleverness of their strategists and the bravery of their fighters, the Israelites did, in the course of centuries of wars, in various stages conquer also the remaining portions of what they claimed was the 'Promised Land' on both sides of the Jordan. As had been the case in the past, also these battles were fierce and much blood was spilled on both sides. It was the rule in those times that the winner took all, i.e. along with the land also everything they found living on it, women and children, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

The males, men and boys, who had not been killed during and after the battle, were forced into slavery. However, I want it very clearly underlined, that contrary to the custom prevailing elsewhere in the world, the Israelites as a rule did treat their slaves in a way we would, even with our actual outlook, call humane, for since their departure from Egypt God and Moses had incessantly drummed into them as a basic lesson to be remembered for ever, that once upon a time the Israelites had themselves been slaves and strangers living in a hostile land, and that they must always in future treat the strangers in their midst and the slaves in their possession in the same way they themselves would have liked to have been treated under similar circumstances.

You will not rarely come across historians and psychologists - I want only to mention A.J. Toynbee and C.G. Jung as representatives - who enjoy calling the God of Israel bloodthirsty and the Israelites barbarians, and who use every opportunity to degrade the Bible as a record of an immoral people. Yes, dear children, such men do exist and do occupy places in the intellectual world of quite some importance. It is an unpleasant experience to encounter anti-jewish prejudice in the disguise of historic research results. In addition, many of the modern historians refute Toynbee's ideas because they view them as being much of a pseudo-theological character. You should not be impressed, nor depressed, by his theories, for he hates the Jews. I am sure that one day research in and analysis of his past will reveal the reasons which are certainly anything but scientific in character. He has a poor opinion of the early Jewish biblical religion which he calls "tribal-parochial, war-minded and intolerant". He denies Israel the position of a unique people, of a chosen people. He even concludes - how and from where I have not been able to discover - that the "totalitarian intransigencies shown by Christianity and Islam are entirely due to the judaic make-up they contain".

Less than with regard to Toynbee should you be affected by the intellectual tantrums of C.G. Jung, who bases his ideas about us Jews on a deep psychological research; but he did not direct his efforts into the depths of his own distorted psyche where jealousy of Sigmund Freud has played havoc among the dregs of his subconscious. He has hardly ever a good word for the Jews. He has psychoanalyzed God and has diagnosed Him as an "irrational rude being who, while talking incessantly of justice is himself not just". Here you see an example of man ruining whatever he may claim as an achievement, by his own uncontrolled hatred.

Of course, I agree with everyone who hooks into the undeniable fact, that the concept of the warfare described and the methods of administration as listed in Scriptures sound drastic and cruel, but I must again point out that within the frame of the historic epoch they were considered justified and acceptable to their contemporaries, as the standard and 'normal

conduct' of warring and victorious parties. You will agree that I could easily underline, reinforce and settle my argument were I to direct your attention to the conditions and effects of the wars of our days, especially insofar as they affect the civilian non-combattant population, but I feel reluctant to excuse something which one upon a time was considered right and justified as well as accepted with adducing something which we all condemn as wrong, bad and unacceptable. I venture to say that on reviewing that part of the early Jewish history I find that the Israelites had been consciously observing the moral rules imposed upon them, and that they lived in this respect and in general on a higher level of ethics than all the other peoples of that time. Even if you want to contradict me by saying that the Bible contains records of the massacre of large population centres which the Israelites had conquered, if you cite me the intrigues they applied and the brutal wars they fought, all this pales and appears relatively harmless in comparison with the excessive cruelties and the total neglect of human values which the rulers, the armies, the politicians and the pirates considered the right thing to do throughout all human history, starting with the slaughter of entire conquered towns by the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Assyrians and all the other powerful nations, purportedly also civilized; let me refer you to the crucifixion of hundreds of thousands of rebels in medieval times, to the hanging on the gallows of 10-12 years old children for stealing some bread only a hundred years ago in England and on the Continent, let me remind you of the 1½ million Armenians the Turks killed in the first quarter of our own century and the six million Jews the Germans killed a few decades ago, and let me recall the lack of interest and effort of much of the civilized world regarding the millions of famine victims of our own days.

No, you will say. You cannot agree with me, you will say. You refuse to accept my comparisons and explanations, you will say. You will ask me, how I can ever consider these cruelties which the Bible never tries to hide and never tires to list, even if they are on a small scale only in relation to those I have cited above, as an "achievement" worthy of us Jews. And even if it proved indeed in comparison with the commonly practiced cruelties a vastly superior attitude of the Jews and a greater merit, why did God not accept their superior moral behaviour, their higher Jewish ethics as a definite indication that Israel had fulfilled its task, had proved itself worthy to be called the "Chosen People", the "Light unto the Nations"? Why did God not accept the good marks which the Jews appear to have earned as a successful achievement of His program, and reward them by bringing on the promised redemption? The only answer I can give to your argument is that the Jews, although they had reached a higher ethical level, were by far not yet worthy of the promised state of grace, because from the beginning and at every stage thereafter in their history they had remained a quarrelsome people, a dissatisfied and grumbling people, because they fought among themselves so often and with more bitterness and greater hatred than they showed and applied to their worst enemies. Such inner dissensions, such fratricidal tendencies must surely have cancelled out all other merits and

must have made the Children of Israel unworthy of that divine respect which is so indispensable in order to become a partner in and a recipient of divine love. Without the establishment of peace and goodwill towards your brother, your neighbour salvation is not possible. And I want you to know, - even though I use as a rule this word to indicate the final aim of human-kind, the coming of "God's Kingdom on Earth" - that 'Redemption' has not that great significance in Judaism as it has in Christianity. It has not even such significance when the indication of redemption from sin is indicated or intended. For the Jew redemption means to have reached a state when one lives according to the revealed will of God, according to the aim to which God has programmed the Jewish fate. This explains something which has often caused me to wonder, viz:- why the Bible does not place any too great value on goals and achievements and 'eternal qualities' but cares mainly on the establishment of peace and goodwill towards your brother, your neighbour, in short for man's existence while he is still alive and on the earth, and for the humans' needs arising from time to time.

Joshua began to introduce, as soon as the circumstances permitted, a new administrative system in the newly settled Country of Canaan. Every tribe was made to elect a leader who had to assist the Chieftain Joshua in keeping law and order among the Israelites, who had until then known only camp life and the loose civil order of the nomads. The first task these leaders had to take on, was to distribute the conquered land among the twelve tribes according to the scheme which Moses had worked out in detail before his death. You may consider it strange that there were still twelve tribes although the Levites and the priests did not receive any lands - after all they were busy enough with temple duties and would not have been able to do any outside work in the fields - but the puzzle is easily solved; the descendants of Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Menasseh, were counted as two tribes in recognition of the debts the Israelites owed to their father and in expiation of the criminal treatment to which their forefathers had once exposed Joseph. You may bet anything and everything you have, that there was a lot of trouble and quibble before a somewhat just and acceptable distribution could be finalized. You may also take it for granted that there was hardly anybody among the Israelites who was satisfied with his lot and share. Such being the circumstances, we must recognize with admiration that for many a year and through many a generation the rulers, who were set over Israel - who, it is true, had more or less absolute legislative, administrative and judicial powers - have kept so successfully their people under such good control.

Judging from the developments of the next few generations of Israelites in Canaan, I think I can deduce that God must have been well satisfied with the way things were with the Jewish people in the Holy Land, for He appears not to have interfered with warnings or punishments when He saw the Israelites were about to absorb the rather undesirable cultural trends and religious systems in vogue among their non-Israelitic neighbours; but neither did He praise or reward them when they succeeded in establishing a firmly knit state-organization. I think I have the right to say that from the way God did and does allow the world to run its course, and how He views the various religious systems in the multitude of their approaches to the same goal, that, although the Jews are His especially chosen mediators and messengers, He does not view Judaism as the exclusively justified religious approach. Any religion which preaches morality and brotherly love, kindness and selflessness must - it appears to me - be acceptable to God, even if the confessors of so many of these religions feel the need to approach God through idols and with cults which may appear to you and to me so very primitive and illogical. I said; this approach may be permissible in its various expressions, but undoubtedly the prerequisite has to be that the confessors of such creeds are sincere and honest in their conception and belief. And it is to my mind equally without any doubt that the ultimate redemption of mankind will finally only be possible if all these approaches to the comprehension of the Supreme flow together into that monotheistic spearhead of which Judaism is and always was the only true one.

Soon after the Israelites had settled in Canaan, they came into contact with the higher civilizations which were prevalent in the surrounding countries; and it should not be too difficult for you to imagine, I think, how much they must have admired what had to appear to them unusually beautiful and technical superior, and it is no wonder that they strove to acquire and to imitate all that which they admired. However, it is remarkable that, unlike other nations, which after having conquered a country with a superior civilization were thereafter absorbed by and assimilated to the vanquished and soon more or less totally disappeared within their new surroundings' culture, Israel never shared such a fate. It survived intact the influence of all the neighbouring cultures. It is true that while the Israelites took over most of the agricultural festivals of the Canaanites - and later also of the Babylonians -

long with the knowledge and technique of agriculture which they had not known until then in their nomadic past, they did not 'swallow' intact and adopt unaltered all these festivals, techniques and other indices and indications of a superior civilization. Instead, they skilfully adapted them to their own standards and ideologies, e.g. they added a set of historic features to native seasonal festivities with an agricultural character, and vested them therewith with a definite historic-religious significance. I suppose that the Sabbath, the day of rest, the Jubilee institution of land restitution, the circumcision, though they were not adopted from the prevailing customs, were most likely changed or adapted to the prevailing circumstances, at least to some degree.

If you take a look at a map you will find that ancient Israel was situated between the two great trade routes of that region. This was the reason why wars never ceased in that part of the world. God did not always give victory to the arms of Israel, and to my mind, the fact was certainly a blessing because it served as a check on their arrogance and as a stimulus to their development. In the course of time they were to learn from their enemies the use and manufacture of tools and arms made from iron, and in addition they developed and perfected a new war strategy of their own which was based on and dictated by their geopolitical position. All their victories were gratefully attributed to the intervention of God, and all their defeats humbly accepted as evidence of God's wrath.

The main enemies of the Israelites were the Philistines. These, a powerful and intelligent people, lived along the seashore, and notwithstanding numerous attempts over some centuries the Israelites found it impossible to dislodge them. They are identical with the 'Sea People' mentioned in ancient literature, who had arrived from the Eastern Mediterranean area around 1150 BCE and had become involved in continued fighting with the Israelites, until the steadily mounting armed confrontation with the Philistines made a new orientation necessary. The twelve israelitic tribes had remained more or less independent of each other. At times they even came into conflict with each other. Only in case of war, when the need arose, did the various tribes form temporary alliances to assist each other. In their conflict with the Philistines the tribes of Israel marched most of the time together into battle. During the intervals between the various military campaigns the Israelites and the Philistines maintained as a rule intense trade relations. It can be supposed that

the Israelites acquired through these contacts a higher degree of civilization and a greater cultural progress. The future was to show, however, that these contacts had also their disadvantages. The Israelites were, apparently, never conscious of having broken their pledge and violated their promise - at least they appear to have expected that they would not be punished for their failures. From the time of the Exodus the main danger facing the Israelites and later on Judaism in general, was that of contamination by the polytheisms of the neighbouring countries. It is remarkable that in the Antique the Israelites were never attacked nor involved in wars for their religious particularism. As a rule the wars the Israelites had to fight had the same cause as most wars in antique times, viz;- geopolitical expediency. The only record we possess of Jews having been attacked because of their fate was in Persia, i.e. during the period described in the Book of Esther - if this was indeed a historic event and not a legend.

The disadvantages I mentioned just now were mainly represented by the tendency of the Israelites to absorb the idols and the vices of their neighbours. I explained a short while ago what I think must have been God's attitude to the way people, a people, a group of a religious movement approach their moral aims and tasks. But this applies in no way to the Jews ! The gentiles may have vices, and if these take overwhelming possession of these people, it will be their end one way or the other. But Israel is a holy people and this makes it impossible that their vices can be overlooked or condoned. All the peoples of the world can have their particular and private religions, their idols, their ceremonies and their rites - but Israel can never get away with any trespasses, any faith system which recognizes any other godhead instead of or next to the One God of Israel. For the Jews are a holy people, let me repeat,

As I have already indicated, Israel's enemies never became less and the wars came never to an end. Their troubles came not only from outside, but also from inside. There was constant strife and frequent fighting among the Israelites themselves. I cannot believe that God ever intervened directly in any of the outside wars or in any of the internal difficulties, except when, due to some unforeseen situation or an excusable miscalculation a situation arose which would have endangered the very existence of His people and would have brought on a breakdown of the scheme He had programmed for Israel's future.

Every time Israel had successfully overcome a crisis, God must have expected that His people would at last have learned their lesson from the analysis of their mistakes, and that they would henceforth correct their habits and change their outlook - but this was hardly ever the case. Fortunately, eternal patience is one of the divine attributes. God knew that the final outcome, the definite fate of Israel, would be as He had planned, promised - and programmed. He did not punish the Israelites, did not sold them, did not slay them. The fate of the Jewish people was evolving as expected and programmed by God, but the many probabilities which were possible and the hurdles which they erected God allowed to evolve historically and logically. The irregularities in the moral behaviour of the Jews and the neglect of their ethical duties brought on events and often disasters even, which must have been interpreted by the Jews, and were explained to them by their prophets and seers as a direct result of the people's misdeeds, as a punitive interference of God.

12. An Excursion into the Science of History.

Before I go into details relating to the further history of the Jews, I want you to agree with me that Jewish history started long before the Exodus from Egypt. Having agree with this, let me make a few general remarks - which I think have become necessary - so that it will be easier for you to understand certain view points I have formed for myself about certain facets of Jewish history.

Whatever we hear about about great personalities or important epochs in mankind's history is rarely the result of a scientific analysis or a researched evaluation, but is mostly nothing but a plain and simple literary product. When we deal with 'historic' personalities we are not rarely offered an uncontrolled and unchecked popular history which projects the concepts and wishes of the writer back into certain past historic material and he then transforms what is long past and over to a wishfilled projection into the present. History should be report and analysis of the past; it should be presented and explained within the frame and in the light of the conditions, the concepts and the values of its own time; any greatness granted to any protagonist should be based on the evaluation of the views of the past participants and should not be viewed through our own spectacles. This measuring rod appears to have been applied by modern historians, who are in consequence very parsimonious with decorating historic figures with the badge of 'greatness'.

It is preached that one should as a rule not make use of the past in the interest of the present, especially not, if this is done in support of one's often preconceived ideas. I feel this advice is justified, and that it has contributed to the profundity of historic analysis. Even though history is granted the rank of a 'science', we should carefully restrict this respectful title to areas in which research stands on solid ground, for we must accept it as a fact that much of what is seen as an 'essential historicity' of the past, is in fact only fable manifold repeated and reproduced and considered genuine by favour of its unexpected multiplicity of 'sources'. History is not a series of fancy tales, a story of heroes and crimes, of adventures and wars. The history of a people reports facts, and should without exception contain only truths which will remain valid for every generation which follows. I want to add also that the history of the Jewish people has an additional unique qualification insofar that one of the factors which has determined Jewish fate - in a positive as well as a negative direction - is the inescapable truth that it is a nation with a history as well as a nation of history, and that its unchallengeable past supremacy indisputably and automatically points to a destiny with future. Even though Jewish history is a factual and a national history, it is intrinsically associated with the Jewish religion, and this makes the introduction of a metaphysical element into the evaluation of its history inevitable. Let me add that this is possibly a welcome ingredient. A certain greatness of the Jewish national history rests on the fact that it is essentially an optimistic self-creating, but not essentially self-centred history. It projects its own and mankind's origin in Eden. It continues in a logic progress with its growth into a nation. It can boast of a direct appointment with and from God. And finally it has the singular experience of its rebirth into an independent state. This historic uniqueness conveys eschatologically a right and the key, because with it is carried the assurance that Israel will be instrumental in engineering the establishment of the promised 'Kingdom of God on Earth'. The vicissitudes which the Jewish people has experienced on its tortuous road between one station to the other on its painful and burdensome march to see an eternal promise come true, I interpret as tests and as corrections, as proofs and as adjustments, as the giro compass in the Jewish destiny which is keeping the Jews on the true track and in the right direction. Israel as the "Chosen People" has every hope and prospect that the ongoing historic process will one day lead to the completion of its destiny and task.

Let me add another thought of mine. Every time the Israelites were exposed to great hardship, already as slaves in Egypt or as nomads in the desert, they must have built up within themselves, with and through these experiences, a deep sense of religiosity and a strong feeling for history. Because they became the 'People of God' they claimed to be the friends of God. This gave them the determination and the strength to take into their stride all the physical sufferings they encountered and all

the mishaps they faced in the mostly metaphysically fulfilling knowledge that they were a special people, an exclusive people chosen by God. Their special position in the world - in its painful as well as in its exalted perimeters - was due to the fact, that God had imposed on them the strict moral laws which, although these in no way reduced their load of troubles and their share of difficulties, did grant them a certain sense of security under a divine umbrella, and an assured remuneration in the world to come. Unfortunately, say so many, and if you are of the same opinion as I, you may say "fortunately", all these experiences, all this knowledge and all these sufferings did not reduce their arrogance which refused to allow other civilizations and different cultures to presume that they were and are in any way superior to the Jewish ones.

The scientific developments of our generation threaten the very existence of mankind. Ours is today the first generation which takes into account the possibility that this may be the last one, or that at the best a few more might follow. We Jews carry within us the knowledge that it is impossible that the fate of the world and of mankind can be ended without an achievement. We interpret the changes and the climate in a more positive and optimistic sense. We are conscious of the fact that we have now entered a new cycle of history and that we are face to face today with a newly growing up cultural climate.

13. "We want to have our own King"

In your optimism you may feel inclined to think that the Israelites were living in the Holy Land under conditions which one would label in our days as 'democratic'. You would not be too far wrong if you take in comparison the very cruel and autocratic conditions which generally prevailed in the then known world of some 3000 years ago; for relative to these the Israelites were definitely better off. They elected their tribal chiefs, as I told you a while ago, and these formed themselves then into a tribal council which dealt with the various intertribal affairs. From among the members of the tribal council a supreme chieftain was appointed whenever it became necessary, especially in the case of a war, to have the guidance of a powerful leader. Every one of the tribal chiefs presided over his own open court - weekly or daily according to the need - in which every man or woman of the tribe could appear and ask for judgement. I think this was an admirable democratic system. However, if you want to qualify my definition as democratic,

you may do so by calling it a "theocratic democracy" . As a rule there was always some major or minor prophet who claimed to speak in the name of God. Only Judaism knows the institution of prophets although there are exceptions: Bileam, mentioned in the Bible was an acknowledged prophet of a pagan people. Also Zoroaster was designated a prophet - and in post biblical times Muhammad is the most influential bearer of such a title. The prophet claims to have the task and the power to transmit to the people a message he has received directly from God. How the message has been received for transmission varies from prophet to prophet, but as a rule it is an immediate experience through which these men and women live a transcendental reality. The in most cases very respected prophets of Israel were often excellent psychologists and well versed in the current political events and currents. They usually preached sermons full of awesome threats and warnings, but very often they also gave excellent advice to the people of the land. For this reason they could often exert considerable influence - and they knew very well how to use and how to apply their power. They were not rarely important cogs in the political intrigues and the demagogic games which were then, as much as they are today, facts of life among the ruling families, the leaders of the country, and of those who aspired to or feared for an important position.

It may have been in the wake of a spontaneous movement or it may have been the outcome of a politically inspired intrigue, but the time appears to have been right for the people to clamour that a permanently appointed leader in the person of a king be placed at the head of the nation. As you know already, an over-all leader had initially been appointed for a restricted purpose and a limited period only, but when the Philistine threat grew and it was feared might endanger the very existence of the Israelitic nation, the need arose for a permanently installed and a more powerfully enabled leadership. It had become the general conviction that a monarchy would be the best arrangement for Israel and would solidify all the tribes into one nation. All the surrounding nations were ruled by kings, and the Israelites may have seen it not only as a matter of urgency but also of prestige to have a king too, even though this would mean that the power would have to be concentrated into the hands of an undisputed authority. To make the choice easier and the decision less painful, the government of the Land of Israel was made to appear as something predestined and as

something which had already been divinely predicted: for it was written in the Bible that "...when you come into your land....and you say ...: 'let us appoint over us a king as all the surrounding nations do', then you shall be free to set a king over yourself, one chosen by the Lord your God". This is written in the Book of Deuteronomy (17:14-20) I have the gut reaction that this is too pat. Don't you think too that this passage, that this prophecy has been written long after the event, that it had been inserted by an interested political party ? For you will recall my having mentioned that the 5th book, the Book of Deuteronomy had been composed in writing a few centuries after the first kings had been appointed and anointed.

In any case: whatever the reasons and whatever the background, the Israelites got their king too. All the intriguing and all the politicking which led to the choice of the first king - and thereafter of everyone of them who followed - was, of course, done in the name of God. I do not think that He minded this at all. The Israelites could do their politicking and their electioneering, their administrating and their governing as and how they liked, as this did not and could not dislocate God's long-range plans. If the Israelites chose wrongly or wisely, they had to carry the responsibility on their own shoulders and they had to feel the effects on their own backs.

The first king to rule the Israelites was Saul. The prophet Samuel had chosen him at the behest of God. Scriptures leave us in no doubt that Saul was in most ways a mediocre king, but he was and is not to be blamed, as Saul was followed by David to compensate for his predecessors shortcomings in the fields of administration and foreign policy, as well with regard to personality, intelligence and charm, although the friendliest biblical historians could not totally hide and completely cover up all of his personal wrongdoings. We learn from the Holy Books that the Court manipulators had trained David to be Saul's successor because God had so ordered. And so the Saga goes on. Henceforth we are told of every king who ruled over Israel, that he had been appointed by and anointed in the name of God - and for this reason his kingly person - and that of every king and emperor until our own days - was declared 'holy' and inviolable.

In the course of the years, the decades and the centuries the Israelites settled in the Holy Land were ruled by a long line of chiefs, judges, kings, and an impressive series of prophets conveyed their spiritual messages in the name of God. Some of the prophets were effective and respected leaders; their influence on Judaism persists to this day. However, of the vast majority of a most likely huge number of prophets and seers of the centuries following the conquest of the Land of Canaan until that land was lost forever, no trace is left - most likely with justification. None of the leaders of Israel, neither the chieftains nor the judges nor the kings were in any way of a remarkable calibre. The Bible, as well as the various books of the biblical canon, never hesitate to point out this fact. This is possibly done, I think, so that their weaknesses and failures might serve as a lesson to me and to you. In addition this prevents also any possible tendency to see in any of these historic figures or religious leaders in the Bible holy traits or material to be venerated as saints. I see in this also an explanation, why God has neither then nor now been willing - mind you well, I did not say "has not been able" - to institute at once and without delay that era of redemption, of salvation, of purity and hope which had been the primary reason why He created man and why He placed Him into the world. For nobody could deny that notwithstanding all opportunities and all facilities the Jewish people itself had not yet grown to that moral height for which it had been elected from among all other peoples. If you survey not only the events but analyse in depth the elements and the motives which are active in the history of the Jewish people, you will find that on its own the Children of Israel could not achieve the required maturity, and that no leader of the right calibre emerged who could have shown the way. It is a fact that there was hardly ever among them a leader who could be called an exceptional personality or an exemplary character; I would go even further and say that a truly good, praiseworthy, benighted and morally superior individual never arose since Moses to take on the leadership.

< You will have noticed that I use "rather indiscriminately" some time the name 'I s r a e l i t e s' and at other times that of "J e r w s". I do not do this for any particular reason in mind; for our purposes and my intentions these two designations can be interchanged. Once upon a time there

was a difference, it is true. Under King Rehobam the kingdom which David had founded was divided into two parts, the southern 'Kingdom of Judah' consisting of the tribes of Yehuda and Benjamin who had remained loyal to the House of David, and the northern 'Kingdom of Israel' made up from the remaining tribes. When in the year 721 BCE the Kingdom of Israel finally fell and disappeared, only the Kingdom of Judah survived. Henceforth the national name of 'Israelites' was replaced by that of 'Y e h u d i', i.e. by that of "J e w". >

14. David the Great and Solomon the Wise .

King followed king in Israel. Shaul was succeeded by David, and David by Solomon, who in turn was followed by a series of kings. As I have already mentioned in general terms, none of these kings was a truly great personality, and none of them can be said to have possessed exceptional human qualities. None of them can be seen as a representative or even as a precursor, as an inspirator of that kind of leadership of which Israel was then and thereafter so much in need. None of them was fit to serve as a shining example nor suitable to guide the Jews into that moral perfection and that spiritual purity for which they had been chosen.

" Oho ", you will shout now, intending to make me stop. " Don't go any further with your defamatory remarks ", you want to tell me. " What are you telling us,? About what and whom are you talking ? Have you forgotten the great and brave King David ? Have you never heard of the clever and wise King Solomon ? Weren't they the best, the greatest, the wisest of men of their times and for many generations thereafter, and possibly even today ?"

Believe me, my children, I have heard and read at least as much as all of you about David and Solomon, but I am not inclined to believe everything of what I have heard and read about them. For I am deeply convinced that what is reported in your history books and what is so extensively described in the biblical books 'Samuel', 'Kings', and 'Chronicles' is far from

true. It is simply impossible that all that is true and correct. David was a bloody tyrant and knew no mercy. He was a selfish and power-hungry king who made extensive and ruthless use of the 'god-appointed' position he occupied. In his condemnable deeds, in his often criminal behaviour, he had the support of his devoted army chiefs, his spittle-licking courtiers as well as his court-appointed prophet, who led him to disobey the moral laws not only preached by the Torah but also by the customs of the land and the spirit of the time. With their support he did whatever he could in the furtherance of his schemes and for the glorification of his own person and name.

And Solomon ? He was not even the constitutionally entitled heir to ascend the throne vacated by David. He acquired the crown through intrigues and murders with the help of his mother who exerted such great influence and power over the ultimately senile David. Solomon was a spoiled child and a self-centred brat. He could not have been as intelligent and as wise as he is painted to have been, as otherwise he could not have believed with such eagerness, and would not have accepted with such readiness the flatterers and the poetasters at his court and what they dutifully whispered into his ears or loudly proclaimed in speeches and songs. He was a leecher as his father, and although one may accept that he had to marry many of his innumerable wives for reasons of politics and in the interest of the state, he kept up a constantly replenished large harem of women who had caught his fancy or whom his courtiers thought might stimulate his faded desires. He cherished grandiose ideas for himself and his country. The Jerusalem which he had inherited from his father was not much more than a large village-sized conglomeration of huts and sheds, until then accepted by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had not long before lived in tents and huts in the desert as suitable and comfortable enough. But Solomon had learned from travellers and courtiers, and especially from his foreign-wives, of the palaces and temples of which even princes and kings of the neighbouring small and insignificant countries could boast. In his vainglory he felt his person not sufficiently appreciated in that primitive environment, and he wanted to build in Jerusalem a palace more grandiose than those earned by any other king or god. In addition he was determined to erect also a temple to the glory of the God of Israel which would be the envy of the entire world. He had to include in his plans such an impressive temple

not only because God was the centre and the soul of Israel, but possibly also because he wanted to disarm any criticism and unrest among his people which his extravagant life style might eventually have caused. It was impossible to find an Israelite architect with experience in the designing and constructing such a kind of buildings. Neither were there among the Jews craftsmen who could work in wood and stone, in metals and textiles; but it was not difficult to induce, against suitable payment, of course, such types of experts and craftsmen from abroad to enter the king's temporary service.

Although Solomon had been successful in enlarging the range of trade relations with the neighbouring countries, and had thereby brought about a considerable degree of social and financial improvement in his country, there arose the usual problems with which ambitious kings and rulers have always been faced. There was by far not enough money in the state treasury to pay for such an extended development program, and although he could, with the skillful help of his spiritual advisers, take hold of the gold and silver which had accumulated over the years in the temple treasury, there was still never enough money available to cover the huge expenses. He found a way out by forcing the population to hand over all their gold, silver and precious stones, along with all other valuables they could not hide, by vesting his orders in the explanation and with the excuse that he was acting on specific orders of God Almighty. The courtiers and the politicians spread the word that those who hesitated and varicated with their contributions were liable to be severely punished - by God. But this was not all ! He imposed a still greater burden on the people by recruiting a large army of workers from among the Israelites and the peoples which his father had subdued. More than one hundred thousand workers were employed. They had to toil in the quarries; they were engaged in transporting the stones and trees which had to be carried to Jerusalem - at times from abroad - and they had to labour on the construction site.

Don't overlook that all the people, the simple people, were without exception illiterate and that they were, in addition, very superstitious. The priests threatened them with the ire of God and their folklore kept them in constant fear of the everpresent spirits and the fearful demons around them. And when Solomon made it known in plain and straight words that he had been ordered by God Himself to build Him a temple, and when the priests

and the prophets of the land unleashed an extensive propaganda campaign to this effect - which was made more effective still by the insinuation that Solomon possessed great magic knowledge and had acquired total power over the demons - the people did not dare to object or to revolt. For many a long year they slaved to enrich and to support Solomon and to contribute whatever they could spare to help him in his ambitious plans.

" How can you know all these things ? As far as we know nothing of all what you have just now told us can be found anywhere in the Scriptures" , you are sure to ask, and I think I can discover a trace of exasperation in your voices. You are right ! Nothing of all what I have written down just now about David and Solomon in such outspoken critical terms, can be found in any of the biblical books or in any treatise of ancient Jewish history, because Solomon, his followers and his successors have purposefully and successfully falsified the history of their days. They have stealthily and diligently changed the true facts. Solomon must have engaged a large army of such 'hagiographers' < this is the name given to that brand of history writers who invent most fanciful stories, fabricate most complex tales, erase and suppress whatever might slight or stain the name of the person they want to paint in brilliant colours. *. In other words: those men of the Antique who compiled the history of David and Solomon have lied, and the bibliographies they have published of these two kings were written with the intent to make us admire them as true political, spiritual and cultural giants - but what they have written is nothing but fanciful inventions or at best a long list of "transmuted facts."

If you take the time to read attentively the sermons and the harangues of the prophets, you will gain a better understanding of the times in which the Israelites lived some 3000 years ago, what kind of leaders were placed over them, what sort of kings and rulers they had. You will find that most all of them failed to be that superior kind of human material which God must have expected them to be and to become. And mind you : also the writings of the prophets had already been censored; very much was corrected in them when the books of the biblical canon, which report the history of the Jews between the First and Second Temple periods, were published by the scribes of the very powerful priestly class. About this I shall have to say some more later on. Once you keep these facts in mind, and as soon as you learn to read between the lines and behind the words of the prophets, you will begin to suspect that things referring to the kingly rulers in the Books of 'Samuel' and 'Kings' had not been as they are described, and you might not anymore

be reluctant to accept my rather negative opinion about these two prominent kings of Israel. Should you still not be convinced, and should you ask for more evidence, let me invite you to recall what I intended to be the red thread visible throughout this tale of mine, viz:- that God had from the onset wanted Israel to grow into a people with superior qualities, entrusted with the task to bring His message to all the peoples and nations of the world, to teach humanistic knowledge to all and to spread His ethic laws among mankind everywhere. It had since ever been the divine plan and program that as soon as Israel itself was ready to live under and with such rules and laws, and as soon it had given up the errors and the sins it had committed again and again over the millenia, then all the peoples of the earth would not have anymore the excuse and could not hesitate any longer, and they in turn would also have to accept in full God's laws and commands. It is true that the other nations, the other peoples in the world, had a far worse record, had committed far greater transgressions of all and every divine law; they were not burdened to the same degree as the Jews because they had never taken upon themselves the same obligations as Israel. When this had been accomplished, when Israel fulfilled its duties and the "goyim" recognized their obligation to take on Israel's spiritual leadership, the blissful days would have arrived which mankind had every right to expect; then it would come to pass that Redemption and Salvation would be theirs at last. But all this did not happen; none of this did come to pass. Although the Jews lived now in their own country and although they had by the knowledge and the wisdom granted to them gained the strength and the agility to survive all the presenting misfortunes and dangers, had learned to adapt to the threats and the temptations which have confronted them over the millenia, they had failed to face the challenge and to take hold of the opportunity presented to them. They had not purged themselves of their weaknesses, had not gained the respect of the world in which they lived. Their values had not been recognized. I can only explain the failure in the history of the Jewish people to reach at that stage a safe and satisfactory existence in their home country and to be governed by and to be satisfied with a morally irreproachable rule of law, by the refusal, by the stubbornness, by their unwillingness, by their unreadiness to overcome its faults, its greed, and by its escape into the unconvincing explanation that it had only the wish to be like all the other nations. This very same negative attitude, this very same inertia, this very same blindness was going to be repeated by, and to serve as a bad augury for future generations too.

I know quite well, my dear children, that it is difficult for you to take all this in, that you are reluctant to believe my words. But listen to me for a few moments more. Have you forgotten that also in our own days history is fabricated by the pens of certain history writers and by order of certain dictators and politicians? Do you know that entire chapters in existing history, and that large tracts in long ago published history books are from time to time removed by order of the ruling men in the Kremlin? Had Hitler survived as the "glorious Fuehrer" and to us today most unimaginable

halo and a now most unbelievable nimbus would since long have been woven around his figure and his personality; stories would have been set in circulation about his noble and celestial birth, about his glorious deeds and his infallible wisdom and so on - and future generations would have accepted such fanciful lies as 'gospel truth'. On the other hand there are still today Nazis alive, who are allowed to write that Jews have never been maltreated, that nobody was ever killed, gased, burned in the Concentration Camps - and this in the face of the many survivors of these Camps confronting them. Do you realize how powerful directed propoganda can be even today ? Whenever you have the chance to do so, make a study of the unlimited hate propoganda of the world press and most other newsmedia against Israel. The way the news is presented, the inuendos with which it is speced, it will easily persuade 99% of the gullible public. And the work entrusted to the newscasters in the gates and on the marketplaces of the ancient Jerusalem must have been far easier to complete.

Such is the strength of propoganda - and of the stupidity of men.

You should also not overlook the fact that in our days nearly everybody can read, that most everybody follows the news and the happenings of the day on the TV screen, that everything which has happened anywhere and which is of the slightest interest and importance, has been eternalized in print, on film or on tape. People are today very well informed about what is and was going on. On the other hand it is a fact that not only in the days of David and Solomon but also long before and after them, only a handful of people could read and write, and that, therefore, only very few people were aware of what the 'historians' and the hagiographers of the day did produce for 'eternity'. What we know of the greatness of David and the wisdom of Solomon derives from the history written by these flatterers at the royal court, by those interested parties and by those bootlickers who had made every effort to please the kings. You can take it for granted that few, if any, of the "Psalms of David" and the "Sayings of Solomon" have in fact been produced by them. It is a regrettable fact that we have no other information about the 'historic' matters reported in the Scriptures, nor do we have descriptions from any other source. All that we know of that period of Jewish history comes from the canonical books which have been added to the Bible. We do not have any other documented history. And as neither the sweat nor the deprivations of the forced labour, neither the confiscation of the properties of a large part of the population, nor the kind of payment, if any, which the workers may have received for their labour, are ever mentioned in the history books referring to the many years of the ambitious building program of King Solomon, you will have to agree at least, that some of the history of that epoch is not complete. Do you know that there is much evidence that Solomon had seen to it that in the "Holy Temple erected to the glory of the Most High God" a room, a special closed room, had been built above the Holiest of Holies, i.e. above the most sacred part of the Temple, in which the idols, the statues of the idolatrous gods were

'accomodated' so that Solomon's foreign wives could pray in comfort - and in democratic spirit - to their own gods ? Can you imagine anything more sacrilegious ? This was an arrangement ordered by the Great Solomon. This could have only happened with the connivance of the contemporary priests and prophets who appear to have made every effort to please Solomon, the king of Israel. You will forgive me if I given in and add here a footnote, as I cannot refrain from having a good laugh: "By Order of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel" of today no Jew is allowed to enter the space on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, now ~~the~~ site of Muslim worship, as his feet may inadvertently step on that very spot which the Holiest of Holies, whose exact topography has not been determined, had once upon a time occupied. And what is still more impressive evidence of modern chief-rabbinical reverence is the strict order civil and military pilots have received, never to fly over the Temple Mount; the reason is the same, viz:- that they might by their overflight inadvertently desecrate the place where the holy place containing the Tabernacle once stood - along with the idols of Somomon's wives.

I hope, that after all the arguments which I have brought forth you may, to some degree at least, be willing to accept my personal views of the cultural, social and religious conditions in the Holy Land at this point in history; but this may not prevent you, with justification, from enquiring "what had God to say" about all this. Why did He allow such things to go on ? Why did He permit such a wastage, such a cruelty, such a demagogy to take place in His Holy Name ?

As I have already explained to you under similar circumstances, I want to report also here that in accordance with my conception of God, of the world and of Israel, I find it quite understandable that God did not interfere, that He did not want to give any orders, advice or instructions. God looked on and watched what was going on. Hopefully He may have expected that the program was functioning well, that mankind would succeed in placing itself onto the right path and into the right direction. I have come to the conclusion that this must indeed ~~have~~ been the divine attitude, because Solomon and his priests had given out the ~~parole~~ - and to every appearance all their efforts had been directed to this effort - that the splendid temple had been erected to the glory of God, and that it might induce the Israelites as well as the nations everywhere, not only the men and women of the neighbouring countries but of all the then known world, to acquire an ~~elect~~ sense of duty, to show a greater inclination to turn into good people and

to become more devoted followers and even lovers of the God of Israel. In short, it was in the theme of things arranged by God, that Israel should be permitted without hindrance and without threats, entirely on its free will and directed by a logical evolution of the decourse of history from one event to the other and in a chance-like auspice of whatever happened,, to do what it thought was right to do in the fulfillment of its destiny. According to this viewpoint of mine Solomon with and by all his faults and extravagances, his good and bad features, was only a tool to shape the Jewish people's fate and the pilot to steer it towards its future.

There is no doubt in my mind that God would have interfered, first in the form of some suitable warnings and if necessary with some adequate punishment, should He have judged that Solomon had done something fundamentally wrong, something unacceptable under any circumstance, or that he had severely damaged and endangered the future of the Jewish people.

In the following pages you will learn that in effect things did not evolve as Solomon had planned, and that time would come, when God had to give, through a set of prophets many stern and repeated warnings because Israel had started on a dangerous and apparently irreversible course, and it had become necessary for things to be changed. And when the Jews, who lived in the centuries which followed Solomon's death, did not maintain that right direction in which they could expect the promised completion, perfection and salvation, God struck them. He struck them hard. He made them experience much pain, loss and humiliation. He made them truly and deeply realize how dangerous far they had been slipping into sin and failure.

15. A short lecture about prophets.

In the 2-3 centuries following the reign of Solomon a multitude of very eloquent and perspicacious, warning and threatening, begging and promising prophets emerged, often in series, among the Israelites. In their powerful sermons they warned the people that in view of their failure punishment by God was inevitable. God's patience was not unlimited and they had been given enough warnings so far. Along with the warnings and admonitions the prophets offered also the certainty that God was sure to pardon their failures should they 'return' to Him,

should they provide enough proof of having realized how much they had deviated by the laws and ethics prescribed by God. We must not overlook that the leaders in Israel continued to be anything but good examples to follow; many of them had adopted a life style which attempted to imitate that prevailing in neighbouring countries. No wonder that the populace endeavoured to follow their example. And so it came to pass that the Jews relapsed into religious customs and practices which were impossible to tolerate from any point of view. They had adopted an every great range of religious cults from their neighbours; they also began to offer large sacrifices to the gods. Often they offer human sacrifices to soothe the ire of these foreign gods or to gain their favours. It happened that such Jews offered even their own children to the bloodthirsty Moloch. Let us not hide the painful truth that the Jews of the first half of the millennium preceding the new era had for all practical purposes abandoned their basic religious faith, the creed that been given to them at Sinai and which had been transmitted to them by their forefathers. The Jews of the 2-3 centuries following Solomon's death persuaded themselves that it was easier to identify and to obey the visible pagan gods than the stern and unchangeable orders of the invisible God of Moses.

I suppose that you have since some time understood from the way in which I tell the story of the Jews - and most likely you have found this out already by yourselves - that God's methods are wonderful, and that He works in a way which we mortals cannot foresee, but which we have to view, once we understand them, with an overpowering sense of awe and emotion. God has chosen the Children of Israel as His people. He has passed through the fire of sufferings and had kept them in the vice of painful humiliations in order to render them fit for the honour of being the keepers and harbingers of a special knowledge of God and to ready them for the task of leading the other peoples of the world towards the fulfillment of the world order foreseen by God as the ultimate aim of mankind. They had on do many occasions shown that they were weak and forgetful, but, as you know, God wanted them to grow and mature through their own recognition of their weaknesses and faults, by the application of their own efforts and strength. In the rare occasion when the situation threatened to degenerate most dangerously He did, therefore, address the Israelites through the mouth and the inspiration of prophets and seers, of wise and worthy men and women, to warn them off their wrong path and to lead them back to that righteousness He demanded. God taught the prophets to explain the Jews that the trend which had grown with regard to the religious cults imported from the outside, was greatly responsible for the deterioration in the character of the Israelites, and that a continued benevolent attitude from His side was no more indicated. He made the prophets, therefore, wage a determined fight against idolatry, against the brutalization which these cults had induced, against the self-indulgence and the amorality which had gripped the people.

Of course, God did not concentrate His watchfulness, His love, His kindness and His care on Israel alone. He is the Father and God of all humankind, as you know. But if you follow the history of the world, the history of mankind, the history of the religions of the world, you will soon find that somehow or other all which has been going on, all which has been happening over the ages relates in some way to the Jewish people - or could be seen to relate thus, in case your mind is attuned to this wavelength, in conformity with and conjecture of some kind of law of probability. Should you, in the frame of this hypothesis of mine, try to fit the remarkable developments which took place in various places around the world during the period of which I have just now been telling, viz:- the 6th and 7th centuries BCE, you will discover that at that 'moment' in history, contemporaneously, and at the same time independently from each other, men arose in different parts of the globe who steered mankind into new spiritual paths. In Israel this role was taken on by Jesajah and Jeremiah, in Greece by Socrates and Plato, in China by Tze and Confucius, in Persia by Zoroaster and in India by Buddha. All these great and god-inspired men preached new values for the world, spoke of inner peace, outlined ethical conduct and offered eternal hopes.

Do you want to see in this a coincidence? Or might this have been a new set of alternative divine programming which had come into functioning?

16. The Heritage of Solomon .

The divine interference at which I have hinted a short while ago, may have been the outcome of Solomon's policy which in the course of time did create an intolerable situation in the eyes of God. On the other hand it may have resulted, as I have hinted, from the fact that Israel was sailing on a route which distantiated it irredeemably from its goal.

At the end of his life King Solomon's realm extended over much conquered territory. The Israelites had thus come into contact with a variety of new peoples who had their own religious cults and a gallery of gods. These, let us concede, were more pleasant to follow and easier to obey than the strict and morally so demanding Jewish God.

Following the death of Solomon, about 930 BCE, Israel was convulsed by two centuries of strife and civil wars. The kingdoms of Israel

and Judah coexisted on uneasy terms; at times they engaged in warfare against each other. In 722 BCE the Assyrians put an end to the Kingdom of Israel and deported its population. The ten tribes making up this kingdom disappeared for ever, and today many claim to be descendants of these "lost Tribes", like the British, the Kashmiris, the Afghans, the Japanese and so on. In 612 BCE Assyria was in turn defeated by the Babylonians, and the Jews were again enslaved. Cyrus, the Persian king, defeated Babylon and in the year 538 BCE he permitted the Jews exiled in Babylon to return to Jerusalem. However, this did not imply that thereby they regained also their total freedom. They had to remain for some further 200 years under the Persian yoke until in the year 332 BCE, when the Persian empire was overthrown by Alexander the Great. But the latter's rule was to last only nine years. After his death the Jews came again under the domination of the hellenized Egyptians, whose Seleucid kings reigned with that kind of harsh hand as was customary in those days. The Jews submitted to their overlords as the conditions were hardly favourable for a revolution; but when one of the Seleucids, Antiochus IV, attempted to hellenize the Jews by force, did they rebel under the leadership of the Macabaeans. Take notice, it required the interference of the conquerors with the religious and cultural heritage of the Jews, for the Jews to take up the fight with their powerful adversary, well knowing that they had very little chance to win and that they would have ultimately to pay for their daring.

Enough for the moment of my hypothesizing.

Let us now proceed and see what happened next.

God had until the above cited appearance of spiritual leaders in various parts of the world, neither overtly nor through their leaders addressed any of the other peoples which populated the earth, as He had apparently wanted these to develop in any way and in any direction they wished and could, as the divine program quite clearly foresaw that they all would either survive separately or disappear for ever. and all would ultimately have to relate to and continue with the spiritual development of Israel. On and off one of the nations would come into the foreground of history, only to disappear again, in due course, from the worldstage, often leaving behind proofs and traces of impressive intellectual and wonderful artistic achievements.

This you may compare to the coming and going of the flora and fauna which proved to be so important and necessary an ingredient to be effective, long after their disappearance, for the fertilization and the invigoration, the improvement and the advancement of the world as a whole. The history of the world means after all species and breeds, cultures and civilizations follow each other; that each perfects itself through the failures of the past and completes itself in the ashes of its predecessors. Line upon line of peoples developed, flourished and acted as was dictated by circumstances encountered and the environment created, because they were not burdened with the task to prove themselves selfless towards others, were not charged either with any moral duty towards mankind's future.

It seems to me - I want to point out to you that I have come to this conclusion purely and simply by hindsight, because nothing and nobody has provided me with an alternate explanation - that God must have, at that decisive epoch changed His approach. The Jewish people were now exposed to new experiences. They were made into a part of and into a cog within the general world history. Henceforth God ceased to talk to Israel in the exclusive way as He has done in the past. The inspirations the prophets and seers could report ceased, their voices were silenced. Instead God made use now of the various gentile nations which had developed in series one after the other and on top of the other and on their own propulsive energies. This process had most likely been already long ago programmed in general terms into the history of mankind, but the program had at this stage developed new proponents and favourable elements which were to be very well suited to bring human civilization forward step by step. One mighty nation after the other grew up, achieved superior power and cultural greatness; it overpowered a preceding great nation and in due course it fell victim to the next arising powerful nation; but they all proved useful for the continued cultural and technical growth of humankind. In the past these partially parallel, partially subsequently appearing civilizations and independently maturing nations, which arose and disappeared in the same or in different parts of the world - but mostly and mainly in the region and the arena of which Israel was a part - had apparently or possibly - you can define it as you wish - been employed by God to attract and influence His Jewish people into the one direction or the other in the way you would blow

about, to one side or the other, a paper boat which floats on the surface of your bathwater. God made use of all these various nations to restrain or to propel Israel, here by a small war or there by a threat of an attack, sometimes by the commercial trends and at others by the cultural currents which evolved in, or which emanated from, different parts of the world. This method of self-effecting programmed guidance had over the centuries, as generation followed generation, proved to be a helpful directive, a corrective and also therapeutic manoeuvre. But it had become less and less effective. I think that God must have concluded that the 'automatic pilot' was not anymore functioning properly and that a stronger hand, a harsher method, a more painful stroke, a direct interference was required in order to teach a lesson to His people Israel, who had over the centuries and generations acquired an unpleasant conception of its own importance and superiority. It is nonsense to say, that "in His ire" He struck His people a severer blow than ever before. A God, like the one I know of, does not get angry. He may be sad. He may be happy. He may be satisfied - but He is always patient and good. A God who gets angry is an impotent God, and this you can under no circumstances say of God. How can you say that God "loses His control", that God "loses His cool", as you young people express yourselves nowadays? When harsh words cannot help, the mildest of fathers will at times use painful methods any time a wayward child deviates from what he has been clearly told is the right path.

The new plan which God had brought into action and operation, and the tools He now used could, of course, have produced, had He so wished, at once the desired effect; but, as I have already told you - and please do not mind if I repeat this again and again - God did and does not want to bring on any solution by any of the forceful means and methods at His disposal, which might appear illogical to an onlooker but could nevertheless, when necessary, be explained away as a miracle. He arranged, instead events in mankind's history, as a dirigent would direct musicians. I do not have to elaborate that He did so in His own way. Powerful nations grew up in the Middle East, one after the other or a few at the same time: the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greek, the Romans and so on. They reacted to and on each other, and most directly or indirectly also finally on Israel.

17. Exiled in Babylon.

In the days of the prophet Ezekiel, which preceded the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, the priestly class had gained great influence and power. It felt called upon to formulate contemporary Jewish thought. The endeavours of the priests and the scribes were successful. They made the laws of the Torah binding and inviolable by declaring that these had been promulgated by God Himself. The Book of Deuteronomy, the 5th of the "Books of Moses" was compiled under the supervision of these priests. They formulated their newly circumscribed theocratic legislation on the facts and on the events as they were now described in the Torah. With the fact that God had rested on the 7th day of the Creation they proved that the Sabbath was a holy day; with the fact that Abraham had sealed his covenant with God with the act of circumcision they reasoned that this operation had henceforth to be binding on all male Jews; by the fact that Abraham had purchased the Cave of Machpela they definitely proved the right of Israel to the Land of Canaan - and so on.

However, the concentration of the spiritual power in the hands of the religious leaders there occurred no improvement in the political, moral and humanitarian conditions within the country. On the contrary; the situation was bound to lead to more strife and to an increase in dishonesty. According to God's plan it appears to have been determined that Israel had to undergo a traumatic shake-up, so that it might be induced to recall its true values.. Within the frame of His program God had allowed Nebukadnezzar, the King of Babylon, to become the mightiest ruler of the then known world. He made him sufficiently powerful, sufficiently avaricious and sufficiently mad to attack, to subdue and to desecrate Israel. In the exuberance of his arrogance he he despoiled in addition the Temple of Jerusalem which Solomon had built. God may have lost interest in that temple as a structure in which He felt Himself reflected, or He may have permitted its destruction as only such a catastrophe would bring home to the Jews the extent of their failing. You will learn in due course that it has always been in the nature of man that he humiliates and pillages a conquered enemy, but the fact that God had

permitted the king of Babylon to desecrate and to destroy the Temple indicates that his might had come to an end. It must have been an additional contributory factor to bring on his downfall and the early destruction of his empire. His fate may serve for all times to come as a warning to those whom it concerns. Nebukadnezar had served as God's tool; he was thereafter discarded, when he had served his purpose. The Children of Israel had never experienced such a severe punishment since they became an independent nation. They were in a veritable state of shock. Their pain and sorrow helped them to gain enough insight to explain to themselves that their lot was the penalty for their misdeeds, and to see in their suffering a punishment from God. The beaten and conquered Jews were deported to Babylon into exile. There they had time and occasion to lament their fate and to promise with due contrition that, having learned their lesson, they would in future behave as God had demanded of them.

18. The Return from Exile.

God, as always and as even today, was ready to trust His repentant children and to forgive their errors. I know quite well that what I have just now said may sound to you quite contradictory to what I have written on the preceding pages. I shall, therefore, for your benefit express in a different way which sounds so simple and cherishing in the plain words I used. It was not a matter of whether God believed their remorse or not, whether He trusted them or not. The fact is that God did not want to break His relationship with Israel. He could not break with them. Once more He must have adjusted, reprogrammed the destiny of the Jewish people - but not more than just necessary; for He never changed His determination to have them grow up to their responsibility by their own cognition. In the hope, therefore, that they would have learned a further lesson, He granted them now a new chance and a fresh opportunity. This opportunity presented itself as one of the miracles which God grants to the Jews from time to time. This miracle happened not long thereafter, as soon as the last of the sinful generation had died off in Babylon. God made Cyrus, the King of Persia, into a powerful ruler, and He implanted into him a sincere friendship for the Jews and a belief in the divine protec-

tion they enjoyed. When you study Jewish history, you will find that on more occasions than you might have thought possible such men were found in the right place when the Jews were in particular need of help and protection. Cyrus of Persia was such a man. He granted extensive executive power to the mature new leadership which had emerged among Babylon's exiled Jews, and he permitted them to return to Jerusalem and granted them there limited self-rule along with the permission to rebuild ~~their~~ country and their temple. He provided them with money and material; he supplied them also with every possible administrative and technical assistance. And it came to pass, in the middle of the 6th century BCE that the Jews returned home from the Babylonian exile which had lasted until the year 538 BCE. Their return to Jerusalem was interpreted as evidence of God's grace and forgiveness. The resulting revival of the religious atmosphere was again dominated by the priestly class. Esra and Zerubabel, the leaders of the returnees succeeded in creating a definite theocratic state. Both, philosophy and theology had undergone a change. During the Babylonian exile the Jews had had intimate contact with the Zoroastrian religion and had adopted many of the precepts of that creed. They took over the concept of a Satan as a spiritual adversary of God and as an enemy of mankind; they acquired the dualistic principle of the opposing trends of good and evil, of a heaven and hell as localities where after death rewards and punishments will be handed out; they accepted the idea of a "Last Judgement" and the ideology of a Messiah.

But do not think that all the Jews had returned to Jerusalem. Only a fraction had come back. The greater part of the Jews preferred to stay on in Babylon, where life was more pleasant, more luxurious and more comfortable. And above all, also business was much more profitable there. You are surprised, are you not? Would you ever have expected that after all the lamentations, complaints, tears, prayers and promises there could have been Jews who would forego the opportunity to be free, to come home from captivity and to live in their own country? You are unable to understand how the majority of them did prefer to remain for ever strangers in the midst of a rarely friendly and hardly hospitable foreign country. Let me confide in you that this is a phenomenon which has disturbed also me a great deal, for this was not the first time nor the last one that this has happened in Jewish history. The Rabbis of the Talmud had gained the impression from the interpretation of

certain biblical passages, th only one in fifty, that is a miserable 2% of the Israelites, who had been living at the time in Egypt had joined the Exodus led by Moses. The other 98% had preferred to stay behind. They must have owned good houses, comfortable jobs and profitable businesses. This does indicate to me that the picture I had formed for myself of the social conditions of the Israelites had been wrong, that not all of them could have been slaves after all ? Apparently this had been within the range of God's possible, it not in fact as fateful programmed factors which have since ever marked all Jewish history. And who are we to argue about it ? But if you go deeper into the meaning of such a divine program, you will come to realize that it indicates in fact a very masterful policy. For those very same people, who refused to leave with Moses or to come back from Babylon, human material of which the Israelites could have made good use, would not have been of great help, or in any way a specific asset, to the people who emigrated from Egypt, or to those who returned from Babylon to be reformed into a nation and to rebuild Jerusalem under the difficult and dangerous conditions they were to encounter, be it in the desert be it among the ruins of Jerusalem. And I want to extend my reasoning a little further: God having selected and educated a people like ours, He must have made sure that there grew up among them in each generation a human material which could and should - and this must have been in God's plan - benefit, enoble and enrich also the other nations of the world, into which the assimilating and converting Jews were steadily submerging in a constant flow. I have the dream that this heritage might one day awaken in the humankind which has benefitted from the supply of Jewish genes, a memory of duty, of belonging, of thankfulness to the Jewish people. This time has so far not come, as you yourselves know only too well. There is still very little respect, and so far also no thankfulness in the hearts of the other peoples, the "goyim". Or am I mistaken ? Has a spark just now been lighted in some of them ?

It might seem to me that I may appear too optimistic in the eyes of most of my contemporaries of today, but at the time of the Rabbis I would certainly have been laughed out of court as the following passage in the Talmud shows: "Hated to God are you, Babylonian Jews. Would you have returned in great numbers, Judaea would have become indestructible and unconquerable a force - but now

it has become weak and vulnerable. "

No !, my dear children, this has not been written in our own days but some 2000 years ago.

19. Of Politics - The Jewish Weakness.

Without cessation wars continued to be waged among the powerful nations of the then known world. One empire replaced the other. In some way or other Israel was involved in all that went on agitating and changing its region. Not only were the Jews affected by the geopolitical disputes which were the usual causes of the wars fought among the neighbouring nations - and in which Israel was not rarely also an actively interested participant - but they were inevitably also pulled into the maelstrom of the cultural currents which pervaded and greatly affected that world. This applies in particular to the all-dominating Hellenism which after the rise to power of Alexander the Great had enveloped all the Near and Middle East. What Hellenism had to offer could not fail to be immensely attractive to the intellectual strata of the Jewish people; but it appealed in particular to the young people, for it provided a very pleasant way of life and it transmitted a very optimistic philosophy of one's existence. But the leadership of Israel perceived in Hellenism only a spiritual desert, a theological trap and a national timebomb. The reaction to the upsurging cultural, political, sociological and theological currents, which began to infiltrate into Jerusalem from all directions, was the division of the population into culturally clearly outlined and intellectually strictly separated parties which partitioned the Jews into deeply divided and bitterly hostile camps. Politics became an important issue and also the poison which was going to cause enormous damage to the Jews. One group, perhaps the largest national party, perceived the true values of Jewish existence exclusively in the undeviating adherence to the principles of their faith as had been laid down in the Torah and interpreted by the Rabbis. Their fanaticism was such that they were willing and ready to sacrifice their lives in the pursuit of their goal to see every Jew follow their religious guidelines. This aim they tried to achieve by fighting without restraint for sup-

remacy within the nation. The followers of this orthodox-conservative group were deeply separated from, and engaged in bloody fight with, the no less numerically strong and politically much engaged Jews with liberal and modernistic aspirations, who made national unity no less an important item on the list of their national priorities and activities.

I cannot tell you, if this was the first time in the history of the Jewish people that a powerful political organization had come into being, whose members were willing to offer their lives in the defense of the God of Israel and His Torah, who fought against the introduction of any kind of reformatory trends, and who strictly believed in the sanctity of the laws which had been promulgated by Moses. I know quite well that there had always existed individuals or groups or sects, who had secluded themselves in the desert or in the mountains in order to better obey the ritual laws, or who had isolated themselves to avoid exposure to the corrupting tendencies of modernity, but here we deal with a strong, dedicated, quasi maniacal political party which made sustained efforts to take over the leadership of the country. If you view this development which dominated the political arena some 2000 years ago, from the point of view that fundamentally it represented the active application and the intensive propagation of God's word and will, you might have to interpret the situation which I have described, as a welcome sign and as a satisfying indication that some progress had at last been made on the road to salvation. I cannot say whether God considered these goings-on in the same light, but if so, He cannot have been of your opinion for long, or He must have concluded that the time was not ripe and that the basic ideology had got derailed; for the piety of these religious groups which had originally been pure, selfless and honest in the missionary-like endeavour to persuade and to attract their fellowmen, was soon to degenerate into fanaticism and intolerance. The inevitable fights for supremacy in the land which ensued between the various parties, among the learned and the zealots, the moderns and the conservatives, turned into fratricidal wars, in which brother killed brother, in which hatred knew no limits, and in which all the most basic rules of decency were trampled underfoot.

These very same Jews, who strove for religious purity in Israel, have to be blamed, that the political argumentation did not stay within civilized limits but had turned into a bloody and merciless war of Jew against

Jew. It must make you also sad to learn that these religious zealots proclaimed loud and without shame that they were acting in the name and with the consent of God. Do not get too indignant ! You should realize that there has never been a war in the last few thousands of years, in which each of the combatants did not claim to fight in the name of God. But in the case of these Jews their punishment was unavoidable, because by their unjustified assumption of God's protection and by their sacrilegious ~~use~~ use of God's name, they were induced to misinterpret their supposedly invincible position in the world of internal and international politics to boast about their unusual strength and to rely too much on their powerful arms. Let me, however, again point out that all those fighters, the Macabees and all the others before and after them, who rose in rebellion against their oppressors, the Romans and others, could only have been driven to risk such unequal confrontations, to fight against such superior forces and to finally accept martyrs' deaths in remuneration, had they not felt they had been called upon to defend their religious freedom, that they were fighting for their religious rights and that they were sacrificing themselves for the purity of the Holy Temple.

We would be guilty of a wrong definition, if we classify all the many wars of that period as 'national wars', because there existed no national unity anymore, nor was there among the Jews that selfless all-embracing brotherly relationship which is the basic ingredient which cements a nation during a war. The consuming hatred which one group harboured against the other, the uncontrolled intrigues which weakened the armies, the growing dishonesty which paralyzed the government, could not be suspended, neutralized or counterbalanced by the Jews' heroic defense of religion and Temple, of nationhood and Jerusalem. There existed no more law and order; one Jew persecuted the other; murder was the method to settle arguments. Fighting became a purpose in itself, strife for strife's sake the aim. That state of affairs cancelled out all of the ethic advancements of which here and there evidence could be detected and which had promised to provide the fertile soil in which God's Kingdom on Earth was to grow up. I do not have to tell you that all this represented a far greater desecration of God, of His laws, of His principles than what the Roman prefects and their legions have inflicted on Jerusalem and the Temple.

Of course, God must have been sad observing all these goings-on.

He did not get angry. He never does. Neither did He interfere with a strong hand, as He had done on certain occasions in the past. He did not wipe out, as you might have feared, once for ever this recalcitrant people which was on the verge of degenerating into a band of immoral fighters and heartless politicians. He brought in a new set of players instead and gave them the chance to set Israel onto the right path. He selected from among the poor and unspoiled people, of whom a number still existed in Israel, a simple learned Jew, with the name of Joshua, who for many years had lived among the Essenes, a monk-like sect which had settled in the vicinity of the Dead Sea and whose aim it was to promote the return of the Jews to the full trust in God, His laws and His promises. The Essenes had since long been engaged in a continuous fight with the religious politicians in Jerusalem whom they identified with the evil forces, calling them the 'sons of darkness'. They lived their plain and ascetic life in the conviction of, and in the preparation for, the imminent arrival of the Messiah and the hoped-for salvation of the Jewish people. The things which this Rabbi Joshua preached were not new; they were part of the Jewish heritage long before he appeared on the scene. Already the Bible had repeatedly warned the Jews not to nourish hatred for their enemies, to love one's neighbour, to respect the poor and so on. For over a hundred years the Essenes had been sending out mystics and missionaries among the masses to preach that the appearance of the Messiah was at hand and that a life of purity was the key to heaven. Wherever the Rabbi went - and he wandered repeatedly through the length and width of the country - he popularized in his sermons the ideas and the ideologies of his sect. He spoke to the people about purity and honesty, and he told them of love and of poverty as tools with which to gain salvation. He was generally liked, but he was loved most by the poor people. In the course of the years he acquired a quite respectable number of followers. As is usually the case in such men, a streak of fanaticism became apparent in this group's beliefs. Joshua's devoted followers though they could detect evidence of holiness in their rabbi, and they were led to conclude from their discovery, that the rabbi himself was the expected messiah so incessantly mentioned in his sermons. According to tradition - which you can hear cited to this day - the expected Messiah has to be a descendent from the House of David, but this did not present a problem to those concerned; without any great effort such a relationship

of the rabbi with King David was established and documented. Thereafter it did not take much time before the humble and ~~pretentious~~ preacher was not only worshipped as the expected messiah, but he ~~was~~ also proclaimed by his band of followers the "King of the Jews"

I can well imagine that you are now in a sceptical mood and that you are unwilling to believe that a plain simple man could without much ado have been proclaimed a 'king' by a group of adoring and fanatic followers who had no great standing in the society. Do you really think it unlikely that this could have happened? You appear to think that one does not make a man into a messiah and a king without any great fuss. Do you really think so? Let me refute your argument by bringing two instances to your attention. In your neighbourhood in Brooklyn lives a man who expects to receive any moment now a call from God to proceed to Jerusalem in His name to take up the function and office of the Messiah. This man is none else than the "Lubavitscher Rebbe" who has so far and for this reason postponed a long overdue visit to the Holy Land. And the other instance? A few years ago the streets and playgrounds in Israel reverberated with the shouts of the plebs who called on the Prime Minister Menachem Begin to declare himself the "King of Israel". Begin is now out of fashion; last years he was replaced by Arik Sharon as the favourite for kingship; and this year the shouts for "Rabbi Kahane King of Israel" are the fashion.

The Romans who occupied and ruled the Holy Land, did not mind the messianic overtones of this movement led by Joshua, but they perceived in the proclamation of his being crowned King of the Jews the seed of a rebellion, And this, of course, they could not tolerate. In their eyes there was no more logical solution for this nuisance, which they wrongly feared had all the potentialities to grow out of control, than to condemn to death this Joshua of Nazareth, whose name was later to be hellenized by Paul into 'Jesus'. For the Romans it was a simple routine affaire - every day they condemned a few dozen Jews to death.

And so and therefore the Romans killed Jesus too by the method they preferred to make use of more than any other other, the humiliating death of crucifixion. In the symbol of Jesus on the Cross the Christian religion was to become a religion of suffering.

20. An Intermezzo about the History of Religion .

You should know that we have in truth no eye witness reports about Jesus; whatever we learn about his person and his teachings has been transmitted to us through 'publications' which appeared many years after his death. Not even these books about Jesus - they are called the 'gospels' - are most likely the reports of eyewitnesses, but the condensation of what has been transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to the next. This can, however, only in part explain the often glaring contradictions which you can discover in the four Gospels, the only out of many originally in existence to have been recognized as true, as divinely inspired and as written down by the apostles themselves after whom they are called. I suppose, that once you have digested this fact, you will hardly ever again use the word 'gospel truth' in the manner it is applied today. In any case, we can take it for granted that there do not exist any reports of people who had personally seen or heard Jesus. These four gospels which have been honoured with the title of "The Memoirs of the Apostles" did not surface before the year 140 CE and they were granted the status of 'canonic literature' around the year 170 CE. It is thought that they were written down sometimes between the years 70 and 130 CE. It is certain that **THEY WERE** written by people who knew Jesus only from hearsay. They are explained as material used in the struggle between two groups of followers of Jesus, the Judaeo-Christians and the Gentile Christians, and that they indicate the effort and the polemic to eradicate all residual trace of Judaism and Jewishness in the history and the tradition of early Christianity. Experts think that only the rituals of the Churches of Ethiopia and Chaldea are still left with some indication of the original 'semitic character'. The Christians on the other hand believe - and this is taught as a dogma - that the Gospels are written by direct witnesses of the life and teaching of Jesus, "most likely" by the Apostles themselves, and that they are, therefore, absolutely true. In the Gospels you will find presented as reality things which are historically unfounded, but this is nothing unusual; it is a feature of many ancient histories. In the case of the Gospels the many inconsistencies, improbabilities indicate that each one is a combination of various sources and different manuscripts.

It is understandable, acceptable and excusable that religious organizations will refute with indignation, and even with horror, any allegation which denies their assumption of the truth, often gained by revelation, and which negates the sacred origin of their holy books. As recently as in the 1960s has the Vatican Council described these four books - the Gospels, the New Testament - as "historically exact and authentic" writing of "sacred authors". Why not? They are welcome to their belief and creed. But I feel

entitled to react angrily when I read that this very same religious organization, in order to strengthen its creed, takes on a hypocritical stand and lowers itself to a level of amorality. To give only one example: that very same Vatican Council, which calls for the recognition of the holiness and "establishes" the perfect truth of the New Testament, thinks itself justified to label the Old Testament as "full of imperfect and obsolete material". Wait !, this is not all ! There is more coming from the Department of Hypocrisy ! What can you do but shake your head in disbelief over the claim in the Gospel of John (5:46,47) that Jesus is supposed to have said: "...if you believe in Moses you believe in me...", that he and the Father are one, that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father, that he "had been even before Abraham". I claim that it is absolutely possible that Rabbi Joshua could have said this; these statements must have been added later on, must have been invented at a later stage, most likely at the height of the struggle between the Judaeo-Christian sect and the followers of Paul. I am sorry I cannot go on with the discussion of this issue; this is not the place - and there are, after all, many who are far better qualified to answer any further questions of yours. You may, however, take it for granted that the Gospels and the so-called 'patristic literature', i.e. the writings of the Church Fathers who ruled and modelled the Church in the first centuries of the Christian era, contain many more and similar 'corrections and additions'. In short, it is certain that the later Christians have greatly changed the early records of the life and the statements of Jesus, and one is justified in saying, that whatever Christianity presents and represents of him today, does hardly conform with the historic Jesus. Even the physical description of Jesus, the Rabbi of Nazareth, whom Josephus Flavius describes as "dark-skinned, small in stature and hunch-backed" appears to have been totally changed and idealized.

You will ask me, why I exhibit here so much interest in the life history of Jesus, his fate and the way he has been painted and illustrated. You have every right to put this question - and even to scold me. But you will permit my intermezzo to stand, if I assure you that this chapter has importance for and in my argument and hypothesis, as the impact the Christian Church had on the fate of the Jews and her role as an instrument in God's hands, to keep the Jews on their track, is enormous and decisive as well as impressive and moving. I would agree that this does not connect or associate with the person of the historic Jesus, who had been abused by the Church for the sake of hurting and excluding the Jews. Yes, I fully take upon my conscience and my responsibility what I have just now said ! And if the Church retorts that she does so by order, by demand, by the urging of God - she is assured of my full agreement.

A large number of Bible critics of high standing, who take literally the description of the resurrection contained in the Gospels, i.e. that Jesus had survived crucifixion, explain this phenomenon by arguing that he had not died on the cross but had been saved by the bribed Roman guards, that he had been drugged and that he was later smuggled out of the country -

some say to Gallilaea, some others to India or to Kashmir and so on. I do not see any justification for the search of an explanation for a physical post-humous resurrection; those who proposed these hypotheses have written nothing but novels or story books, because the deification of Jesus and the resurrection after his death became significant only long after he had died, and in addition because they conform so very much to the fate of the heroes of the Greek mystery religions of the time, which were most likely not familiar to or at least not acceptable to the early Judaeo-Christian, and which, on the other hand, are so typical and specific for the material used in the propaganda campaign of Paul and the policies of the later Church Fathers.

21. Shaul-Paul, the Organizer.

You can rest assured that God looked on with interest, as He must have been curious to find out how the new religious movement was going to affect the Jewish people. He did not interfere, nor did He object. He allowed things to develop along their own logical decourse. Neither, I am sure, did God object that a very clever man, a Jewish travelling scholar from Taurus with the name Paul < he had thus hellenized his good Jewish name 'Shaul' * should make his appearance on the stage. That was a very intelligent man indeed ! He was also a very ambitious man. And in addition he was also an excellent speaker and a skillful politician. Paul had been educated in the schools of hellenized Rome. I can well imagine that on his return to the Holy Land he had been shocked and disgusted by the political chaos, the ongoing religious struggles which he encountered. All what was going on in his homeland must have appeared to this hellenized intellectual the epitome of cultural backwardness. He was a Jew, possibly an observant Jew like most all the Jews of that time, for heresy was simply not thinkable, not imaginable in ancient times; but I do not think that he should be called a fanatic follower of the precepts of the Torah. Even though he was thoroughly assimilated, we must see in him a fundamentally religious man, and there is enough evidence to show that he had sought and found a proper spiritual guidance and a satisfactory emotional happiness in the mystery cults, a form

of religion which was at that time practiced in nearly all the countries of the then civilized world. It is clear to me from studying the expressions and images he used that Paul could not have seen an incompatibility between Judaism and the mystery religions, and it may also well be that to this conception he had been introduced and guided by the contemporary philosopher Philo, a Jew of Alexandria who, with the intention of making it easier for the Greeks to understand the Jewish Bible, and on the other hand to persuade the Jews to accept some form of synchronization of Judaism with hellenistic culture, had endeavoured to give the Bible an interpretation from the viewpoint of a mystery religion. Philo 'Judaeus' who had lived and taught a few decades before Jesus was born, was the creator of the philosophical concept of the 'logos' (the 'word') with which he intended to identify a "Second God" or even a "Son of God".

Christian theologians deny that Philo's 'logos' is identical with that in John's Gospel, where we hear of the "Logos - the word made flesh". According to Philo - and in the sense of Philo - God is a pure Being, abstract, immaterial, intellect and free of any attribute or qualification. Because of such ideas Philo had scarce opportunity to influence the traditional Jewish world. He has been the more appreciated by the Christian theology. Philo by his interpretation of Moses' position as that of a "King and God" may have, if not surprised at least influenced Paul. It is established that Paul has never met Jesus in person but that he knew many persons who told him about Jesus' personality and his sermons. It is quite clear to me that Paul must have perceived in this Rabbi of Nazareth, so widely loved and admired, the appropriate person around whom he might build up the kind of religious structure which he had in mind for the Jews. There is no doubt in my mind that Paul had decided if not to reform Judaism at least to modernize it with the introduction of the images and the ideas contained in the mystery cults. He must have considered the traditional Jewish religion outdated, restrictive and not anymore acceptable to a modern man living in the shadow and under the impact of the Greek culture. A main factor of Paul's religious belief system which, as I have told you, was the concept of man's survival after death to be followed by resurrection. This was the content of the mystery cults of the hellenic world; it expressed by symbols and rituals these ideas, and allegorically presented and dramatically played out its message in the appearance on earth of a godlike figure who, in due course, was to suffer a humiliating death which was followed by his resurrection and his deification. Every mortal man and a man on earth through the

initiations into one of the 'mysteries', woven into a cult around a godlike figure, was assured that he or she could acquire the knowledge and the ability to pass with ease over the threshold between life and death, i.e. that such an initiation could save a person from the uncertainty which lurks for mankind in the twilight zone of death, and the ~~unpleasantness~~ **SANTINESS WHICH AWAITS** him after his death.

Paul constructed the personality of Jesus, his teachings and his preachings into that very type of a mythical figure which in various representations and appellations he had encountered in every one of the many mystery religions which were at that time in vogue: a godlike individual or a super-human hero attracts by his way of life or after having successfully accomplished some superhuman task, many powerful enemies, who in the end invariably succeed in killing him - but through the intervention of a god is again resurrected and will, thereafter, himself live as a god in heaven or on the Olympus. This pleasing and uncomplicated theology promised all those, who have been initiated by means of a holy and always secret ritual, into the mystery which surrounds the resurrection, who have been taught some secret formulas or had been entrusted with some specific signs, that they will become godlike themselves and can, therefore, be sure that after their death they will enter some kind of paradise. Paul, a psychologist endowed with an excellent sense of intuition, constructed a belief system - and a cultsystem - in which he built the established elements of the mystery cults around the figure, the personality and the sermons of the Rabbi of Nazareth, and gave that mystic-religious structure the aspect of a new theology. His masterpiece was composed with the intention to bring about a marriage of an antiquated Judaism in need of reform with a vigorous and joyous hellenistic philosophy. He, therefore, first and foremost hoped to convert the Jews to his interpretation of Judaism. He understood only too well that to a religious Jew a rite would be unacceptable in which in the ritual of initiation he had to act out the role of a godfigure, where he has to die symbolically as a human being and being allegorically resurrected as a god. To overcome this difficulty, the genius of Paul found a suitably modified formula and rite. He preached in his sermons and letters that Jesus had died for all mankind, that by his one-time death this god, this son of god had offered himself as a sacrifice for everybody once for ever, and that henceforth nobody had to enact this sacrifice, not even figuratively or symbolically in a ceremony, and that

only a simple statement and declaration of the belief that Jesus had thus lived, acted and died was sufficient and effective to bless the believee and to bestow on him all the benefits which the other cults would have granted after a more complex initiation ceremony.

This is in simple and plain words the Christianity which Paul had created and propagated. He was wise enough, not to attempt - at least not in the beginning - his missionary activity anywhere within the Holy Land, especially not in Jerusalem; but he tried his luck, with quite some success, among the Jewish communities which existed in those days in most parts of the wide-spread Roman Empire. There he founded many Judaeo-Christian groups composed of Jews who held Rabbi Joshua of Nazareth in veneration, who believed that he had carried in himself and with himself the promise of an early arrival of the expected Messiah and of an early establishment of God's Kingdom on Erath. They did not, however, believe that Jesus was the son of God or that he was in any sense a divine figure. I do not have to produce any evidence from Scripture to prove or to document my assertion; it is amply supported by the fact that such early Judaeo-Christians could live in Jerusalem and its surroundings in communal harmony with the other Jews without being molested or persecuted as heretics. Paul could not have had any significant success among the early followers of Joshua and still less among the general Jewish population. The Judae-Christians had remained loyal Jews and they refused to accept Paul's new theology. They must have seen in him a traitor to the Jewish faith, I am sure. Soon there was to occur a scission of the early Christians into two separate communities hostile to each other. In the early years of Paul's activities the number of the Judaeo-Christians was far greater than that of the followers of Paul. The over-all success of Paul's missionary work fell, however, far short of the expectations with which he had set out, and this induced him to change his policy and his tactics. He now endeavoured to attract and to convert mainly the gentiles. He concentrated his missionary activities on the heathens and the pagans whom he ardently searched out on his many journeys through the Roman empire. At last he could register greater success among these men and women, as the tales he told of the wonderful promises and the recital of the miraculous deeds of Jesus attracted more and more people abroad especially so, because the construction and the principles of the new Nazarene

faith were not at all foreign to the culture and the comprehension of the mediterranean world. Understandably he had to abolish the demands of circumcision, of the dietary and purity laws and of the many other burdensome duties imposed on a Jew; and by these additional and fundamental reforms the new religion which he had created and which he now preached with great enthusiasm and eloquency, became finally acceptable to a large number of ggentiles - and also to many 'modern-minded' Jews.

It was inevitable that these fundamental and radical changes in the intrinsic Jewish theology, which Paul had finally introduced into the new christian belief system, had to lead to a DEFINITE break with the Jewish people, with the Jewish religion and with the Jewish establishment. Outside the jurisdiction of Jerusalem Paul could survive and his religion flourish only because he could not be persecuted for the outspoken hostility he exhibited for the Jews and Judaism. These sentiments were, of course, heartily reciprocated by the Jews. The hostility between the two streams did not remain confined to theological ISSUES. All over the Roman empire pamphlets began to appear in which one group accused the other of all kinds of vicious crimes, denounced the other to the Romans of lack of patriotism and even of treason. At times and in certain places it was a physical fight to the death.

I am going to anticipate here and now your next question which has to be : "And what did God say to all this ? What was His reaction to Jesus, to Paul, to Christianity ? Did He not feel the need to interfere in some way or other ?" My answer may have been in the affirmative to the last part of your question, possibly with the time when Jesus was alive and occupied with his preaching to the Jews. God could not but have noticed "with a smile", how deep was the trust and how limitless the faith of this man. He may have somehow wished that Jesus could bring about at least some change in the hardness and the harshness with which Jew opposed Jew. He may have hoped that a part of the depth of belief and some of the pureness of heart which made this young rabbi stick out from the multitude of preaching Torah sages of his day, would be shared by His Jewish children. He did not endow Joshua with special powers, did not bless him with unusual faculties , nor did He , by any "natural event" try to awaken in the population of the Land of Israel a readiness to follow this young rabbi. Still ! I sense that somehow God must have hoped that the sermons of this migratory preacher, and the deep affection and trust which his

flock of followers evinced, might bring about a turning point in the history and the destiny of the Jewish people. God did not, however, in any way interfere. He watched and observed. God did not interfere although He could hardly have maintained His neutral attitude, nor continued in His hope when Paul took the organization and therewith the fate of the small Judaeo-Christian community into his clever hands. God could hardly have agreed with what Paul said, wrote and did, nor with the way he manipulated and changed Jesus' words. God could in no way have had any sympathy with the policy of Paul, by which the simple Rabbi Joshua was turned into a Christus, a Redeemer; and least of all could He have had any respect for that twist in the interpretation of the facts, the change-over and the mix-up with Greek religious conceptions, by which our God and Heaven were turned into a part of a Trinity and afflicted with a son supposedly "begat" by Him. It may surprise you that God did not do something about it all and that He did not prevent the execution of Joshua by the Romans, even though He must have known that this would turn out to be to the advantage of Paul's eventual reorganization of the early Christians. However, this is easily explained. God had not in any way predestined such an evolution, i.e. Joshua's death and Paul's making use of the folklore which had begun to arise. These were developments born of the automated program probabilities. Had Joshua not been executed, the genius and the psychologist Paul would not have had any difficulty to find another suitable person to fit his prototype of the expected redeemer. From these facts as they came to pass you can conclude that, although, as you know, God could have easily changed the situation, turned it into another direction and with it also the history of the world, He might, nay must have decided that the introduction of Paul and his religious system into the history of the Jews would serve the purpose of nudging the Jews into the right path towards their goal, towards the achievement of salvation for themselves and the whole world. God must have let things run its own course thinking, that they might benefit the Jews also insofar as they would have now come to the realization not only of their own failure but also of the shortcomings leading to their failure, as otherwise even a man of the stature and the intelligence of a Paul of Taurus could not have imagined or have dared or believed that he could change the religion and the laws which God Himself had promulgated and prescribed for the Jews and the world. Eventually the use God

made of Christianity moulded according to Paul - and as later further changed and reformed by the Church Fathers, by the Councils, by the Popes and the many critics - was to keep the Jewish people controlled, disciplined and compact. This must have been the true reason why God did not interfere, why He allowed Paul's Christianity to grow and to prosper. At first He had the original Christian Church which believed in the ethically irreproachable sermons of Rabbi Joshua, in the wisdom of the rabbis and the exposition of God's purpose and wishes, to gently shake His Jewish people loose from their rigid attitudes towards God and each other, so that they should search on their own their salvation by obeying the laws contained in their inherited faith; and when the increasing hostility, the growing aggressiveness of the ever stronger and more powerful Christian Church proved insufficient and ineffective to make the Jews mend their ways, He allowed the Christian Church and her over the centuries so often changing and reconstructing theology to turn into a whip by which His Jewish people would and could, when things so required, be forced to look into themselves, to repent and to make at least an effort to return.

22. Agape = The Church's Love Feast.

As I have hinted a few moments ago, I am not going to exclude the possibility that God had at first looked on with some favour, when the new version of the Jewish faith and the remodelled version of God's plans made their appearance among the Jews of the Holy Land, as for God the ultimate evolvment of a morally perfected people worthy of His love was the decisive issue, and for this reason every ethically unimpeachable approach was acceptable to Him. He could not, however, for long maintain this hope and estimate, as from generation to generation the followers of the religious principles, as they had been preached by Joshua of Nazareth, distantiated themselves to an increasing degree from the founder's original precepts. God must have lost any further interest in Christianity as a channel through which Judaism could proceed onwards, nor as a tool with which to reshape Jewry to its primary and intended shape and image, when the system into which Paul had modelled

the original Judaeo-Christian sect's religion . The Church's programmed decourse was to proceed on its own until it had run its course, as has been the destiny of so many other religious cults,sects and similar religious movements in the disguise of philosophical schools or political parties which have come and gone, which are in existence - and will go too.. Over the centuries to come the Christian Church was to be more and more altered and transfigured - and violated - to make her serve and fit the personal ambitions and the political aspirations of the leaders and representatives of the Christan creed. There were times when nothing when nothing could be detected of what God had wished and advised, proscribed and demanded in the comportment and the politics, the activities and policies of the Catholic Church which had grown into enormous dimensions in and with the name of the humble rabbi from Nazareth. The priestly individuals' ambition to control and to dominate the kings and the princes, and the Church institutions' desire to conquer and to rule the world were packaged and offered overwhelmingly as god-ordered desires to save mankind from perdition, to establish God's kingdom and to "bring back the Redeemer". But when you study the history of the world in relation to that of the Church, you will not remain in any doubt that there was no trace left of any divine direction or any association with a possible divine purpose anymore. The true aim of the Church has always been the acquisition of unlimited worldly power and the gaining of every possible and all the most unusual privileges for the benefit of the leaders of the Church themselves. The use of brutal and often extreme force unashamedly applied in the name of the meek Rabbi Joshua was apparently deemed to be the only suited method by which to bring about the salvation. There was not the slightest trace left of the original concepts of brotherly love, of selfless conduct and of honest insight. You will not find any evidence in the original descriptions and writings predating the appearance of Paul which could be cited to justify the , to me incomprehensible and impudent sounding, claim that God has for ever banned the Jews from His favours and His care, that the Church was the "new Israel" and had been granted the place which had originally been occupied by the Jews in God's plans, that she had now replaced the children of Abraham in the heritage which God had reserved for them. The usurpation of the name by calling itself the "New Israel" is as crude as it is immoral. Let me assure you that you will in the history of the Church very little, if anything at all , which could have pleased God, which could have justified the Church's claim that she was acting in God's name and on His behalf. On these facts I bar

my conclusion that God has given up any interest in Christianity's possible replacement of or channelling for Israel. Were I wrong there would have been signs that God had influenced, redirected the course of the history as related to Christianity. However the program of the Church may evolve, it certainly contains the directive to serve as the correcting tool, as a threatening whip to be brought into action when the Jews have to be served with a reminder of their duties. How could anybody go on thinking that the Church, any church in Christianity, could speak in the name of God, might be justified to pose as moral example, could claim to function as ethical guide!? Let it suffice that I tell you that over the last 2000 years you will hardly find among the popes and the various grades of Church leaders, among the kings and princes who posed as the defenders of the Christian faith, more than a handful of individuals who have exhibited the kind of moral qualities and of human characteristics which would have marked them as ideal prototypes of mankind, as protagonists of goodness - and as examples of true religiosity. It is not difficult for you to check on my statements. Do so whenever you have the time. I assure you, that you will not be able to prove me wrong. But there is one advice which I want to give you: don't permit yourselves to be influenced by the titles these individuals have granted each other. Don't be over-awed, not even impressed, when you encounter appendices likes 'Saint' or 'Great' added to their names. And should you continue to persue your research still further, you will find that in the name of Jesus Christ more blood has been spilled, more people have been killed and more damage has been done than anything which could ever be summed up against the Huns, against Hitler and Stalin and other scourges of mankind
c o m b i n e d.

It would be a mistake for you to conclude that God had out of as purpose made the Christians hate and persecute the Jews. You can only say that God did not mind them doing so, that He did not interfere in their never ceasing persecution of the Jews. You can take it for granted that had the Christian behaved otherwise, that had God made them abandon their hatred for the Jews - you can rest assured that God has thousands of ways and means available to bring about such situation - the Jews, all the Jews would soon have been lured into accepting the Christian religion. You will agree that such an outcome would, once for all, have solved the 'Jewish problem'. But such an outcome was impossible, was unacceptable. The Jews cannot submerge, cannot disappear. I

have mentioned more than once already my conviction that God as a rule does permit mankind to follow its own trends and instincts as long as the basic plans He has for mankind, and essentially those for the Jews, are not fundamentally interfered with or endangered. To make sure that the mechanism of the principle would always continue to function, He has inserted into the ~~programing~~ process and into the belief system of Israel's instinctive enemies and unreasoning haters two very effective safety devices: although God has rarely if ever intervened, when the christian persecutors tormented and killed His children, He had planted in the former the belief that there was no future for the Christians, that their Redeemer would never appear, should there not be always some Jews, a 'remnant of Jews' be found alive on earth. This astounding sine qua non was created by the dogmatic belief that before the bliss of "God's Kingdom on Earth" could come about "all the surviving Jews would have to be turned into Christians" Do you realize that on the basis of the 'formula' the solution of the "Jewish problem" , for which the Christians have since ever longed, was made impossible, i.e. the total elimination for ever of all the Jews from the surface of the earth, one way or the other, but best by the simple stratagem of killing them off to the last person could not be contemplated at all. There had always to be a 'remnant' of Jews available to be converted when the time of the return of the 'Redeemer' approached. There had to be a visible and palpable confirmation of the fact that not all the Jews had been exterminated until God's Kingdom had been established on earth. Let me say it in plain words: - God programmed into the Christian tradition the belief that the final victory of their godhead, that mankind's salvation and redemption under the auspices of Jesus Christ could only be achieved after the last Jew had been turned into a Christian. It has thus become the Christians' own and main interest to keep a sufficient number of Jews alive for the indispensable role they have to play in the hope of redemption - and according to Christian theology the Jewish role was conceived possible only with the help of the ceremony of baptism. There was also another reason why a residue of the Jewish people had to be kept alive: they had to serve as an excuse for and as an explanation of the fact that "Christ, the Redeemer", whose appearance has been promised again and again has so far not come and has not yet turned the world into the promised Kingdom. As the christian teaching goes this moment can come only after the last Jew alive has on his free will adopted the christian faith. From the first day since the

Church has been established the survival of unbaptised Jews was a necessary proof or excuse.

You may remind me impatiently that I have mentioned "two safety devices" which God had provided. I have not made a mistake. Have some patience ! I shall soon have the opportunity to mention the second one also.

Let me again point out that all this time I do not detect any indication that God had intervened in the affairs of the Church and of society in general. God's program included a series of possible developments by which mankind would be permitted to produce on its own the next stages of evolution in its history. God was well aware that by the inbuilt mechanism of the uncountable number of variations possible in its history mankind would eventually come to an end, or would take a new direction, or would change into a totally different configuration. The policies and the ethics, the aims and the manifestations of Christianity as they became manifest in the many institutions and organizations which surfaced, stayed on permanently or remained active or effective only for a time to disappear again for ever, were over the centuries made use of by God to test and to try, to clean and to train, to reward and to punish His Jewish people. Strange and unbelievable as it may sound to you, the Church has made her occupation with engagement, with, and the molestation and the persecution of the Jews one of her main interests; and she has made the erection of a defensive bulwark against Jewish theology her main task. She has always acclaimed it as a great victory whenever Jews, though mostly under the threat of death, could be made to sever their ancient ties with their religion. You are entitled to shed tears for these victims of the Church's cruel policy for many of them harboured beautiful souls and were blessed with brilliant intellect; but on the other hand do not condemn those who converted out of selfishness, those who were weak or cowardly, for by the elimination of these elements from among the Jews, by the steady peeling off of such human material from the body of Jewry, the remaining nucleus was to a great degree saved from corruption and deterioration. I believe furthermore that it must have been a part of the divine plan that the influence and the impact which these Jewish converts to Christianity, on their new environment, represented an additional advantage and benefit insofar as they enriched and fertilized the gentile world with their genius.

23. Another Exile - Explanation and Excuse... ..

I am afraid I have been abusing your patience by transgressing into details which must appear extraneous to my planned tale and story. But they appear only to be transgressions. In my opinion all this had to be mentioned. I must warn you that I shall also later on not tkkeep back similar material and thoughts whenever I have to use them to make my point or to persuade you that my ideas have some base and justification. However, for the next few pages I shall try to report only straight historic facts. I shall also try to proceed at a far quicker tempo that before.

I am now returning to the point where I have left our people in the Holy Land: divided into various irreconcilable factions and hostile groupings, fighting among themselves with a bitterness usually reserved for one's worst enemies. All of them, without exception, abused the name of God by their claim to be His true interpreters and executors. For a long time the Romans stood by without getting directly involved in the expectation that the Jews would "sort things out" among themselves. But there came the moment when they appear to have concluded, that none of these parties involved in the struggle had a justified claim. With their swords they set an end to any and every discussion among the politicians about the justification of their demands. God appears to have hesitated for a short while before He permitted the necessary, and of necessity severe, measure of correction to proceed by which the people might be brought to the realization of their sins and of their failures. But God must have judged the situation very exceptional, for He appeared to have decided to intervene more actively and decisively in the control and the discipline of which His people was in need, when it became evident that the hope was fading out the newly arrisen Judaeo-Christian brotherhood would provide the yeast by which the Jews could have fermented into the expected awakening and into the wish for a return to the true values. For when the paganization of the early christian groups was effected by the ongrafting of fundamentally different, but psychologically well chosen, variants of therconcurrent - and by the gentile population well understood and easily accepted - mystery cults, God must have decided to forego the judaeo-

christian element as a possible mould for the forming of His people into the desired shape. Inexorably the time had come to teach the Jews a lesson, a severe lesson, a more extensive lesson than any they had ever received before. As it is the way of God, the Romans were made to serve as the tools in this divine scheme. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. And when even this punishment appeared not to have had a sufficient effect, when Bar Kokhba felt induced to set out on his foolish enterprise in the pursuit of his megalomaniac plans, when he thought he could measure himself successfully against the mighty Roman Empire, the Jews were again, but this time finally, driven into exile.

The consequence of this punishment was that Israel lost along with Jerusalem and the Temple also its nationhood, its spiritual base and its legal rights. Again, as once before, the Jews were driven out to live among hostile peoples; but this time the exile was to last nearly 40 times longer than the previous one in Babylon. They were expelled into an environment, into which for a long time to come they were not allowed to assimilate. They were planted among nations where every human right then in existence was denied to them. Now they were to wait for a very long time in the expectation that another Cyrus would appear on the scene and arrange for their return to the Holy Land. They were going to remain dispersed and homeless until the moment would arrive, when the suffering and the humiliation they had known in Egyptian slavery so long ago and so far away, would appear to them a pleasant memory. Henceforth the punishments the Jews had to undergo were the severer, the pain inflicted on them the deeper, and the humiliation they experienced the greater, because God made use of the Church, of Christianity - and later of Islam, as you are going to find out - to be His whip with which to beat the Jews, His torch with which to burn the Jews, His laboratory in which to gas the Jews. You can rest assured that God did not like to do this to His Jews, that in the evolution of the Jewish destiny this was going on. He must often have felt the hurt more than His children did, but he knew also, at least I sense this, that such a severe and long-lasting punishment would at last bring home to the Jews in general, but also to each of us individually, that lesson which we have so stubbornly refused to learn.

You will ask me now, I suppose, "How can you say all this in such certain and definite words? Why do you arrogate to yourself the knowledge

that it must have been thus ?" I said all this, I stated all this, because I think I have found the right explanation for the complex developments with its often unusual and at times illogical appearing outcome in Jewish history from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple until our own time. By making the Church His executioner, and by shattering her into all her later ramifications with their various sects, He showed the Church unequivocally, And to us consolingly, that Christianity and Christians have not stepped into our place in the affection of God, as she asserts; that the Church does not function as the replacement of Israel, as she asserts. He blesses us with the conviction that all the other organized religions, which claimed and claim to speak in the name of God, are only allowed to exist and to speak and to preach in the name of God, so that they realize that they cannot measure themselves with the Jews, but that they may help the Jews to find their way, their own place and their definite destiny.

From the first days of their dispersion they found themselves a despised minority everywhere in the Roman Empire, which in practice means all over the then known civilized world. There was a large Jewish community in Rome, and all over the empire colonies of retired Jewish soldiers existed, who, after they had been pensioned off had been granted lands and other privileges. A main reason, why the Romans disliked the Jews, however, wherever they were to be found, was their exhibition of an unusual religious fanaticism and missionary zeal. It may be true that the Jews by their arrogance must have caused a lot of trouble to the Romans, but you must appreciate that in the lawless crime-bound Roman society of those days the trouble caused by the Jews was by far not of a criminal or rebellious nature, but was mainly due to ideological and fundamentalistic diversities. The Jews were allowed to practice their religion; they were prudent enough not to agitate against the prevailing paganism, but they saw hateful adversaries in the growing Christian sects with which they were in constant competition for the acquisition of converts. The truly ferocious and merciless infighting of these competing groups - which extended at times also among the Jews themselves - obscured whatever valuable lessons they could have taught the Romans, the manifestation of whatever ethical purity or national superiority which might have had some beneficial influence on at least the intellectual strata of Rome society. It would in any case, and at the best of times, have been an uphill work, as the

doctrine of the supremacy of One God could not have impressed a society in which the Senate could decide by a majority of votes whether or not to grant the Emperor or any of his wives the status of a god or a goddess. & Do not laugh about such a presumption ! Do not blame an "ignorant heathen people" ! Is this in any way different from the method which was later to become the fief of the Church's popes who could and did and do transfer 'sainthood' on some dead individual - and this even without a 'democratic' vote ? > The only possible way by which the Roman society could be persuaded ~~by~~ and persuaded of the supremacy of the Jewish religion would have been the unimpeachable conduct of its followers, at least of their intellectual peers; but these failed to live up to such standards - and for this reason any possible chance of a missionary success had to fail.

24. An Intermezzo dealing with Theology and Religion.

As the following history of the Jewish people, embracing many centuries, is overshadowed by the Church and the creed she teaches, I am going to interrupt the flow of my story again, because I feel it necessary that I explain to you in simple words and without reaching for any high standard of intellectuality, what I perceive as the main differences between Jewish and Christian theology. Some of these differences I have already mentioned when I told you of the 'reorganization' which Paul had inflicted on Jesus' teaching.

The Christians, like the Jews, believe that God's existence is independent of the human beings which He has created and they assume that the ~~Old~~ Testament is a revelation of God. That is a primary creed of all the religions of revelation.

Christian religion teaches that whatever cannot be perceived by natural reason, must have been revealed or arranged by God. Traditional catholic thinking implies that God could, if He wanted to, communicate any number of mysterious deeds and statements. Christianity boasts of being a a "religion of love" This may have been true for a time during the first century CE, but has never been true since then. The lack of such selfless love and kindness all through the centuries may be explained away by the mentality momentary prevailing which could not created or admitted such a trend. But what of the time of the Reformation when

both sides lost their last inhibition. Both AND did not St. Augustin remind his listeners that Jesus himself had said: ' I have not come to bring peace on earth. I have come not to bring peace but the sword' ? This tennet has at all times been faithfully followed.

The orthodox among the Jewish as well as the Christian religion accuse you of having sinned gravely, of contradicting God, if you do not fully and literally accept whatever is written in the Bible. In the early centuries of their existence the Christians proclaimed the Bible perfect in every way; for did not Paul say and write: "...all Scriptures are inspired by God - the Greek text uses so impressively 'God-breathed'- and it can be profitably used for teaching, for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be holy" (2.Tim.3:16)

Up to this point Jewish orthodoxy has no quarrel with its christian counterpart. Christianity has cultivated the Jewish-messianic promise that God's reign will soon begin, ~~that~~ death will not affect the true believer, will not affect the children of light but those of darkness. Baptism, communion and other Church ceremonies were offered as antidote against death. The Christians, through their undergoing baptism, have already died and been born again - they do not have to die again. But the realities of life - and of death - did not agree which such interpretations and this defect was explained away by the dogma that even though everybody has to die, A christian is assured of an eternal life thereafter. To make certain of this outcome, the dying individual is given a last anointment and the Eucharist.

The Jewish religion does not promise such a kind of solution for the problem of life and death. It does not know the Christian form of redemption. The Bible is interested far less in "eternal values" after death than in the importance of human life and the elimination of human suffering here on earth, and how to live in accordance with the transforming of man into an ethical individual; it preaches that at the time of resurrection the total individual, body and soul, will be revived and rise from the grave.

1 Christian theology which appears to enjoy the exhibition of a tortured crucified suffering Jesus, teaches that man cannot avoid offending God, and that nobody can save either himself nor anybody else. In Christianity God is perceived as a trinity, as three elements uniting or united in God. The Trinity is made up of the Father, God, Jesus the son, and the Holy Ghost. Some of the philosophers, who think they do understand this principle, call the Trinity the union of body, spirit and mind. This concept has been perceived first in the third century CE; it is nowhere mentioned in the Gospels. In Buddhism a similar concept of a trinity is taught, composed of the elements Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The Jews do not know of a three-folded God. Some say that the Cabbalists are an exception - but this is wrong. I have already tried to explain to you a while ago, that the Shekhina is not a separate part of God, that she does not relate to God in the way the 'Holy Ghost' relates to God in Christian theology. If you ask me to explain this complex 'situation' in more

detail, I would not know how to do it - and I have the impression that even far more learned men and women, be they profane or be they of the 'cloth', can do any better. The only advice the Church is apparently ready to offer to people, who cannot penetrate to a true and exact understanding of the principle of the Trinity, is to simply accept the threefold composition of God as a fact, as a dogma - and not to ask any questions. I enjoyed the explanation which Barth, one of the most brilliant men of our time, has given. He says that God did not want to remain by Himself. He wanted to have an opposite, someone facing Him. Such an opposite is Jesus since eternity, and through him all mankind. Thus God and man belong together as partners. I am sure St. Paul would have enjoyed such an explanation too, I think, something of a similar nature has been reflected also in ancient Jewish writings. There is also another Jewish thought which Christian theologians have incorporated, viz:- that God's covenant with man is the basic reason why the world has been created. However, I have difficulty to accept this idea. I told you that God created the Universe, prepared our earth for life to be started and that man was thereafter added to the living beings - one may say, for God to find companionship and someone on whom to apply His wisdom. This is for me in reality the world's purpose and aim. I have also already told you that Christianity's main 'raison d'etre' derives from the death of Jesus, the Christ. Or let me express it differently: Christianity is unthinkable without Jesus having been condemned to death and without his execution on the cross. Without this background Christianity could not continue to exist. Christ's death is the main theme of all Christian theology. Bonhoeffer, another leading modern theologian, says, interestingly, that because Jesus dominates the world due to his sufferings, by his powerlessness and by his serving mankind, also God's presence in the world is to be seen as His suffering for the world, as His being ignored by the world, as His powerlessness to act in the world. Therefore faith in God has to mean participation in the suffering of God. < I have no doubt that you and many others may reject what I myself have written and said, that people will criticise me that I have built a structure and formulated a conception not a rather thin and possibly personally far too esoterically perceived hypothesis, but I may say that a far more justified accusation, that of having erected an architectonically very shaky structure on the shifting sands of a hypothesis would apply far more reasonably to the learned Bonhoeffer. And this applies still more to what I have read of the ideas and thoughts of the innumerable theologians and philosophers I have studied before I sat down to write this essay. For good measure let us hear some more of Bonhoeffer's teaching which appears to make sense to modern Christians: He asserts that God makes us know that we live our lives without reference to God. "The God who is with us, is the one who deserts us", he says. In a letter to a friend he wrote: "...there is no need anymore for a God in religion and philosophy! >

I would not be surprised if, after you have reached with me this point in my explanations, you would come forward and tell me: " What you have said about the Christian theology is rather very scanty, even superficial. We understand that it is not the purpose of the story to provide us with elaborate information on theology. We may accept this. But as you wrote this tale, this story, this narrative to tell us not only of God and the world, of the Jews and of our hopes, but also with the intention to improve our intellectual and spiritual eyesight, you should tell us also something, even if only sketchily, about the tenets of Judaism, of the principles of Jewish ethics. " You are right. You are fully justified in your criticism, and I am going to say a few words, tell you a few basic facts regarding the theme you have broached. You cannot have missed that already in the preceding ~~pamphlets~~ have never foregone an opportunity to give you some information about Judaism, about the Bible, about God and about the world, with the intention of bringing home to you my own views and ideas.

First a few words about ' religion ' in general.

Man's life and existence are risky. The world is unstable. Existence is perilous. Natural disasters, political dangers, economic failures occupy much of man's life. This has always been the case, and in order to remedy the psychological effects and ~~to~~ provide an explanation and some consolation, religions with their gods, rites, cults, ceremonies, magic were 'created', were morals, art, laws formed and philosophies shaped. Man created for himself gods not because he feared them, but because he hoped that they would help, console and direct him.

Religious conceptions divert mainly from and into three directions: nature religions, ethical religions and redemptive religions. A religion of ethics, i.e. a prophetic religion, and a religion of redemption can only find their fields of vision in the shape of a monotheistic religion. I shall later on have to say a few words about the 'nature religions' , but already at this stage I want to make it clear that Judaism has nothing in common with a 'nature religion', that it is a revealed religion, a prophetic religion as well as a religion of history. I must confess - with due respect to the men and women who follow a 'naturalistic' view of the creation and the functioning of the universe - that I cannot give space to a detailed description about the various cults and 'fancy religions' with which the world overflows today. Let me make it also clear that I have neither any patience with those 'monotheists' who depict God as petty and revengeful, who are ever ready to punish you for what is in their personal opinion sinful. In my conception of ethics and of religion there exists no sin either of man nor of the world; there is only our imperfection and our immaturity, only our incomplete recognition and the insufficient fulfillment of our moral duties. Only the person who does not find an explanation for our existence in the belief of a divinely willed Creation, and a direction in the demands in the religiously based ethics, has to take resort

to - so that he may form for himself a 'philosophy of life' -the always changing technical and scientific interpretations of what we call 'nature'. This means in as final conclusion that such a person has to take the responsibility for the organization and also of the thics of the universe upon himself.

"But what about the theology of Judaism?", you will insist. Have patience, please. This is not a treatise on Judaism and you will have to do with a few words only. I hope that these will stimulate you to set our on a deeper study of what Judaism is and means. A priorilet me state that Judaism is not only a theology anchored in history but also a way of life with a particular social code. The speicifc of Judaism can only be satisfactorily lived within a Jewish society ruled by Jewsih laws. Very early already in their history have the Jews refused the conception of God in anthropomorphic form, although the language used in the Bible and in the prayers may tell you the opposite. Even the appellation of God as Father and as King should in no way be seen in an anthropomorphic aspect. A further plain, but basic truth which it is important to point out, is that Judaism can impossibly exist without a Jewish people, and that it cannot even be transformed onto other peoples. Even a remnant suffices to keep alive and renew the Jewish people. A Jew is a Jew if he confirms his belief and his conviction that he is a Jew at least to himself. Another sad, but essentially true definition is the one that ~~we~~ is a Jews whom Hitler would have killed as a Jew.

Since I have touched on this problem now , I am going on and shall not postpone it to take the occasion for a few remarks I want to make about the Jewish religion in general and the form into which it has grown today. In the past the Jews accepted their fate as a punishment for their sins, imposed upon them by God. But I was impressed by the realization that among the Jews a new consciousness has grown up of their freedom of action and of their human values. They do not feel anymore like "clay in God's hands"; they do not anymore their protests and their lamentations to God, do not beg for reprieve from God - at least not exclusively - but they address manking, human consciousness and the conscience which has been ~~w~~wakened in every stratum of mankind. I have only come to understand the great changes in which Jewish religion and religiosity appear today, when I learned of the past and applied what I have learned to the present. But i shall postpone any further discussion of this very interesting and impressive modern picture until 'we have arrived' in my story at our own moment in history.

Until then we shall continue with our story.

C H A P T E R I I I .

A new chapter began in the history of the Jews. In conformity with this recognition I am also taking up my history and my story under the heading of a new chapter. This is only a matter of convenience for writer and reader, as it the same thread which leads from Abraham to Moses to Jesajah to Rabbi Akiva to you.

1. And how they suffered !

At no time since they had been driven from their homeland, have the Jews forgotten their Holy Jerusalem, all it stood for and all it meant to them. They vowed to forget the use of their right hand rather than to forget the Holy City. They prayed for an early return. They cried to God to be sent home again. When the occasion made it necessary, they offered their lives to make an eventual restoration of their homeland Israel possible. Can you doubt that God felt pity for them ? He promised Himself, and He made His people sense, that He would do something to create suitable conditions for their return. But, still ! For many centuries nothing happened. I could bring so many explanations why this was so, but the one which appears to me most likely, is the possibility that His archangels did interfere, because they are stern creatures, not as soft-hearted as to overlook realities and facts, and they were not too sure that the Jews were ready to return. They were not motivated by jealousy or envy as some angels had been on previous occasions; they worried in the main that God might again be exposed to disappointments and that, in case of a renewed failure, He would suffer more than ever. In any case, for a long time, nothing decisive and nothing specific happened in the fate and life of the Jews - and also nothing concrete to reduce their misery due to their having to live everywhere as strangers, to be the butt of ridicule for everyone, the target of the murderer's lust for most. It must be difficult for you to imagine, safe and protected as you are today, how very cruel people have been all along mankind's history, and I do not mean only to the Jews. I venture to say that they were cruel for cruelty's sake, because they did not know better, because it was inconceivable to them, not to be cruel. I mentioned some instances on a preceding page, but I would like to enlarge on this a little more. We read in the Bible that the Israelites in warfare or in revenge killed off entire villages and tribes; but this was accepted as "nothing unusual". This was the customary way how things were handled. You may be inclined to call the events, as they are described in the Bible, murderous, inhuman, impardonable, but what are you going to say about the Greeks, the Indians, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Romans of the Antique, whose regimes were of the most unlimited cruelty ?

They treated the weak and the conquered in the most inhuman way. And what of the terrible sufferings which the rulers and leaders, whom history represents as civilized and enlightened, have inflicted on the powerless masses all through the Middle Ages ? If you study the history of mankind with open eyes and without prejudice you cannot fail to come to the conclusion that the Israelites behaved better than most. I agree with you that this is hardly a sufficient excuse, for I agree that the Jews, who had been called upon to become the moral guides of mankind, the light for the world, have failed in their early history, I could even say at most stages and epochs of history, even though and because they did not act differently from most other nations in existence. I ask you, what else could they do ? God understood that they could not have acted differently, and so should you be understanding. Had they refused to defend themselves, had they decided to keep to the ethical ideals of which they dreamed,, had they not kept to the standards of conduct and the methods of war as these were applied by their neighbours, nothing is more certain than that they would all have been slaughtered. Yes, do not look askance ! Of this you may be certain. Here is a case in point. Have you ever heard of the advice which Mahatma Gandhi, supposedly a wise and saintly man, gave to the Jews , when they were threatened with total annihilation by Hitler ? He told them to answer Hitler's hatred with love, not to resist but to offer themselves en masse and voluntarily for liquidation by either gas or bullets. For it was Gandhi's interpretation of the role which God had predetermined for the Jews, and his firm opinion that such a fearless and trusting behaviour of the Jews would so much touch, so much move and so much please Hitler, that he would love the Jews in turn, that he would spare their lives and that he would live with them in peace ever thereafter. Have you ever heard such a bullshit ? I have no doubt that Hitler and his hordes would have welcomed the Jew's docile collaboration, as it would have saved them thereby so much additional effort, manpower and energy. And it might have made a number of the leaders among the Allies in addition very angry as the troops and SS-men, thus freed from duty in the many concentration camps and would have made the war still more costly for the allied strategists.

I discover that until now I have been strolling along the byways of Jewish history at too leisurely a pace. This cannot go on. I shall have to hurry up, especially as all I am telling you and that I am explaining to you, is

meant in reality to be a kind of introduction only to the exposition of my very personal religious philosophy of which I want to convey to you at least a vague outline. There is still a long way for us to go until we arrive at that stage - and you must not mind, if we move faster from now onwards.

Here we go !

Hard had been the life and bitter the fate of our people, the Jews, for nearly all of the 1800 years which followed the destruction of the Second Temple. All through the centuries they were hunted and humiliated, from that traumatic even in the year 70 CE until at last, sixty generations later, a new chance was offered to the Jews. Let me point out to you that in every generation the Jews were given the opportunity to learn from the punishment to which they were exposed, and to be purified by the suffering they had to undergo. From the onset of the exile the Jews had ample time and occasion to reform and to mature into the kind of people which God wanted to see evolve as the prototype of mankind, which would ultimately come to populate His ideal world. Be it by the force of their existence, be it by the law of selection, be it by the grace of God, the Jews had been blessed with every kind of spiritual and intellectual gifts, and it is understandable that by the advantages they had been provided the envy and jealousy of the gentile world was aroused. Unfortunately the intellectual advantages of which the Jews disposed, were not applied in the direction and used in the manner which might have evoked the admiration and the tolerance - and possibly even to some extent also the love - of those among whom they lived. During the centuries of their dispersion hardly a generation did pass, when they were not persecuted and humiliated, degraded and killed, but never was there evidence which might convey to me the conviction that they had drawn the right conclusion, had learned the suitable lesson. They were never blessed with the insight to recognize the faults in their character. They blamed everything and everybody for their misfortunes but never themselves. Again and again, certainly with the consent of God, the Church saw it as her apparent task to punish them with the cruellest means available to her. Many were the times and occasions, when the Jews were driven from place to place, from country to country, where no piece of earth anywhere in the world was available to them to rest for a while. There were periods in which their

sufferings were less widespread. There were comfortable intervals in their lives, during which they could recover and reflect on their fate in comparative calm. There were epochs of relative peace, during which they could have freed the true values which they harboured, but instead, they preferred in those peaceful and relaxed times to absorb the asocial attitudes and the amoral habits prevalent in their host society. But when the balance is drawn, one has to conclude that the Jews had not changed, had not learned, though they had every time they were hurt and hit so incessantly and so loudly proclaimed their repentance, their intention to turn a new leaf. Oh yes ! They cried and they weeped. Year in and year out they said and they shouted that they repented their sins and their faults, that in the following year they would be good and decent people - but their repentance was not for long, even if it was a truly intended repentance. Unfortunately they did not draw from their acquired knowledge the right conclusions, did not, from the experiences through which they had to live, learn the logical consequences. It gives me the impression that every time they turned stubborn and were strengthened as if by the knowledge that they could never completely perish from the earth, that their enemies would never succeed in totally destroying them, because one day God's promises were surely going to be fulfilled, and they had to be alive and present for the fulfillment of the divine promise. They did not learn, they did not change. So far this has been the case throughout their history. It has been thus since the beginning of the first century of our common era. From the destruction of the Second Temple onwards they were exposed to every kind of misery and to every kind of violent death. Such prolonged persistent suffering and the consequential physical and moral degenerations would have finished off every other people on earth; and indeed, innumerable peoples have disappeared for ever for far less stringent reasons.

But it is an undoubtable fact that at no stage in their history has God even for a moment abandoned the Jews. He has punished them. He has permitted them to be hurt. Yes, for some periods He did "turn His face from them" , as the prophets were wont to say - but He never abandoned them. The Christian religion became the state religion of the mighty Roman Empire, and the first use the Church made of her newly acquired power was to use it against the Jews. Many or most of the peoples of Europe were christianized, and more or less the first lesson these converts learned from the monks and the priests

was how to hate and to persecute the Jews. This happened even in countries, where the inhabitants had never seen a Jew. When God introduced through Moh- ammad a new religion to counterbalance the extravagancies of Christianity, the followers of Islam searched to find in the Jews a first outlet for their hatred and bloodthirst. When God allowed the Crusaders to open a new chapter in the Jewish book of suffering, His children did not learn the right lesson, nay any lesson therefrom. God made the Church invent the scourge of the Inquisition, but even in the wake of the unendurable persecutions did our people show only too clearly that they were not inclined to change their life style not to improve their character trends. Would you believe it possible that even after that terrible experience and in view of that great loss of life one could not notice any change for the better in the life nor in the moral structure of the Jews ? God exposed them to the pogroms in Poland and to the knouts of the Cossacks of Russia, but while the majority of the vic- tims escaped into fanciful self-delusions and others fancied themselves into hallucinatory belief-systems, a large number of the persecuted Jews searched their physical salvation and personal survival abroad, to immerge among the better placed and financially more blessed Jews in the western countries for for themselves had neither drawn the right conclusions. You may register it AS a further evidence of the estrangement of the well- situated Jews in foreign countries from the thics and duties of their faith that the newcomers were in no unclear terms made to understand that they were unwelcome and that they had no feeling of sympathy for these newly arriving destitute and frightened brothers and sisters. All these things, which I have just now depicted rather superficially, are not specific for any particular epoch; they would and do fit into any of the centuries within the range of our millenium.

To a great extent these conditions of life of the Jews were also characteristic for the preceding milennium. In the Dark Ages which overcame Europe after the conquest of Rome by the Barbarians, the Jews were in no way actively engaged or partners in the rawness and rudeness which became the way of life, nor in the ruthness measures by which the mildest disputes were settled. But they were made responsible and were made to suf- fer. In the Middle Ages the Jews were not concerned with, nor ~~concerned~~ in

- except as victims - the cruelties and crimes so common in and so characteristic of those times. The only crimes they could be and were accused were those of being Jews, of being Christ-murderers, and that of living from usury as moneylenders. But their lot had improved then; developments occurred, changes set in which allowed a betterment in the ways the Jews lived. All through the centuries the Jews have endeavoured to exhibit and to represent a higher moral standard and a superior ethical level in the brutal and cruel environments, where even until a hundred years ago hungry children of ten years have been hanged in England for the crime of having stolen a loaf of bread. But never were the higher values of Judaism and the superior morality of the Jews recognized, and even less were they appreciated. It is fortunate that notwithstanding their inability to break out of their fetters of selfishness and envy, to rid themselves of the blinkers placed on their eyes by the fight for survival and the fear of suffering, the Jews could keep active that inner force with which they were endowed, that persistent strength which was born from their higher intellectual environment and spiritual heritage, from the knowledge of their specific vocation and from their expectation of a definite and defined history. This allowed them to survive the cruelty of their surroundings, the pitilessness of the ages with which they had to deal throughout their exile. The sages and the philosophers among the Christians and the Muslims were busily engaged to prove by word and pen how superior their own creeds were with respect to Judaism, and they were in competition with each other for the invention of the most effective ways to humiliate the Jews. Although there was never much love lost between Church and Mosque, they were agreed on their negative and aggressive attitudes to the Jews. One of the inventions which the Muslims shared with the Christians, was the "Yellow Patch of Shame", a spiritual and theological accomplishment instituted by the Fourth Lateran Council of Rome in 1215 - and until then reserved only for prostitutes. It must make us wonder about the quality of the Christian religion which in a morally tainted, a crime-ridden and corrupt world accused Jews of, and persecuted them for mostly insignificant offenses - which, in addition, were in most instances even totally baseless. < Let me point out already now, full of pride, satisfaction and hope, that Jews of and in Israel, who besieged and sorely tempted by enemies which practise the cruelties and the crimes, the insinuations and the accusations which are unchanged from those they knew so

inflict on the Jews in times past, do under the most trying circumstances behave today to their immediate and distant enemies in a far more humane way, than any other nation in the world does and ever did. But again, it is sad to state, also this fact is not recognized, it is studiously ignored and misinterpreted by the world's newsmedia. >

At every stage of their exile, and wherever they found themselves, have the Jews been strangers, unwelcome and repulsed even in the countries, where the actual inhabitants had immigrated and settled long after the arrival of the Jews. However, to the surprise of the gentile world (and let me add, also to that of the Jews themselves), the Jews have stubbornly stuck to their ancient religion, even after the many centuries of sufferings and in the face of the lures offered by conversion. Mommsen, a historian of the last century, feels forced, albeit reluctantly, to admit this fact. He cannot help himself but to call this phenomenon with acknowledged wonderment, an "unnatural perversity of the Jews".

2. Some Words about Enlightenment and some more about Science, Faith and the Bible.

A
Some five hundred years ago Europe underwent a great intellectual upheaval, and the shockwaves originating in the Renaissance period, in the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution continued for centuries and they finally culminated in 'The Enlightenment'. When that stage was reached also the Jewish people became indeed very deeply involved. They were pushed into a new era and they were made to face an apparently totally new situation. It was certainly new with respect to the way it affected globally all mankind, but for the now intellectually more than ever involved Jews it was a severer test and a far greater temptation than they had to face when they withstood the temptations of Hellenism. As this 'Enlightenment' was of great significance for the Jews no less than for the entire world, I feel it is important that I say something more extensively about this epoch insofar as it is required for your understanding of the modern stage of Jewish history.

You may not yet have learned or even heard about "Enlightenment" but you are sure to learn and hear in your education AND IN YOUR reading in the years to come about the enormously important cultural and spiritual changes which are herded under the banner of 'Enlightenment! I am not going to offer you here a longwinded discourse about this period; I am only going to describe in general terms this development, and this mostly only with regard to the issues which interest us in the framework of my story. The epoch of Enlightenment started at the beginning of the 17th century; it had grown up in the wake of - and could only have happened in the atmosphere of - the Renaissance and the Reformation. Enlightenment reached its highest point in the 18th century, after which it was replaced by Humanism and Pietism, but it could still find itself reflected in the Liberalism which predominated in Europe in the middle of the 19th century. It saw in 'Reason' the true essence of man and presented it as the generally valid scale with which everything could be measured. Enlightenment waged the fight against dogmatic rules and ecclesiastic dominance, involved itself into the struggle against the traditional ecclesiastic principles in the arena where light fought darkness, reason fought obscurantism, where priestly rule and tyranny were faced by man's demand for freedom of mind and thought. Christian orthodoxy had already made some concessions to Enlightenment, especially the protestant theology, but it feared the further developments and called Enlightenment "the work of Satan". The protagonists of Enlightenment considered themselves Christians, but they were sharply divided by the question of supporting 'Reason' as a supreme factor in man's evolution, which was refused by the orthodox Christians who believed in a revealed faith. Without making any concession Enlightenment demanded that a religion, if it has to have an acceptable content, should be based on 'Reason'.

Enlightenment restored to mankind its waning confidence in human worthiness, and it promised an opening into a better future. It promised tremendous changes in human perception. For the first time - at least since biblical times - injustice was recognized as a crime. Humanitarian ideas were given due attention. Individual rights were accorded their place in society. In short, you may say that a new wind was blowing away the spiderwebs of superstition, and a kind of spiritual earthquake planed and equalized the irregularities and the inequalities in human standards. "Reason", as I have already mentioned, was allotted an honourable place, and on the basis of the argument it raised, every religion in the era of Enlightenment was to come under attack and every theological postulate, law or dogma was examined through the spectacles of 'Reason'. Everything had to be proved with and by 'scientific methods'. Everything had to conform to the established laws and principles of Nature. /

However, the ranks of the faithful followers of the 'nature religion' were steadily eroded, especially of those who had not required for their spiritual equilibrium and their intellectual satisfaction a steady or insistent indoctrination from the pulpit of any of the organized religions,

and came also to refute any and all of the many cults which had been created in the ensuing vacuum. These men and women were capable of forming in and by themselves a satisfying and fulfilling philosophy of religion, a philosophically affirmative belief system.

Since the days of the Renaissance man had been nourishing the certainty that he could and would dominate and control nature and its forces. The certainty of his inner strength and power, of his knowledge and independence, formed itself into a concept of supreme importance, because it assured mankind that it was offered in the newly arisen philosophy a platform on which it could construct a new all-embracing and all-explaining creed. The outcome of this inner certainty, this pride of independence and of this philosophically conclusive argument with its answers and its reactions, were easily accepted by wide circles among the educated classes, because Nature could easily be understood without metaphysical overtones. A 'religion of nature' without the need of a god or any number of gods to make the universe function properly, was the result.

5 You may be inclined to interject that this type of 'nature religion' means only a return to that of the primitive peoples. But this would be a wrong conclusion. Fundamentally this principle, these nature religions differed from the kind of religion which are known to primitive peoples - and which in a certain sense can be said the forerunner of all religion - because the primitive religions try to explain natural phenomena with an anthropomorphic imagery. i.e. the visualizing God in human form, with human features and sensations. Until not so long ago everything which happened in nature and to man had to have reference to a divinity which managed and regulated any event. Only with the flourishing of the sciences was it possible to offer a definite explanation of the natural phenomena on a scientific basis. It is an interesting fact that science and progress have not always and in every case succeeded to replace anthropomorphic formulations and expressions. This is still very marked in Christianity. The various christian churches and sects have to this day to fight against the trend to apply the concepts, the images and the verbiage of the nature-religions cults, The application and explanation of trances, stigmata, hysteroid activities and so on as divinely inspired supernatural manifestations. The creation of saints as a deviative and compensatory metaphysical tool is today no more as effective as in the past. In times past, especially in the Middle Ages could blame all shortcomings on demonic forces, building up a belief in magic and witches as a kind of safeguard against popular unrest and in making sure of her monotheistic predominance.

3 With the extending frontiers of the natural sciences and the progressive successes of the experimental sciences a series of theories became possible, with the help of which the origin and the working of the Universe as well as of the observable physical changes were better

understood. The natural sciences had in an excess of optimism set out to give us the answers to all the questions which we want to see solved, but the scientists had themselves to confess that this is impossible, that they have not to offer the knowledge of things which which is an indispensable demand and a characteristic of our humanity; and they have to make use of metaphysics in order to provide us with an enlarged knowledge. Man's place in the world and mankind's purpose in the Creation were not explained. These issues were not even mentioned. In the new natural philosophy which crowned nature as the supreme instance, man was excluded as a factor of any significant value for the systematic laws which govern the Universe. You can well understand that in consequence religions which relied on a metaphysical acceptance and an inner knowledge of a Godhead as the ultimate Creator and as the Ruler of the Universe, as the Controller of the mechanism which governs the world, felt secure in their faith and could confront the spiritual upheaval with equanimity. These established religions which did not rely on, or did not have to adduce scientific tests and proofs for their theology, had available in their belief systems an anchor to which a large part of humankind continued to fasten.

When Enlightenment rode into history on the back of science along the trail blasted by Renaissance and Reformation, a new intellectual and theological configuration appeared in the clouds of dust it had raised. A wave of thoughts, ideas, theories presented in a flood of pamphlets became the order of the day. All of this was not exactly new; these ideas had in some degree and in embryonic form already been created and nourished by the Reformation, but they could only now become outspoken and boldly presented with the arrival of the 'Age of Science'. These new ideas which created doubts in the veracity of the Bible were based on the all-exclusive argument that whatever was contained in the Bible was eo ipso incompatible with the scientific discoveries of the Bible.

3. A few additional Remarks about the Bible.

In view of what I have just now said, and remembering my former occasional remarks about the Bible, I feel it necessary to add a few remarks.

When we speak of the Bible or the Scriptures we mean essentially the 'Torah', the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses, but it comprises also the Books of the Prophets and Booksoof 'Other Writings'. The word 'Torah' derives from the root 'to teach' and is usually translated as the 'Law'. It refers to all the regulations and teachings relating man to God, and of man to his fellowmen. The Bible records history, which to the Israelites meant history of the acts of God. History was recorded but it was mainly interpreted as God's part in the historic process and also to teach mankind its religious duties.

The Bible indicates and regulates the relation of God to Israel, and in turn of Israel's relation with God, as well as that of the Jews

among themselves and to other peoples and people. I have already mentioned that Israel, by its appointment has nolens volens to be holy because God is holy. God wishes to share His holiness with His people. The people is holy in its entirety as a nation. Holiness cannot be visualized without a moral basis, hence Israel has to be a moral nation. For God is perfect and by association Israel has to aspire to perfection. In the words of the great prophet Isaiah holiness is very much emphasized in its ethical conception.

In the Bible man and life are important in particular in their relationship to God. Man does not stand in the centre of the Bible, but man is an important part of the Bible because God communicates with him. These conceptions reverberate in the writings of the Prophets of Israel where, as in the Torah, God takes up the centre. Also the Covenant is painted into a central place: the sins the people commit are violations of the Covenant and on every occasion the people are reminded that a sin is a stain on their holiness. The ethical demands are very central and much superior to the ritual in the preaching of the prophets. Their main concern was to induce the Jew to be acceptable by and to God. The main significance of the Prophets rests on the fact that they never ceased to teach the "primacy of morality"; to make it evident that religion and morality are intimately associated. They taught that God desires obedience to the moral laws and that sacrifices will never undo and erase any act of disobedience. Sin did indeed mean in pre-prophetic times a contravention of the ritual to be corrected by the offer of a suitable sacrifice.

It is specific for a revealed religion, and was accepted as a fact by the ancient Jews - as it is today by the orthodox Jews as well as by the Christians - that the Bible has been written by God and handed over to Moses. This is for them a fact and cannot even be discussed. Similar is the belief of the Muslims that the Q'ran has been taught to Mohammad by the Archangel Gabriel. There is sense nor profit in any attempt to dispute with scientists, who demand as a sine qua non for accepting the above statement to be presented with scientific proofs and experimentally provable facts. Do not think that these scientists try to be obstreperous or obstinate; they quite rightly point out that scientific analysis and research imply the quest for a scientifically proven truth, and that they cannot, therefore, identify with what is for others 'biblical truths'. One could counter that that it is possible to interpret the biblical truths if not as facts at least as hypotheses and as allegories, that they express the truth as it presented itself to mankind's range of understanding, comprehension and imagining some 3-4000 years ago; that we should try to accept the Bible reports ancient humanity's concepts and images even older than that, as the legends we find in the Bible have been known already to many of the peoples of the Antique whose cultures predated that of the Hebrews. We should not be rigid in demand and interpretation. We should not simply shrug off the possibility that the ancients knew very much of things which we have only "recently" discovered ourselves, but they expressed their

if not in a purposefully veiled form, than at least in the images and the language of their days. In this connection I want to put forward the argument that you should not take literally when, e.g. the Bible says that "God created the world within six days" You should reflect that it would have been impossible to explain to mankind of ages, cultures and conceptions past that with 'days' developmental stages, hugely extended periods are meant. And let me ask you? " How would you explain what 'eons' are to a man of the Antique, who did not know of mathematics, numbers and so on ?" And let me in addition point out, that when the Bible speaks of the 'creation of the world' only our earth is meant, our planet earth, and not the universe.

For generations past people have been told that the Bible is infallible. The Christians settled whatever doubts there arose with a series of dogmas established by the scholastics, mainly by Thomas of Aquinas and by the Council of Trent. For the Jews there is no such easy way out. However, when the Bible came to be criticized more and more by the scientists, the dogmas lost much of their power.

Let me give you another instance of the objections raised by scientific-minded bible critics. They will tell you that the sequence of the creative production which God performed according to the first chapter of Genesis, is incompatible with scientific facts and contradicts the simplest biological and astrophysical rules. Let this not disturb you, and even less, do not let this kind of discussion which arises whenever the creation is described, affront you. The earth, the living beings, the firmament and so on may not have made their appearance in the sequence mentioned in Genesis; they may not fit into scientific laws and discoveries; but what we read in this respect in the Pentateuch should be enough for us to take it all in all to accept it as the way in which the original scribes supposed it to have happened. It is important that you realize that we do not read the Bible in order to gain from it a detached scientific information. Let us simply accept and view it as a matter of truth that the world, the Universe and all that is and exists, were the work of a divine Creator, that the description is antiquated but that the fact is eternal.

This is the reason why I do not deem it of such a great importance in which sequence the appearance of plants and animals on earth are reported in the Bible, whether the birds came before or after the "beasts of the earth", and whether the latter came after or before the evolution of the fish and so on. All that is written in Genesis ~~is true~~ in the eyes of the ancient people, and it was accepted as pure truth by the authors of the Bible. Nowhere is it written that God did tell them, how and when He had performed the various creative acts; man had to discover this for himself, and it was given to him to change his ideas about the Creation and his perception of it, from time to time, as it becomes necessary and as it is made inevitable by the scientific and other discoveries which have consequently and consecutively formed or changed the knowledge of mankind. If we take such a view of things and adopt such an interpretation, the usual time factor

and time values do not apply, i.e. all these happenings do not have to be placed in an orderly form and sequence; its rhythm, its systematization, its repetition and its measurements have not to be given in exact terms.

Do you know that it would even today be an impossible task to present to that section of mankind which is scientifically not adequately educated and mentally not sufficiently prepared, an adequately complete and complex scientific explanation and description of the evolution of the earth, of the solar system and of all the many involved biological processes? At every epoch and age mankind has read into the Bible that kind and complexity of a history, of a story and of a truth as it is inescapable to understand and as it is fit to derive from it. You should clearly distinguish between the pseudo-historic and pseudo-scientific representations in the Bible and its spiritual and intellectual content. I am the first to concede that there are a large number of statements in the Bible which are totally unacceptable to the scientifically minded. I am, therefore, placing on record that it is my opinion that it is wrong, even foolish, of the theologians belonging to the various religions, to attempt to defend the various unscientific statements contained in the Bible, with apologies, or to persuade people with arguments. Let me again point out to you, that you should not be in any doubt that the authors of the Bible expressed their ideas, their knowledge and their inspiration according to the culture, to the mentality and the symbolism which prevailed and were understood in their days. Let us for a moment place ourselves at their side. Should we ourselves receive and asked to transmit a divine message and be asked to explain its meaning in scientific terms and in the social context of today, we can be sure that we are going to be criticised and ridiculed as unscientific, as improbable, and even as puerile a few centuries hence. Therefore, my children, do not be discouraged and despondent. I have ~~not~~ in these pages endeavoured to deliver a difficult lecture and a complicated course of instruction or a convoluted philosophical explanation, any or all of which you would be unable to understand. Take my words in their simplest meaning, which is, that one should take into account the fact over the years humankind's mental images and philosophical concepts are bound to change, and that in the past other descriptions and different interpretations than ours have been used by those who transmitted the Bible, first by word of mouth and later by copying one edition from the other. I must also remind you that what we read today as the Bible is the 'sacerdotal edition', i.e. the outcome of the efforts of the priests of the 6th century BCE to make the Jews strictly follow the ritual laws. to accept without criticism the rigors of the orthodox Shabbath, to make them follow the most rigid rules for the baking of Mazzoth, and so on. This will explain - I agree, only partially will this be the case - why in your eyes and ears so many of the orders, rules, laws and opinions have been imposed on the Jews. Have you not also already decided, inside yourselves at least, that our God could not be so petty and so narrow-minded as to insist on such a kind of restrictions and limitations. I see in that side of the Bible reflected the ordinances issued by the trade union

of priests; they had, you may rest assured, more efficient tools at their disposal that strikes, sit-daowns or slow-downs.

I am sorry to have felt it necessary to interrupt my description of the effects which the 'Enlightenment' had on the Jews. You will understand that I had to make these remarks, because when the new movement became effective, the Bible was exposed to attacks from every side and angle. You will, I hope, forgive this interruption. I have only to add further that in general the Enlightenment had a very great impact not only on the intelligentsia, but also on the general population, even on those who had no direct contact with scientific research and application. The Enlightenment - Aufklaerung, in German, l'eclasicissement in French - awoke in all the belief that at last a light had appeared by which the darkness of ignorance, superstition and bigotry were going to be dissipated, and that reason and reasoning would be given their due respect.

4. And what of Emancipation ?

The socially depressed classes were to benefit most from the blessings which Enlightenment had brought in; and among these the Jews profitted perhaps more than any other group. You must ready yourselves now for a disappointment. You would have expected that the Jews, who after so many centuries of oppression and humiliation were at last enabled to enter a newly opened and more or less unrestricted world of freedom and equality, would make use of these opportunities to free themselves of the fear and the snarl of the persecuted; that they would give vent to their pride and open breathing space to their Jewish values; that they would jubilantly give exposure to their inherited spiritual treasures. Just the opposite was the case. Everywhere in Europe you could notice the same phenomenon. The Jews thought it was their duty to repay the kindness which the gentiles had shown to them by the newly proclaimed humanistic, humanitarian and liberal ideas, through the, though still restricted but in comparison to the past most unusual social acceptance of the formerly so despised Jews, by refuting and abandoning Judaism, by queuing up at the baptismal fountains. In short by becoming Christians. In many an instance they went even further and turned into veritable antisemites.

In the course of my study of this chapter in Jewish history one glaring fact has become clear to me: at no time in history have the Jews ever wanted to gain their freedom. I mean with this their freedom as Jews. Yes, they have prayed and sighed to God; they have cried and wept for freedom ; they have again and again implored the world at large for help to be free people. They have insisted that they want to be recognized and respected as Jews. But whenever the occasion offered itself by which their wishes could have been fulfilled, whenever the opportunity to achieve this was at hand, they denied, they refused, they overlooked the offer. Yes ! They ignored nearly every such possibility. They ignored their chances when the walls of the ghettos were torn down and they could leave to live anywhere else. Instead they preferred to continue to reside in those very same dark and narrow streets which they had never ceased to curse and hate as evidence of their humiliation. I have come to register with something like horror the impression that in reality have never lost their slave mentality, that they prefer life and conditions in the diaspora to an existence as free men whenever such was available to them. Did and do they fear the responsibility which freedom encompasses, the duties a free people has to face ? Do they dread the moment when as free people they are confronted with the demands of God and mankind to take on their responsibilities, to prove their worth ? Do they behave thus, because they know that, once they have no more the excuse of a limited freedom, they will be asked to stand up and to act in an equivalent of a "Hic Rhodos, hic salta" ? I was to see my pessimism confirmed by the statements of leading theologians and philosophers who think they are better off in the diaspora; can be better Jews among the gentiles.

Even though in the 18th century, under the impact of Enlightenment and Liberalism the Jews had been offered in most of the countries of Europe a better way of life, you should not think that all at once, from one day to the other, they were totally free, fully accepted and humanly equal. By far not ! The "emancipation" of the Jews began in 1791 when the French National Assembly established the principle of religious tolerance and when it granted full citizenship to every Jew. The Napoleonic laws were introduced into every country which the French subsequently conquered. By the 19th century Jewish emancipation was effective in most countries of western Europe

as well as in America. But also the process of emancipation was slow and was only reluctantly recognized by the gentile world as justified and as inevitable. But there was every reason and possibility to expect that the first hesitant moves would progressively lead to the full emancipation of the Jews - even without the strong impetus this process had received from the French Revolution and the favourable legislation issued thereafter by Napoleon. But large parts of Europe, America and Asia appeared to barricade themselves against the forces of progress, against the demands of Enlightenment and the forces of Emancipation - but there was no doubt that also these countries like Russia, the Ottoman Empire, the Vatican and other reluctant conservative powers who resisted the grant of freedom to the Jews living under their jurisdiction, would in due course also break down the ghettos of the Jews. There were, however, other difficulties coming from the Jews themselves: the orthodox establishment feared that emancipation would lead to assimilation and estrangement from the faith. These anti-enlightenment forces made great effort to deviate whatever appeared as a possible emancipatory attraction. The continued survival of the Russian Jews was endangered and this was well recognized by their spiritual leaders, but these preferred to keep their flocks in ignorance as enlightenment meant assimilation. Let me give you an example: Reb Schneur of Lyadi, a well-respected talmudic authority, preferred the Czar's antisemitic decrees to Napoleon's emancipatory grants, because in case Napoleon would remain victorious, baptism and assimilation would inevitably become the vogue, while the Czar's pogroms would force the Jews to close ranks.

All the signs signalled a smooth progress towards the individual and social adjustment of the Jews. But somehow things went awry. While on the one hand the liberated Jewish genius found ample room and opportunity to expand in the fields of art, literature, philosophy and science, which until then had been totally closed to them, and to occupy therein often even leading position, the majority of the Jews, who had jumped into the current of emancipation, was carried by it straight into the arms of the Christian priests whose hands and cross these Jews kissed and whose ardent followers they became. Others thought they could use their arms, now freed from chains, to carry the banners of revolution, or even that of anarchy, into the socially depressed classes; they thought, they could apply their mental faculties - now no more

suppressed or restricted - to call for reform ,rebellion,insurrection. It may well be that in this way they acted in accordance with the plan and the consent of God - how do I know ?

These terrific changes,the revolutions and the evolutions which characterise the epoch of Enlightenment and its aftermath, gripped not exclusively the Jews and not only these in the so-called 'civilized and advanced countries', but they carried along also those who lived in the backward countries - you may believe me that this word is applied with great justification-like Poland and Russia, where the largest masses of Jews were concentrated. 'Concentration' is the right word, for theywere herded into densely populated towns and villages, into the so-called 'stetls' inside the 'Pale of Settlement'; there they were forced to live within the limits of a small number of districts which they could not leave even temporarily, except on rare occasions and with the permission of the Police./One can state without exaggeration that the Jews of Eastern Europe had suffered over long centuries more than other human beings, not only because they were economically deprived, but also1 because they were viewed **AND** treated as subhumans by the Czar and his officials.

The 18th and 19th centuries were in many aspectys centuries of revolutions and changes. What threats and violence, temptations and bribes could not achieve over one and a half millenia, i.e. the voluntary disappearance of the Jewish people through immersion into the ~~Ch~~Christian religion, became possible by that minimal degree of kindness which the gentile world was ready to grant. The devaluation in the importance of religion and faith, which Enlightenment had preached , which Reason had demanded and which Nature had explained made the estrangement from Judaism an effortless move. Moses Mendelsohn, the vaunted German-Jewish philosopher of the Emancipation is a good example. He tried to make Judaism palpable to the gentile world, and he endeavoured to offer the Jews a flattened view of their traditional beliefs. He preached that Judaism has no exclusive right on the revelation of the truth, that it is in any case not a revealed religion but a revealed legislation. "Only commands and no faith was issued at Sinai", hersaid. Reason was to him 'the mistress of religion' Does it come as a supprise to you that most of his followers and nearly all his children and grandchildren saw in his 'philosophy' enough justifiication to abandon Judaism ? I am very

certain that at this moment in history we can witness definite evidence of God's presence and care by rendering ourselves conscious of His intervention in the ~~course of the~~ Jewish history; for when the danger of a 'painless and gradual' elimination of the Jews became overwhelming, and when the Jews were flocking en masse to the baptismal founts, a new principle was introduced into the lifestream of the eternal hatred and envy which the Christian harbour against the Jews. AN important and impressive 'scientific discovery' was made and at once accepted by all and sundry, viz: that it was through Jewish genes - ~~as~~ as the Spaniards had already observed and proclaimed, by the "Jewish blood" - that an individual was imprinted as a Jew for ever, and that this fact could not be washed away ever by a few drops of water, not even by a huge waterfall. Once a Jew, a Jew was a Jew forever. This was the great a great discovery and a scientifically proven eternal truth. When Enlightenment had struck the western world, a change of name, a large donation, a rich dowry had been sufficient, though at times essential too, to change a Jew into a Christian. Henceforth this was no more possible.

You may believe me , that in this unique way God has saved the Jews from disappearing entirely. It is true that in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries a large number of them did disappear, but this may have been an advantage for all of us. A solid and valuable remnant has survived and thrived.

I hope you have understood what I want to convey to you. I hope you are able to realize the significance and the substance of the picture I have painted just now in a few strokes, of the conditions which affected and stirred the Jewish people, particularly in the course of the last century. You will understand that I cannot enlarge here further on this theme, cannot give you a more detailed history, nor provide more exact and statistically elaborated surveys. I fervently wish, however, that you will crave for these and that you will, when you are ready, dedicate some at least of your time to read about this chapter of Jewish fate and history, and that you will not stop your studies until you have gained a full picture of what has been going on during all these interesting and painful years.

5. Assimilation and Misinterpretation.

You will be as disappointed as I am to learn that the Jews of Europe had not learned to evaluate what significance the changes for them personally had which were affecting the entire world. They had not become aware of the significance of the moment when the world had become illuminated by the spirit of Enlightenment which granted human rights, albeit reluctantly, also to the Jews. It is a pity that they did not sense in the new developments a divine plan, the perception of which could have guided them to an unhampered self-realization. They missed the turning point in their destiny which could have led them at last to become the light which the world so keenly desired. For now the windows into the future were, by the impact of the enlightened ideas and the flow of scientific discoveries, cleared of the spiderwebs which superstition and ignorance had spun in the course of the millenia, and which the Church had permitted to grow ever more dense, so that they might obscure reason and paralyze criticism. It is unfortunate that even in view of all their past painful experiences and within this for them opportunity-loaded atmosphere the Jews did not react in the way that was expected of them. I would express myself in even stronger terms and say that they did not react in the way their duty had prescribed for them, i.e. to show to the expectant and now receptive gentile world that, freed now from the need to pursue the often unethical practices which the exigencies of self-defense and the instinct of self-preservation had made necessary at times, they were able, capable and willing at last to show the same ethical standards as prevailed in their environment. They could have demonstrated to themselves and to others that they could, if given the chance, live as honest, altruistic, friendly and proud people; and they could have impressed the world of gentiles with their inherent good qualities and with their traditional values as Jews; and they could, by their conduct and by their example, have provided the explanation why God had selected them to carry His message and to show the way to redemption. However, they did not make use of this chance, they did not get hold of this opportunity to prove themselves as messengers, as witnesses, as prototypes of what Jewry and Judaism in truth do signify. In this they failed again. What a pity! They only saw the doors which the new wind had blown

open into an existence which was to them assimilation and possibly even salvation, but which for God and Jewry meant nothing else than extinction and oblivion.

As you have by now found out with no less sadness and disappointment than I experience myself, even the sternest warnings and the heaviest punishments which were increasingly inflicted on the Jewish people by the hands of their enemies did not influence them to look inwards. Quite clearly these afflictions and persecutions could only have happened with the consent of God, though hardly by His orders. These persecutions already some 3000 years ago after God had offered His chosen people so many privileges and so many facilities to mature to its task, its duty and its destiny. Neither have the untold inducements and promises which had been transmitted to them through the prophets cleared away from their souls the clinkers, which over the thousands of years had accumulated from misconceptions, selfishness and indulgence.

Our world of today is swept along by a tidal wave caused by the never diminishing tidal wave of the technical improvements' and this wave threatens to overcome and even to destroy our civilization. It is not only the terrifying risk of the thermonuclear conflict and conflagration, not only the biospheric changes in the ozone layer above our atmosphere due to the interference and the abuse by the new chemicals in use, not only the progressive soil erosion, the forest destruction and the population explosion which threaten life on earth and carry with them the danger that we may soon reach in all this respect the point of no return, but there is also the growing cultural nihilism which has become overwhelmingly noticeable in the last few decades, in the corrosion of the moral infrastructure and the reduction of the deep-seated values which until now have sustained mankind in general and Judaism in particular in the confrontation with the threats of corruption. Let us render ourselves conscious that a new age has started and that we face new dangers. Recent scientific developments and mankind's brutalization have increased the threat to the world of its own destruction and also that of our earth. This might mean the possibility that God may have reached a final and negative decision, that He may ultimately abandon humanity by bringing about the destruction, the devastation of the entire planet earth and all it contains. But as I see it, the latest developments have so clearly demonstrated

God has decided to give the Children of Israel - and through them to the world as a whole - a further chance. Within the framework of His latest - possibly last - plan He must have decided to inflict on the Jews a last warning of a kind and to an extent which the Jewish people, which even all history, had not known so far.

You will feel quite rightly some unease because I always insist that only the Jews can be instrumental, ~~can~~ be relied upon to save the spirituality and the ethic heritage of humankind. You will point out to me that there are other religions and creeds which in their original, fundamental and pure substance can only be pleasing to God, and that even if He insists that only Judaism can be the sole 'appointee', He could quite well arrange that these by some kind of symbiosis with the Jews would make it easier for the latter to advance to their goal. And in addition you will insist, as there are some good and decent people among the Jews there are surely also some good and decent people among the non-Jews, it is for their sake and with their collaboration and no less than for the sake of the Jews, the world has to be saved. You are right and I have no quarrel with this argument. I am of the same opinion.

It is certainly not for their racial purity that the Jewish people are distinguished from others. You have only to look at the racial variations you encounter among the Jews walking along the streets of Jerusalem to have any residual doubt of yours soon evaporate. Don't take any notice of the efforts of the rabbinical establishment to persuade us and themselves that we Jews are the racially pure descendants of Jacob's twelve sons. The divine message of electivity and selectivity has been granted to the totality of the Jewish people, belongs to whomever is willing to identify with the Jewish faith and fate, to whomever is ready to take upon himself the burden and the duty which the original Children of Israel have taken upon themselves, to whomever agrees to proclaim that he feels as he himself had been standing at the foot of Mount Sinai during that momentous event in the history of the Jews, when Israel entered into that decisive covenant with God. Nowadays, as I have already mentioned before, we have to add, we have to adapt this definition to make it include all those whom Hitler would have included in his definition as belonging to the "Jewish race".

Our modern world boasts of an enormous number of religious movements, sects and subsects, and each one of them claims to know the truth, to possess the only key to heaven, to have the only right to exist. Don't mind them. Don't object to them. All of them should be allowed to cultivate their beliefs; all of them should continue in their search for a way to the truth, because they all, in some form or to some degree, refer to Israel and to the message we carry. They all could be of definite value and benefit to the world at large. They all may positively influence human-kind's future, provided they could be made to forego their not uncommonly violent methods of proselytization, provided they could bring themselves to recognize Israel's superiority, and provided they could mature sufficiently - morally and intellectually - to submit to Israel's spiritual leadership. Unfortunately, in nearly every case, the contrary is the case. The attitude of the religions and cults crowding each other in the marketplace filled with "seekers of the truth" is characterized by a deep hostility against the Jews. Unpleasant as the contacts with the usually fanatic "bearers of the truth" so often are - and at times they can degenerate into more than intellectual disputes - they may give you some consolation from a psychological point of view, as we could not be wrong to interpret them and their antagonism to indicate a subconscious recognition of the truth, of the justification of that very claim I have made for the special position, even the supremacy of the Jewish people. On the other hand you have to view it as a definite Jewish failure not to have shed that clear light, not to have created that respect for which the world of believers wants to perceive in the Jews of today. We can satisfy their search, our position will only be recognizable, the respect which is needed as a sine qua non can only be granted to us, after the many negative and unfavourable criteria which Israel has accumulated, under which the true values are hidden, have been eradicated.

Although I have mentioned it already here and there in the preceding pages, it is not within my program to elaborate on the effects which the 'Enlightenment' had on the further development of humanity in general. One can say in a few words, that after a span of a thousand years

cultural , and to a certain extent also of intellectual stagnation, the epoch of the Renaissance emerged to steer the ship of mankind into a totally different direction. Out of the awakening of man from his cultural and intellectually lethargy, after the rediscovery of his ancient treasures and along with his race to create a new world of beauty and aesthetics, another equally decisive shift to a larger and higher level occurred, in which a new era was finalized and consolidated, and in which discoveries in the scientific domain and revolutionary changes in the industrial field acted as godparents to bring a new flowering to mankind.

You will have to be satisfied with a few titbits of history, as it would be impossible for me to expand to any length the chapters of the story I am telling. The day will come when you will notice the desire to spend some of your time on a more extensive study of the effects which Enlightenment and Emancipation have had on the Jews. I shall not be surprised should you come to learn with sadness, what I have told you already before, viz:- that my negative remarks had been fully justified. I mean my statement that ultimately and basically most of our Jews had not wanted to accept their freedom when it was offered to them, when this freedom intended to mean the chance at last to live and to speak freely as Jews, when it meant the right to exhibit, without the fear of being understood by a critical and hostile environment, the intrinsic values of Judaism. They failed when it was possible at last to prove to the gentile world - which fundamentally was expecting such proof - that we are capable and fit to live as an independent people in accordance with the accepted international standards. A proud confirmation of the Jews' Jewishness would eo ipso indicate to us and to the world that we are prepared, that we are strong enough to fulfill our proper duties as a member of the family of nations, that we do submit to the moral obligations imposed upon us as the Chosen People, that we are conscious of being the spiritual carriers of God's commands and wishes. All this would have meant that we do not need any reminder from outside to make us recall, that we have an appointment with God to live and act as a holy people.

Alas, nothing of All this has happened. The unique opportunity was missed, was overlooked, was neglected. The Jews preferred instead to

interpret the offer, implied in the revolutionary changes which embraced all Europe, as a request, as an invitation to abandon Judaism. Large numbers of emancipated Jews converted to Christianity. Many became 'Freethinkers'. These Jewish people who radically deny the existence of God, joined other movements of non-believers who reject religion in any form. You could say that in principle also the Freethinkers could be defined as a religious movement - and I would agree with you. They refuted religion as such, and Judaism as a religion. We may count it as a good mark for them that they did not declare that Judaism is of less significance and value than Christianity as those who emerged from underneath the baptismal water intended to convey. If you ask me how any Jew could ever have preferred Christianity as his religion, or how anybody could ever be blind and negative about the existence of God, of a Creator, I can only reply that I am as puzzled as you are. I know quite well that it is a fact that many Jews converted in order to further their careers, did give up their Jewish heritage in the expectation of reaching higher graded jobs, did kiss the cross in the hope of gaining financial advantages. I know also that many did so out of cowardice, but I am unable to have sympathy for such people. I refuse to accept such explanations and reasons from a mentally normal and balanced person as a viable excuse for his conversion. To my mind such people, whatever their motives, should be treated with the scorn and contempt they merit. My judgement sounds possibly too harsh, but I cannot detect an honest attitude in those who want to persuade me that they have found the message of Christ superior to that of Judaism. The bloody history of the Churches show only too clearly that the very message which they propagate is a fake in their own eyes. What is the message? Salvation through the "redemption to come"? This messianic hope has since ever been inherent in Judaism, and whenever an individual has come forward with messianic claims, he has always been certain of at least a hearing. When he failed to bring proof of his messianic promises, he submerged again to remain at best a footnote in the history of the Jews. The message of Christianity that the messiah has already arrived, was and is unacceptable to the Jews, as he could at no stage prove his claims in the past nor in our own unredeemed world. The lame explanations and reasons brought forward for this incongruity being attempted to be brought home through Jewish suffering and blood, could not make any thinking and feeling Jew but shake his head in disbelief.

6. And now some words about Anti-Semitism.

Things reached such a state that within 2-3 generations a large section of Jewry was lost forever, and in no less a large number of Jews the foundations of their faith had become dangerously undermined. The continued existence of the Jewish people was placed in jeopardy. There was every possibility that within a century there would not be any Jews left, at least not in the western countries of Europe. However something developed which prevented this disaster. "Anti-Semitism" became stronger than ever. Anti-Jewish resentment has existed since the Jewish nation was formed, and what we label as A'anti-Semitism' today has been along with Christianity our heritage. But at this stage in the history of the Jewish people a new aspect of the established and inherited anti-Semitism became manifest. A form of anti-Semitism surfaced which thoroughly affected and infected the entire Christian world. It inflicted also great harm to the Jews. We are justified to say that it was a social characteristic of the gentiles everywhere, even in countries where there were no Jews among them, even in countries where the population had never met a Jew . Psychologic and sociologic researchers have tried to explain what happened, but they have failed to find a satisfactory answer. This is one of the 'developments' in history for which no specific single reason can be found. Since long an army of researchers has been digging for the psychologic, historic, economic and other possible causes and reasons for anti-Semitism, but the many theories and hypotheses they have produced are not convincing. No consensus exists among experts so far. They have not been able to convince each other either. I personally can only find satisfaction in my own way to explain this phenomem, viz:- that we have to perceive in what was happening - and as I am going to describe to you in detail - one of those occasional or periodic 'pushes', one of those decisive shifts which God - who, as I have told you already, does otherwise nowadays not intervene in the events on our earth - introduced into human thinking and acting. Or to describe my concept in other terms: He gave a new aspect, a new indication and a new intonation to the long ago established chronically poisoning evil

of anti-semitism which already in the past had served as a corrective method to discipline the Jews, which had always been a whip kept threateningly raised over the heads of the Jews.

Much as I would have liked to do, this is not going to become an extended chapter with an elaborated sociological and psychological analysis of the type of hatred with its variations, which the gentiles have nourished about the Jews since Christianity was in its infancy. There exists more books about anti-Semitism than even the largest library hall in the world could ever accommodate. This should also show you, among other things, that so far nobody has been able to evolve a definite explanation or to produce a complete description of this particular perennial evil.

The word 'anti-Semitism' is a badly, even stupidly selected term. It does not adequately, and less even exactly, describe the hatred to which exclusively the Jews have been exposed for such a long time, as this word could also be applied - possibly exclusively - to the Arabs who are the only pure semites in existence, while one could hardly call the Jews a homogenous semitic 'race'. "Anti-Judaism" would be a more correct label, but as "anti-Semitism" is today the 'registered trademark' for the negative attitude which the gentiles exhibit towards us, I am not going to change, in my talk to you at least, the name under which this form of human depravity has been and is flourishing. In the Antique an anti-jewish posture may have been understandable as a reaction of certain peoples and nations who lived in the neighbourhood of Israel and were in frequent conflict with the Israelites. After all such an attitude, such an angry and hostile reaction is a common feature among conflicting nations and in subjected peoples. However, nowhere else in the history of and in connection with any other nation in past or in present history is the aversion and hatred among two or more peoples given such an exclusively negative notion leading to unexplainable excesses. Already in the Antique has this adversity, this hostility at a certain stage taken on an irrational and fanatical character. This was the case with the hellenized populace in the large towns of Egypt, where the Jews often made up the socially and economically dominant class, and where their competitors gave vent to their frustration, their envy and their anger by the use of expressions, by physical attacks, by other aggressive manifestations, which we can with justification call - by benefit of our modern experiences - the precursors and the persistent sources of modern anti-Semitism.

What has to be seen as the real and true form of anti-Semitism, as that form of hatred which is expressed and formulated in fantastic, incredible and irrational accusations supported by the invention of most untrue and devilish interpretations, has been the exclusive contribution of the Christian Church. The Christians were educated to make the Jews

collectively responsible for the death of Jesus. This prevented the Jews until a century or two ago from becoming part of the society which was exclusively controlled by the Church. Luckily business and money affairs were viewed as unchristian occupations, so that there were at least some zones in the world which they could share with their enemies and where they could earn a living. Anti-Semitism has since ever been the always available multipurpose weapon in the arsenal of the Church. Thanks to the Church anti-Semitic demagoguery has been the main cause of pogroms and murders. I dare say that Christianity since its inception, i.e. from the time it found itself in competition with Judaism for the souls of possible converts and for the favours of the Roman overlords, has "lived on anti-Semitism". I want to impute even that Christianity would not have survived for long, had it not woven into its theology a diabolic program for the victimization of the Jews. Ancient christian theological literature contains an inexhaustible vocabulary by which the Jews are depicted as enemies of God, of the Church and of mankind. There is hardly a Saint from whose holy mouth contributions to this effect have not spouted. John the Evangelist and the Church Fathers had no doubt that the 'Anti-Christ' would be a Jew - and this belief continues to this day to be nourished by the Church.

For nearly 2000 years, from the time that the judaeo-christian brotherhood of the first century of our era was broken up, anti-Semitism has become established, and it has ever since been religious, dogmatic - and christian. Already in her infancy had anti-Semitism been implanted into the very constitution of the Church. It had become an important ingredient of the defense mechanism of the Church. It was not bound with, directed to or based on any specific Jewish characteristics or features. It was not nourished by an inborn or incorrigible defect in the Jews nor by any physical inferiority of theirs. It was turned into a global, deep-seated, irrational habit. The demonization of the Jews, the image of the Jew as the Devil, is a later addition to the anti-Semitic armamentarium; it resulted from the search for a more impressive and best known symbol which could fit suitably into the superstitious beliefs which had gripped the Middle Ages. This was, however, no new discovery or invention of the scientific brains of the Church, as this same accusation had already been raised in the first century of our era. Already then Christianity trumpeted about that the Jews are "children of the devil", that for this reason they are condemned for all eternity, and that it was therefore impossible to fully accept them among other human beings. As you might have already learned, the Jews knew how to adjust to this situation. They submitted. When they were exposed to physical danger - a situation which was endemic all over the christian world and liable to flare up somewhere in every generation - they drew in their heads until the tempest had somewhat abated or until the killers' lust for blood had been sated. I myself do, however, things differently. I find it more satisfactory, more

understandable and "more realistic" to explain the evil of christian anti-Semitism according to my personal philosophical viewpoint, and thus I have come to the conclusion that we have in a certain sense to see a blessing in the bloodthirsty attitude of the Church. Yes , it has to some extent been a divine blessing; for it is almost uncanny to notice that the manifestations of uncontrolled anti-Semitism and the physical harm it caused, reached their highest point just about the time when, and in the ambience where, the survival of the Jews had become especially endangered by the allures of baptism, by the temptation of total absorption. Let me point particularly to the time when the Inquisition was rampant and when those who converted had been under the impression that by their conversion they had saved their lives, that their jewish past would thereby for ever be whiped out; but - I am nearly tempted to say 'fortunately - these converts were never fully accepted in the bosom of the Church. Their conversion was looked upon with suspicion, even by those very same men , the priests and the institutions who had persuaded them, had threatened them, had blackmailed them to embrace the creed of Jesus. They were never full citizens. They were restricted to a second-class existence under the label of "Marannos" - this word means 'pigs' - ; they were treated with disdain and looked upon with suspicion as carriers of 'tainted blood'. Imagine how many Jews would have been converted over the centuries had their treatment been better and had they been met with sympathy from the side of the dispensers of their new faith.

Call it surprisingly, call it unexpectedly, call it miraculously, but it is a fact that this very same kind of phenomenon did make its appearance again, at the time when the queues in front of the baptising priests of western Europe got longer and longer, when among the European Jews in the East the number of atheists and revolutionaries without any kind of belief in religious values grew bigger and bigger - and when there was the danger that only an ever more fanatic, intolerant, superstitious and negativistic Jewish remnant which had fenced itself in against new ideas and against 'the dangers of modernization' , would have been left. At that time - and it was truly the right time - the old ingrained anti-Semitism with the effectiveness of which its purporters, its preservers and its conveyors had until then been quite satisfied, was remade into a new shape. The concept of "Racial anti-Semitism" appeared on the scene. I can describe to you what it means in simple words as that very same old anti-Semitism, but amplified and made more palatable to a scientifically more aware public by basing that anti-jewish hatred on the childish doctrine, that a Jew will remain a Jew forever, that he is and remains a person of inferior quality, that nothing can ever change this fact, that no amount of baptesimal water nor any heavily stamped and sealed document of the Church will ever be able to alter this fact.

7. Karl Marx, the Jewish Saviour.

Just then, if by chance or not, the Jews were offered the choice of also another religion. This one too had been created by a Jew, but one who, not unlike so many of the other baptised Jews was agitated to more than the usual degree by the common and typical Jewish self-hatred. Karl Marx, of Trier in Germany, was the descendent of a long line of rabbis. He had been baptised already in childhood, at a time when one of his uncles was the town rabbi. You may see as a matter of fact the socialist movement which he invented as a new religion advancing under the flag of atheism. Soviet-Russian anti-Semitism and its ferocious, often senseless manifestations by the 'modern left' owe more to the ex-Jew Marx than to the poison which had persisted since the regime of the Czars. Marx' slander of Judaism is so much more loaded with irrelevant argumentations because he had to blind himself from acknowledging his background. He blamed the Jewish religion as the cause of and the motivation for the "jewish evil". He wrote: "The secret of religion is in the real Jew..." , and "...Judaism is nothing but an undialectical falsehood" . Among his adherents and followers were many Jews, and they were instrumental in carrying forward Marxism, even though the creator of this new communist movement never hid or denied his blatant anti-Semitism. Marx was a very clever and learned man - nobody can deny this. He may even be called a genius, but he was certainly not the type whom I can respect., For an ex-Jew, who could make it a point to denigrate the faith and the character of his people, has to be called a very low breed indeed.

Here are a few of statements:-

"What is the worldly religion of the Jews ? Hucksing.
What is their worldly God ? Money...money is the jealous God of Israel.
The bill of exchange is the real God of the Jews.
The Jews avoid the law whenever it is possible to do so. The constantly evaded law makes the Jew a Jew.
Every tyrant is backed by a Jew, as every pope is a Jesuit.
Ferdinand Lassale (his friend) is a "Jewish Nigger".
The 'Sabbath Jew' as well as the 'Secular Jew' are asocial elements."

Yes, these offensive remarks come from the pen of a Jew ! And these sentiments have become the slogans with which the Jews have since been castigated, and the songs which accompanied the murder of uncountable Jews.

All this may not be new to you, but to us who have lived in Hitler's time, it all sounds very familiar. That Marxism became a world religion, a world movement, was to a great part due to the support it received from large segments of the Jewish intelligentsia. And there is no doubt that Soviet Russia, with its outgrowth of communism, did succeed in getting a foothold after World War I due to the contribution of Jews who were from the beginning in the forefront of the marxist struggle. Can you imagine the scenario in which Lenin, Stalin & Co had not conscientiously eliminated any further Jewish collaboration, had not killed off all their Jewish lieutenants ? You may

may believe me that had this been the case, it would not have been unlikely that communism might have taken over, absorbed and replaced Judaism in a great part of our world. Fortunately communism has proved a disappointment of the enlightened world and has become unmasked as a determined enemy of Jewry. It is to a great extent due these and similar factors that the victorious onward march of communism has been stopped. You will have to give up the idea that the followers of Marx differ from him in his anti-Semitic remarks and views. The literature and the pamphlets of the last one hundred years overflow with evidence to this effect. Even the socialist banner carriers of our century - the Webbs - not only defended Stalin's anti-Semitism but gave also in their own writings ample proof of their anti-jewish heritage. I hope that Marxism in its costume of communism will soon have a more accelerated decline - it merits such a fate for having become unveiled as a false philosophy, to say the least - and I also hope that the 'socialists' of Israel will roll up and store away their red flags and that they will not anymore embarrass other 'socialist' parties and governments abroad with their unrelenting, stubborn and self-destructing belief in Lenin, Marx and Engels.

I think and believe that what I have just now described to you, is an instance of further and marvellous evidence of divine interference; for I am absolutely convinced that had the tools and the whip, into which God had made the anti-Semitic christians and the no less anti-Semitic Stalinists turn in such clear and unmistakable terms, had He not abolished the lures of emancipation and the promises of assimilation which were offered to the Jews during the period of Enlightenment and under the banner of Marxism, there would not have been left a single unbaptised Jew, at least not in Europe. Here and there, in Poland, in Russia or in Asia a few small groups of Jews might have been left, rigidified and calcified in beliefs and traditions of orthodox Judaism - but European Jewry would, for all practical purposes, have disappeared. Had things turned out differently, especially in the 'Red Paradise', in the communist countries of Eastern Europe, where religious freedom had been so loudly proclaimed, and where the ethnic groups are still today allegedly permitted to keep their identity, the masses of Jews, who had survived the Holocaust, would certainly have disappeared forever. They would have finally and irrevocably merged into their surroundings, had not a vicious, brutal, total and irrational anti-Semitism resurged and kept the Jews - most of whom had given proof and evidence that they were ready to forget their origins and keen to ignore their roots - against their will, fully conscious of their Jewish background, forced away from leaving their association with the Jewish people. An additional benefit accrued for Judaism in the resulting psychological groundswell which made many of these Jews anxious to confirm their Jewishness in a most determined way and in a positive manner.

Did I make my point ? Have you understood my reasoning ? If you have up to now followed with an open heart and a perceptive ear the essence of my narrative about your and my being Jewish, then, my children, you will

not only understand what I wanted you to see, but you will also comprehend why I perceive in all these facts and events a confirmation, in all these goings-on the proof, that we Jews play a predestined role within the total fate of humankind, why we occupy a special place in the ultimate destiny of the world which we inhabit.

And, hopefully, I shall see in your eyes a comprehension of the truth that there must be some sense and meaning in everything that goes on; and if this comprehension fills your soul, I hope that you will accept, even though still with some hesitation, my view and my interpretation, that the events of this century - as far as they affect the Jewish people and as they relate to them - have to be perceived in a different light, in a different sense than they may have been told and explained to you before.

7. The thorough German brand of Anti-Semitism.

All the world events which have happened not so long ago, in my own lifetime that is, are so enormous in the way they affect the Jewish people, and they are so unbelievably significant for all mankind in general, that the researchers of history and the writers of books have so far not been able to comprehensibly gather for us a totality of information, or to provide us with a fully integrated and deeply penetrating explanation. The printing presses have over the last forty years or so produced already a gigantic literature on this subject. There is hardly ~~any~~ ~~theme~~ with a theme involving the last generation in which this issue has not been incorporated. But all the books and theories are only speculatively vague or inconvincingly descriptive. The reason for this unsatisfying situation is our inability so far to distance ourselves sufficiently from the events encompassing the middle third of this century - spatially, emotionally and intellectually - and much more time is necessary before we would be justified to grant these publications and explanations, these descriptions and interpretations the value of a final history. As only bare facts are enumerated, no final conclusions are permitted; and as so very often a painful pathos has in addition been allowed to creep

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Hermann M. SELZER coll.

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A story, a tale, a narrative
about your God, your world
your people and about you

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pt 3 (200-289)

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Hermann M. SELZER Coll.

A story, a tale, a narrative
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in, the writers, psychologists and politicians leave no room, no opening, to view the occurrences as a far deeper rooted, as a truly fate-conditioned intervention. Let me elaborate, to your and my benefit, some more on the historic time and the great upheaval, as well as the great changes which took place in the status and the future of the Jews.

In the following chapters I am going to tell you about the Jews of Europe, and in particular of those who have been living in Germany. With much of what I am going to tell, you are already familiar from other sources, but you will not mind hearing some additional details. You cannot imagine the great progress the Jews had made after they had been granted some degree of emancipation, when they were allowed to enter the professions and other occupations from which until then Jews had been banned. In the course of the 19th century they achieved leading positions in the arts and the sciences, in industry and commerce. It is, however, a fact that they became never fully integrated into German society unless they took the final step over the barrier and converted to Christianity. And not even then, as I think I have already explained to you, were they considered socially equal. There were many circles and societies to which they were never admitted. I have told you also already that their elevation to the status of a good Christian from that of an inferior human being via a short ceremony accompanied with some drops of water in a church had been rendered more or less impossible after a newly coined anti-Semitic slogan surfaced and when the fairy tale of the Jewish racial inferiority was introduced into the vocabulary, and 'scientifically' perfected by self-appointed apostles. When the gospel of a "Jewish mongrel race" began to be preached, and when the doctrine of "racial purity" became the battle-cry of the well-established socially domineering German anti-Semites, the consequences had to be that the Jews were degraded into second-class human beings and treated accordingly. No great effort was required to have the ancient hatred for the Jews appear in a new garb, eagerly accepted and copied also in most every country of the world. Anti-Semitism flowered as never before; it became an essential ingredient in the European culture. It brought to the surface, particularly in the Germans, the most unexpected characteristics and the most unpleasant depravities, and these have stamped the German nation forever with the stigma which will never be removed as long as there is a German history. You can imagine the extent of the shock

this new development in Germany, this new aspect of the German character, this outbreak of their most base instincts gave to the German Jews. They had lived with the illusion that the majority of the Germans had accepted them as fully integrated citizens. They had told themselves that the old anti-Semitism was on the wane. They had assured themselves that they were equal in every aspect to their German hosts. They had believed themselves second to none in their patriotism, and statistics of the high Jewish war deads were presented on every occasion. Yes, for such a long time they had been under the impression that they were "more or less" fully recognized and integrated German citizens, and they were certain that the "les" too would soon go away. The shock they now experienced was the greater still, because they had evolved in their minds the idea that they were far superior to all the other Jews in the world, especially to those Jews who live in the east of Europe, in Russia and Poland, and who had begun to flock into Germany, driven by the urge to escape the increasingly pogroms which took an ever greater toll of Jewish lives. Nearly all of these 'integrated Jews' in Germany, and this applies to a no lesser degree to the Jews in France, England, America and so on, who had illusioned themselves that they were the 'aristocrats' among the Jews, even though they had themselves not so long ago been refugees from Eastern Europe, and had themselves and in their time been in search of a safe resting place. Now, under the onslaught of the unceasing waves of immigrants the German, the French, the English Jews did not hide their fear, that the 'uncivilized' Jews coming from Russia and Galicia] might spoil the good impression they thought they themselves had made on their host countries. They not only gave in manifold ways expression to their worries that the gentiles might see in the 'strangely dressed and badly behaved Ostjuden' a confirmation and a proof of the inferiority of the 'Jewish race', but many of these German Jews themselves used the very same abusive and offensive language of the rabid anti-Semites, whenever they were speaking of the emigrants from the East.

What I wrote just now applies not only to the German Jews, but, as I have just now pointed out. to a no less degree to all the 'western Jews' everywhere. Don't think I have exaggerated, This was indeed the manner, the bad manner, in which most of the assimilated Jews - usually well established and financially successful - in the western countries comported themselves about one hundred years ago. They were basically unhappy people because they

were frustrated people. They felt restricted in their freedom to advance; they felt limited to a place always below the top; they were unsure of themselves; they were insecure. They were now looking always over their shoulders to see if the gentiles laughed about them, talked about them. They were uneasy, they were offended, they were shocked whenever the word 'Jew' was used to designate them; they were happier, they thought themselves more respectfully treated, if they were called "followers of the mosaic confession" or by similar paraphrases. They made frantic efforts to load the responsibility on the 'Ostjuden' for the fact that they themselves had not been fully accepted anywhere in the West. For notwithstanding all the fanfares which had announced 'Enlightenment', and all the flares which illuminated 'Progress' in the 18th century, and notwithstanding all the songs and slogans circulating and all the proclamations and legislations which at the time of the French Revolution and thereafter had announced the victory of "Liberté and Egalité", the Jews had remained at the best second-class citizens everywhere. Only when it was a matter of business or trade could they establish some kind of relationship with the Gentiles, but never, or hardly ever, did this result in contacts on a social or personal level or ever graduate into friendship. The only social and cultural contacts they had were with their correligionists. The Jews of Germany lived as before among themselves in a ghetto without walls. Toynbee, whom we have encountered before, explains the prominence of Jews in commerce and arts, as well as the large number of Nobel Prize winners, as due to the "stimulus of penalization", i.e. that greater efforts are required from a minority to have a share in an obtainable prize and in a position which are a priori the privileges enjoyed by the majority. This was markedly so in Germany, but you should not think that conditions were any better for the Jews of France, England or America or elsewhere. Jews were only rarely appointed to top positions in the universities; they could become only low-ranking officers in the army; they could never reach a higher place anywhere in the administration or the judiciary. Do you still wonder why they were afraid? Why they never lost their sense of insecurity? I advise you, beg of you, not to be satisfied by what I have told and explained to you. I think it is important that you should pursue this matter further and that you should find the time to learn more about the situation of the Jews all over the world around the turn of our century, and to some extent before and after that date. Search through the newspapers and the magazines which appeared

during that period. I am sure you will be deeply shocked to discover how abused, how ridiculed and how hated the Jews had been in every country in the world - in a world which boasted of being enlightened, civilized, cultured and liberal. You will also find out - with a sense of horror, I am afraid - that America was in no way an exception. You will never think it possible that people supposedly of education and of wisdom, men who occupied leading positions in every sphere of life, could have expressed themselves about the Jews in such offensive, ignorant and prejudiced terms. And still this prejudice and humiliation, this ridicule and hatred was the lot of the Jews everywhere in the world. And all this happened not so long ago, mind you ! It did not only happen in the Middle Ages, in the dim past! It happened also in this century. I myself have amply experienced all this in my childhood. I can assure you that whenever the Jews were affected or involved no ethics nor tolerance, no enlightened public nor any loving christian theology did exist.

But before the inevitable and ever more unpleasant situation could deteriorate still further, and before a concrete persecution could result, the disarray of the European Jewry, to which I have alluded in the preceding pages could result in a final degradation, could be followed by a systematic effort to annihilate all Jewry - or to use here words which would be more in accordance with my , to you by now familiar, way of thinking, before the anti-semitic brotherhood of the world could make use of the dangerous and unpleasant situation into which Jewry had been forced everywhere in the world - new events took place, a new situation arose, a new program began to take shape. From whatever angle you may look at the developments which I am going to describe to you now, you will have to agree that they did come to the fore in the right atmosphere and that they did start in sufficient time, that they did gain momentum in the best suited tempo.

Before I continue with the chronology in which I was just now engaged, I have to crave for your patience and attention to some remarks which I think essential, even basic and which are at the root of my thinking.

. A Philosophical Credo .

In order that you can easier absorb and integrate what I am expounding ~~the~~ the next chapters, it is necessary that I tell you in detail, give you an exact outline the message I have wanted to convey to you. You will find in the coming pages, in these final chapters of my narrative, at last what I think and sense, and the reason why I have made you spend all these long hours to hear me talk to you about God and the Jews.

From the time that terrible upheaval took place in the life of the Jewish people some 1900 years ago, when their Holy Temple was destroyed and they were driven from their homeland, they have never ceased to lament their loss and their fate. Since then the Jews have been in a permanent state of mourning for their lost homeland. There has not been a prayer service, no day of commemoration, no festival nor any joyful event, when Jerusalem is not remembered, when the Jews do not recall with bitterness their exile from the Holy Land. They have never ceased to sigh for an early liberation from their exile, they continue to this day to pray for a blissful return to Jerusalem.

You must by now have learned that I have constructed my personal belief system, my own satisfying explanation of things and beings, of God and the world, of history and the Jews. I have quite explicitly, from the beginning of this story presented it to you in its basic form. I have avoided the use of philosophical arguments. I have made an effort to use plain language and simple reasoning. Within the framework of my presentation of the story, in my picture of the world and of the Jews, you will never miss my realization and discovery, my deep conviction and assurance that there can be noticed somewhere and somehow at every important stage in Jewish history a protecting ~~and~~ guiding influence which directs the fate of the Jews, out of a final disaster, along a clear line of progress and within a strict - often disciplinary - guidance. But you will notice that I have nowhere tried to imply that God holds Israel by its hands and leads it onwards step by step. I find, however, a deep meaning in the way the theological image,

that once upon a time God has revealed to the Jewish people the way He wants it to take, has outlined to the Jews once for ever the direction for them to observe, and has clearly determined the final goal they should never fail to keep in mind. But my philosophy does not try to convey nor does it contain the meaning, that God does interfere in the daily life of mankind in general, that He does prescribe in detail the way a nation has to manage its existence, and that He does meddle in the routine life of the Jewish people. There is, however, an exception to this rule, a very important and significant exception ! God does ~~interfere~~, directly or indirectly, whenever a critical moment is boiling up into a threat to the very existence of the Jews or may menace in a general way the survival of the world. With regard to the latter danger or eventuality I cannot avoid the feeling that both these perils are intertwined. You might be curious to know, how I could have come to such a belief ? Let me prevent you from imagining that I have reached such conclusions after prolonged philosophical researching or deep agonizing pondering. The honest truth is that it is above all the outcome - and at the same time also the final confirmation - of an acceptable and consoling explanation for the fateful developments which have overtaken the Jews in recent times.

I am sure that God has agreed to the crystallization - if in effect He has not specifically directed it - of the ongoing spiritual ideologies and of the intellectual currents, which agitated and enlivened the 19th century, into a political and sociological movement. The platform of this movement again offered to the Jewish people an opportunity to achieve the repossession of its homeland, to renew its nationhood, to reconquer its independence - in short, to regain its freedom. This time the period of the Jews' serfdom had lasted longer than ever, counting from the time they were elected for a special destiny and had been forged into a nation. An apparent predestination to undergo prolonged suffering and to be exposed to mental and physical pain must have been built into the programmed burden which seems to have been the outcome of their appointment to holiness by God. Their suffering had greatly increased from the time they had begun to mismanage their opportunities and to abuse their privileges by their reckless disobedience to the commands of God. One might have thought that the never diminishing degradations and humiliations which had been their lot in their exile following the destruction of the Second Temple, would at last have made them ready and willing to welcome a new dawn of liberty. The at times truly inhuman persecutions they had known for so long should at last have

made them appreciate the gift presented to them, i.e. the gift to enjoy henceforth a life of freedom. The more so as the never fading hatred of their gentile environment, a quasi inborn instinct in the christian population which had formerly been brewing mostly underground and was now being transformed into an ideological movement surrounded by a scientific halo. It was now an openly formulated and freely promulgated 'ideology'; it was spreading through more or less all the peoples and nations of the world. You would have thought that such an unpleasant life in such a threatening atmosphere was going to increase the Jews' yearning for their independence. Yes ! I agree that from every logical and practical point of view the Jews should by now have come to realize that a correction should be brought about in their continued life of unease and in the unabated state of insecurity to which they were exposed everywhere. The Jews should by now have found out that the time was right, that they were ready and readied, that the world was agreeable and that climate was amenable to bring about a radical change in the life of the Jews. However, the Jews should also have learned by now from all the indications from past experience and from the intricacies of the present that such a change would have to be brought about by their own effort, that they could not anymore be guided into a change in their condition and an improvement in their existence through any benevolent grants and any condescending assistance offered by the gentile world, but that they should and would have to bring about any of the desired and necessary changes, which would ultimately result in giving them freedom , through their own exertion and by their own initiative. And although , under the impact of Enlightenment and in the wake of mankind's generalized higher state of education, the Jews had the right to expect to be henceforth as human beings with all the rights due to human beings, their past and their intelligence should have told them that such an optimism was not called for. They should have concluded instead that it was for them , and for them alone, to make use of the favourable situation in which they found themselves, to aim and to opt for independence as a nation within the borders of their own independent homeland. You might have expected that from their experiences past and present the Jews would have learned their lesson, that they would have at last discovered the truth that the solution of their ages-old problem lay not in assimilation, that the answer to their quest for an escape from misery was

not the negation of their Jewish destiny, and that future of their children lay not in a continued diaspora.

8. To Return Or Not To Return.

Following Bar Kochba's unsuccessful revolt the Jews were radically expelled from the Holy Land. The Romans barred them from ever again living in ~~the~~ Jerusalem. However, only a few years or decades were to pass before one could find that some Jews had again settled among the ruins of the Holy City. With the waning might of Rome the number of the Jewish residents increased still further, notwithstanding the powerful and brutal interference of the ever more influential Church. By the time Mohammad's armies conquered Jerusalem, in the 7th century, the Muslims found there are sufficient number of Jews from whom they could extract considerable tax payments and to issue for them special ordinances of submission. And when in the 11th century the hordes of Crusaders invaded the Holy Land, already enough Jews had by that time immigrated from the diaspora, on whom these brave knights could satisfy their murderous lust. We know that all through the ages never a decade was to pass when Jews from all over the world did not return to Jerusalem singly or in groups, to spend ~~their~~ their final days of life. As especial cases mention is made of Maimonides and Yehuda Halevi but in every century there must have been many thousands of pilgrims coming back to satisfy their desire to settle on holy soil. There has, however, in the last 1850 years never been a mass immigration, never an organized movement with the aim of settling in and the rebuilding of the Holy Land. It came to me as a surprise when I discovered that this did not even happen about 500 years ago when the large and rich Jewish communities of Spain and Portugal were chased into exile.

I have been pondering the question why the Jews of Europe - and for that matter those of Asia - who lived in the hostile environments of the diaspora and who were exposed to such a miserable treatment, in whom there must always have been dormant the wish to escape their misery, did not plan, arrange, organize their return to the Holy Land. I can very well imagine that

they have thought of this, had hoped for this and that they had to abandon such a plan as impossible to realize. I can well imagine the enormous political difficulties they would have had to overcome, as Palestine was for centuries in the hands of christian Byzantine, then in the hands of muslim Arabs and later on in the hands of the Turks. I do not think that it would have been possible to induce of any of the overlords to permit a mass immigration of Jews, even if the rich merchants of Spain or Amsterdam had been willing to pay handsomely for the grant of such a permit, and could have persuaded the rulers of the time of the advantages which new industries and a lively trade could have meant to them. The truly himalayan obstacles however, all through history, was the Christian Church which refused to accept an 'earthly Jerusalem', especially one built and occupied by Jews.

But I think that the greatest obstacle of all, the basic reason why never anybody actively thought of, planned or organized a mass return to Jerusalem, were the Jews themselves. Ever since they had been deprived by Rome of their political independence, the Jews had given up their faith in extricating themselves by their own efforts from the exile. Only a miraculous intervention could achieve this. Only the authority of the host countries or that of a divine messenger could introduce any change in the status of the Jews in the diaspora. There was the misunderstood, the wrongly interpreted tradition that the Jews could be brought home only by a Messiah, and that until he appeared on the scene, the Jews had to remain in exile. Or to word it differently: there never arose among the Jews the right kind of a leader. No new Moses came forward, no man with that kind of a strong personality who could have overcome the misconceptions of the Jews. No man came forth who could have readied the soil into which the desire to see in him the messenger sent from heaven could be planted. There was never a man to bring the fate of the Jews to maturation. There are still today among us Jews looking out for the Messiah's arrival. I hope you are not to be counted among them, but that you learn the truth that every man and woman is a messiah, that each one of us has to be his won intermediary to perfection and to the realization that each one of us has something timelessly divine within himself.

No, my children, after the destruction of the Second Temple, no leader of the right stature has ever arisen among the Jews. The only one

who might have staked a claim to this honour - doubtful in his case - was that false prophet and Messiah, Shabtai Zvi, whose mishappen adventure was only capable of creating still greater misery for the disappointed masses. The early immense wave of enthusiasm which he evoked, the general uncritical identification with his plans, the immediate readiness of most of the Jews from all ways of life to follow him, will document to you only too well the strong desire and eternal hope for a return to Jerusalem which were always present, had never been extinguished. On the other hand the fact that everything ended in failure, will indicate also to you very clearly that the Jews of that epoch were not yet ready to set out on their return, and that for this reason - and I am the last to deny that there were most likely many other reasons - God did not see the need to interfere in the inevitable, the logical decourse the events had to take. God did not intervene; He did not soften the disastrous consequences of the final collapse of the "Shabtai Zvi Affaire", because the Jews had not yet reached the sufficient degree of education, had not yet evolved enough motivation? May be that this was the case; but it is also a certainty that they were not yet physically fit and technically capable enough to rebuild the necessary infrastructure, to provide for the primary agricultural and industrial needs, and to keep alive the economy of a rebuilt Holy Land. In view of the undeniable justification of these my pre-suppositions they would have had a very poor chance to succeed, and you will agree with me that a failure would have had disastrous, even fateful consequences for the moral and spiritual survival, possibly even for the continued physical existence of the Jews anywhere in the world. With our hindsight knowledge we can state that they had not the physical strength and the political power, that they were not endowed with that moral superiority which was needed to compensate their other deficiencies, and above all that they did not dispose of the influence and the means to enroll the support and to overcome the suspicion of the Turks who were at that time the occupier of the Holy Land. Above all, their total failure was a priori assured because in their intention to settle in Palestine they did not rely on their own work and effort, but they would have left everything in "God's hands" without having realized the fundamental truth that God never helps those who approach their tasks and duties with such an attitude and such a mentality. God helps only those who

help themselves. You may be sure that had the Jews of that epoch been admitted to Jerusalem and had they settled in Palestine - as the Holy Land was called then - they would most likely have relapsed into their old habit of complaining and grumbling, lamenting and whining, and they would, as in the past, have found release from their deep-seated discontent and frustration in murderous strife among themselves. God must have known, that had the Jews returned under the then prevailing circumstances to the Holy Land, they would have been straight away led into slavery and even into annihilation, because the Muslim masters, the Turkish rulers and their Islam, never did identify with God's promise and His program for the Jews. They would have known of only one way to react to a situation, where a mass of 'infodels' in their midst clai-med the right to organize their religious rights and rituals, viz:- by condemning them to a cruel death. It is a true fact that Shabtai Zvi and some of his followers did indeed journey to Istanbul with the aim of organizing a "Great Return to Jerusalem", and that he saved his life by convertigg to Islam. We should register the 'Shabtai Zvi Intermezzo' as nothing more than another episode, another sad experience in the life of the Jewish people, and we should take cognition of the fact that it did not end in that kind of disaster which one might have expected as the outcome of that man's grandiose schemes. Does this mean that after all God did intervene - just a little ?

10. The Zionist Impulse .

Another upsurge to return to the Holy Land began to ferment among the Jews about one hundred years ago. This time, however, the background appears to have been different. Also in this instance the movement was strongly motivated by the messianic expectations of the Jewish people. This made the Holy Land the exclusive aim for the deep desire growing among the young Jews in the eastern ~~part~~ of Europe; otherwise, it may be presumed, they would not have so explicitly rejected offers to settle anywhere else. This was not a popular movement which had arisen out of a vacuum. It was born in an era which was characterized by a wave of many other nationalistic movements. The newly emerging nationalistic fervour of the Jews found a

fertile soil in every country on every continent. You will have understood that I am speaking here of Zionism . However, I must make now a reservation. Zionism cannot be fitted into the context of the nationalist movements of the last century. It is true, it had in common with them the same kind of romantic, often unrealistic and basically democratic vision which vitalized the other nationalist movements of the 19th century, but in the latter chauvinistic elements were soon to gain predominance whenever their movement came to clash with narrow nationalistic trends in the countries somehow directly involved. Neither can Zionism be called another political movement of national liberation, as it aspired above all to the creation of a new socio-political order. You should see in it a rebellion against the assimilatory trends prevailing among the Jews of Europe, and a protest against the efforts of Orthodoxy which found always new reasons to isolate itself still further from the attractions of modern life. It was also a new approach to a new fulfillment, a new conception of redemption which, as it was at last realized, could not be achieved in the Galuth, in the diaspora, in exile.

The stage was now set for a totally new approach, for a more stirring, a more active interference in the wheels of history. In the late 19th century. as you know already, a great number of Jews had exerted themselves to escape from their Jewish fate by passing through the gates of assimilation. There was, on the other side, a far less numerous but quite determined sector which saw the only possible solution of the Jewish problem and the Jews' future in the establishment of an independent Jewish homestead in Palestine. The men **AND WOMEN, WHO MADE UP THIS GROUP**, driven by despair and hopelessness, were supported by a fervent enthusiasm and idealism. They clamoured for the grant of national and human rights to their people, and they foresaw the fulfillment of their demands and of their dreams as only possible within a restored independent national home. With enthusiasm and vision they took up the struggle to regain what had once been their homeland, their Holy Land, and they claimed had remained and still is to this day the exclusive Jewish national property. The ~~word~~ **mantra** of 'Zionism' encompassed these ideas, these hopes, these demands, these efforts - and more. The Zionist Movement's aim was the return of the Jews to Zion. It was no more

a dream or an idea but a fact to be established. It was the general resettlement of the Jews in a Jewish home. Fundamentally, of course, this was no new program. As I have repeatedly mentioned, it has since ever been part of the Jewish dream, an ingredient of the Jewish soul; but it was felt that this time everything was favourable to give it an ideological expression, a social ideology and a political content. Although the early Zionist program had been illuminated, and often blinded also, by the rays of romanticism, the leadership soon passed into the hands of capable and sober men and women. Palestine became the symbol of the Jewish people's hopes. Zionism was moulded and fitted into a legally and politically viable creation. A ~~new set~~ new aims and new aspirations were made to crystallize. The reconquest, the resettlement, the revival of Erez Israel was the aspired fulfillment to be realized now. Although Judaism could continue to exist without the Zionist program and its fulfillment, consciously or not the theological-messianic proposition of Judaism had its impact which viewed the Jews as a history-bound people, and as such it could not exert its spiritual influence, could not exemplify its specific ethics, could not undertake its mission to the world, without having regained the characteristics, the recognized legal diameter of a nation.

The Zionists, those ready and willing, as well as those hoping and promising to take upon themselves the duty to take physical possession of the Holy Land by peaceful means, belonged to all the various social and intellectual strata of the Jewish people. They enthusiastically joined a movement of dreams, whose realization was at its time of foundation, and for decades thereafter, far from being realizable. There was an even far greater number of Jews belonging to the very same social classes and coming from similar educational backgrounds, who derided these dreams as impracticable and also as dangerous, and who fought Zionism with an often unrestricted and unrestrained hostility. Why so?, you will ask. This fact must be incomprehensible to the younger generation of today, but you must see it as one of those Jewish experiences which occur again and again in Jewish history. These "Anti-Zionist" behaviour was caused by the fear the spread of such ideas might cause them harm. They feared and hated the Zionists because the latter's program ~~would~~ negated the very claim of the assimilating Jews that they could and would fit into and become an essential part of their host countries. They feared and hated the Zionists because the latter's plans and

ideas undermined the very foundations on which the peripheral Jews, who wanted to merge and to disappear without a trace into their christian environment, had built their hopes. ¶ I remember an occasion , it must have been 1928/29, when I was successfully engaged in organizing a Jewish sports club - 'Bar Kochba Club' - and I was visited by a group fo leading Jews of Oberhausen, men who would never have contemplated putting their feet into our house, who offered me "any amount of money and no questions asked", if I would agree to have the sports club function under the auspices of the "Centralverband", the association of assimilated Jews in Germany, and not to turn it into a "Zionist sports club". Needless to say , they did not succeed - but I remember how embarrassed I was for them...)

Yes. it is a fact merciless struggles and bitter discussions caused deep divisions between the Zionists and their Jewish adversaries - often to the amazement of the 'goyim'. Platforms, meetings, newsmedia and sermons resounded with accusations and counter-accusations, with arguments and counter-arguments. But it soon became evident to all bu the wilfully blind, that all these ideological clashes between the followers of the two Weltanschauungen were rather futile, that they had been totally unnecessary. Soon it was accepted by all thst these discussions, accusations and arguments had remained nothing but verbal duells, that they were played out in an ambience of theory only, because nothing happened and nothing was done, because everybody talked and nobody acted. It has to be stated with much admiration, and also with sorrow, that already a hundred years ago a few small groups of people, mostly from Russia, determined and enthusiastic idealists, did emigrate to Palestine to conquer and to rebuild the land with their own hands. But before many years had passed most of them had left again. Of those who stayed on, only a few did so because of any sustained enthusiasm, because they were supported by a continued deep-rooted belief. The majority of those who stayed behind, did so because they were too proud to concede defeat. Theodor Herzl, the man who had more or less created, and who for a long time had also led the Zionist movement, died a disappointed man, possibly a disillusioned man. However, we must register with surprise, and also with respect, that he had found so much admiration and such great support for his dream of a National Home among the Jewish people everywhere in the

Diaspora. They gave contributed their regular financial donations, although there was hardly ever a case where these reached dimensions which even an optimist would have called a sacrifice. However, there was that monumental "but" that all these followers, enthusiasts, subscribers and members of the Zionist movement never contemplated to become themselves physically engaged; instead they encouraged others to go to Palestine, to do the real, the dirty, the dangerous work. Large sections of the rich and assimilated Jews of America and Europe were ready - even eager - to support Zionism financially, even politically; but they were mainly motivated by extraneous reasons: a successful outcome of the Zionist experiment could have meant to them that the large pool of miserable, unsuccessful and destitute Jews, who had settled among them, especially the homeless refugees from Eastern Europe, who came to America in ever greater numbers, could then be channelled to Palestine. It is true, it was a neglected and barren piece of real estate, but with will and faith, which these rich Jews so readily supplied by proxy, it could be made again into a "land flowing with milk and honey" for the homeless and unsettled Jews.

Yes, that was so. I am not exaggerating ! Most of the Jews of the last century and of the first third of this century, who called themselves 'Zionist', were mainly attracted to the Zionist idea because they saw in its 'charitable' side-effects a duty and an opportunity. They did indeed pursue their efforts actively and with zeal. They made it their responsibility to find for those who were stranded or rootless a place to settle. It is another specific - you may call it a historically recurring - fact that all those who had not the slightest intention of ever leaving their comfortable homes and businesses in the diaspora but who considered themselves still Jews, never ceased to express in their prayers the pious hope that they might "return to Jerusalem in the coming year". To this manifold diversity of attitude and reaction to the steadily growing interest in Zionism you may add another sector of the Jews who opposed Zionism out of fear that their political standing and their economic position might be endangered in case a nationalistic Jewish movement should flourish and gain international recognition. They tried to turn the issue into one of settlement of refugees.

They used up much money, influence and effort to have the homeless Jews in their midst, or those potentially still on their way, colonize uninhabited stretches of land in Uganda, Brazil, in the Argentines and so on, i.e. as far away from Jerusalem as possible. Do you wonder why many people think that Theodor Herzl might have died of a broken heart ?

Fortunately - and to the honour of the Jewish people be it said - from the moment the Zionist dream, from the moment the Zionist movement became a reality and the State of Israel was proclaimed, all Jews - the religious as well as the secular ones - knew and proclaimed that the new State had not been established for the sake, the benefit and the wellbeing of its inhabitants alone, but that it was meant to be, that it should be seen as the home, as the national emblem of all the Jews in the world. But before this recognition, this identification came to the fore much had to happen to the Jews.

The jubilations, the blessings and the happiness experienced by the Jews with the establishment of the State of Israel was justified in praise of a great achievement. We must not overlook, on the other hand, that this event, this geographical and political fact, was a blessing not only for the homeless Jews everywhere, not only for the remnants of European Jewry dumped into "Displaced Persons' Camps", but also for the historic image, for the moral standing of the gentile world wide and large. I ask myself - I must confess with sadness considering the pessimistic reply I have to give - what would the gentile world have done with the Jews who had survived the war ? How would the wide world have reacted with respect to the masses of homeless, helpless and destitute Jews ? Would these have found refuge anywhere among the gentile nations ? How would this gentile world have reacted when having to face these eternal reminders of a collective gentile guilt ? You know quite well what the answer has to be.

Let me return to the situation around the turn of the century and for a few decades thereafter. The Jews had the offer, the inspiration, the means, the influence, the willing support of the gentile world to end their exile, to free them from the need to suppress their individuality. They had the opportunity to unfold their qualities and to build up a country and a society which might become an inspiration, 'a light to the nations' - in

short to fulfill their duty, their destiny. It is unfortunately the truth that they remained insensitive to the opportunities they could have grabbed, and their unwillingness was associated with with their blindness and their deafness to the dangers they were facing.

You must be surprised to hear me say all these things. Or did you know them already? Are you coming back at me now with the usual question: "And what did God think about all this ?". What reply can I give you except that I do not know what God thinks ? How could a human being know such things ? But I think I know how He reacted, or let me say that I think I can at least clearly conclude, from the events and happenings of the last sixty od years, how God reacted. And as I think ~~o~~ am right and justified in my conclusions, I feel overawed. I am deeply ~~mod~~ed. And I am thoroughly gripped.

Yes ! God acted. God intervened.

G o d s s s e n t H i t l e r !

11. The Holocaust 1- its Effect and its Meaning.

God inflicted Hitler and the Nazis on the world, and in particular on the Jews. God made use of Hitler, that cruel, ~~h~~atdemented teutonic scourge, to teach us Jews a lesson. All the sacrifices which the Jewish people had to make since the Exodus from Egypt, all the sufferings which our ancestors have known since we were made into a nation at Sinai, appear not to have sufficed in the last 2000 years to make us Jews live according to the principles and the standars indispensable to a people whose God wanted them to be a holy people. Ove that span of time millions of Jews have been killed, burned, torn to pieces - but still all the surviving generations of Jews did not provide the evidence that they had learned their lesson. It must have become apparent to God that the Jews would not learn about their duty without having been given another lesson. But this time it had to be a far more effective lesson in the form of a far harsher reminder, of a far bigger punishment. And can you imagine anything more painful, anything more dreadful that to have within the course of handful of years six million of your brothers and sisters, one

third of your entire people, killed, burned, gasses inside and outside the hellish institutions, partly invented and partly perfected, by the Germans, the so-called Concentration Camps, the Death Camps ?

The Holocaust, as this orgy of murder and flames has been labelled has consumed these many millions of Jews. It was the greatest misfortune the Jewish people has ever known, at least since the destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth in the year 70 CE. In its enormity it will also prove - I fervently hope so at least - to be the turning point in Jewish history. For after a pain-loaded interval of 1900 years Israel has at last been reborn again into a nation. It has returned to its ancient land. You and I are favoured indeed to have lived in these momentous days.

So much has already been written about the Holocaust that you will with justification say, that there is probably very little which I can still add. You are justified to tell me this. But I crave your attention for the few remarks I do have to add to this chapter. I want to view this latest and largest Jewish tragedy through my own, my personal spectacles.

CHAPTER IV.

We and our Duties.

1. A few remarks about morals and duties.

I have not much to tell you about recent history. A lot of it is still evolving, and much you know so well by living this history. But let me ponder in your company about what we have learned and what more we have to learn.

Great catastrophes and disasters have occurred in Jewish history. They are theologically difficult to explain, as from that angle they would indicate that God has permitted, if not willed, the destruction of large segments of Jewry, of things and of institutions which God Himself has declared that they are holy. It is very difficult to agree to such a conclusion, as undoubtedly tragedies like the destruction of the two Temples, the exile of the Jews, the bloodbaths of the Crusades and of the Inquisition, and the horrors of the Holocaust are only understandable, comprehensible, acceptable as God's effective contribution or at least by His abstaining from interfering. What else can you say? But whatever they may be, or however they may be viewed one thing is certain; these disasters, these tragedies do not indicate His disinterestedness, does not mean that He has abandoned His people. Most of all the Holocaust does not indicate that "God is dead", does not exist, as so many Jews believe now they have the right to conclude. You will hear these and similar words spoken with deep pain by the mystic, with resignation by the religious, with irony by the secularist. God is dead, they say, because a God of mercy and justice, of love and grace could not have permitted a Holocaust. Let us make it clear to ourselves that those who make the statement that God is dead, use it as a slogan, do after all confirm - though often involuntarily - that there must once have been a living God. Those who ~~make~~ these funereal statements may have killed God within themselves, but they should not presume that they have also removed Him from within us.

Also at the time of the Crusades the "gentle knights", fighting for the God of Love, and the rabid mobs, hoping to gain grace and merit, found extreme delight in killing off entire Jewish communities simply for ~~being~~ being Jews, but at least they offered their victims reprieve through baptism as an alternative to 'salvation through martyrdom'. Even the cruel priests of the Holy Catholic Church placed the Jews before the choice of baptism

in place of the pyre of the Inquisition. For the Jews in Nazi hands there was no escape, no choice, no alternative. Hitler killed them for their so-called 'racial characteristics which he wanted to eradicate by murder. Unlike other heinous mass-murderers the Nazis did evil for the sake of evil. For them the destruction of European Jewry was not a side-show of the war but a most important issue in itself. When they saw that the end of their regime was approaching, they deviated men and material from the war effort in order to intensify and to accelerated the relentless murder of the Jews. You may be certain that if Hitler had won the war, no Jew would have been left alive in the world, and this includes also those who had the "tainted blood" of some distant Jewish relative in their veins. This was the reason why Hitler could never have won the war - not because the Western Powers proved in the end stronger and as a recompense for their having cared and fought for the survival of Jewry, but entirely and only because God would never have allowed this to happen.

It is clear to me that at a certain stage God did indeed intervene to save the Jews, the remnants of Jewry; but as we all know He did not prevent the Holocaust, as He could easily have done. I have no illusion that should I say these things aloud, there would be an outcry, as my ideas would seem to mean that only a cruel God could allow millions of innocents, among them so many children to perish so miserably - in the same way as it happened in my own lifetime in Armenia, in Russia, in Biafra, in Ethiopia. Since years the arguments have been flying about that the Holocaust can only indicate that there is no God or that the God who created this world has lost all interest in mankind and especially in the Jews. Can you believe that humankind could ever be as shortsighted as to believe such nonsense ?

One thing, however, does bother me very much: why do the gentiles, the world and also the Jews speak so little about the genocide of the Gipsies? They have suffered no less than the Jews ! Are the Jews the only ones who nowadays do speak about the sufferings of the Gipsies and accuse the Germans of this additional crime ? What does this mean ? Were the masskillings of the Gipsies less painful to the Gentiles because they do not recall any unreasonable subconsciously hoarded church-nourished hate propaganda extending over the centuries ?

I do not have any answer either when you ask me why not only so many children but also the most pious and the poorest among the Jews have been killed by Hitler, and why so many of the young and rich, the unscrupulous and the atheists could make their escape and could survive thereafter in peace and comfort. I do not know. I could, of course, disarm your argument with the explanation that in this instance the rule has become evident that the greatest part of the survivors has been made up of the most energetic and the fittest, the cleverest and the strongest. This explanation may satisfy the genetist, the sociologist and the anthropologist, but to me it does not appear to be the right nor the suitable answer.

Our contemporaries speak of the "martyrdom of the Jews murdered by the Nazis". I do not think that any of the Jews in the hands of the Germans thought of being a martyr or of aspiring to martyrdom. The days of Jewish aspirants to martyrdom are over - if since long or only now is irrelevant. Such an explanation serves at best only as an apology. Do you really think that God, as we perceive Him, could ever have expected martyrdom from the Jews, could have respected them had they voluntarily offered it, could ever have demanded martyrdom from the Jews? Yes, possibly in certain individuals as evidence of their strength of character or as an indication of their devotion or as a stimulating memento (I think at this moment of Abram offering his son Yizhak or of Moses handing over command to Yohshua), but God certainly never directly demanded it, immediately insisted on it. Martyrdom was only one of the probabilities rendered possible by circumstances within the coincidences of the programmed destiny of the Jews. I do not say that this does apply to the Holocaust - it is far too enormous a calamity to be explained away like this. And it would also not sufficiently explain the outcome of the Holocaust, its effect on humankind in general and on Jewry in particular. The Holocaust was of a terrifying dimension and has an enormous and persisting impact. I risk and go even further in my reply by declaring that it indicates the possible beginning, the starting point of a new era. Great changes are inevitable in the wake of that great catastrophe, and the effect is bound to be still greater in the years to come. The Jews cannot anymore be judged by the gentiles without their judging themselves. Jews will not anymore be persecuted without guilt and shame breaking through the gentile

procrastinations and without this leading to a continued recall of their responsibilities. Jews will no more approach God in their prayers with confessions of sin, with ready-made self-accusations, of having been idolatrous. Their confessions will be mainly of their having realized that they had become blind and deaf to the signs and calls of their duty. Jewish martyrdom which may once upon a time partial satisfaction to the Jews themselves, does not move or impress anymore the Jewhaters; it has in fact never moved or impressed them. But today it has lost its value for the Jews too. There is today the tendency to bring the Holocaust of the Jews into parallel with the nuclear holocaust which threatens to engulf the world. I do not see in this - quite clearly forced - comparison a sacrilegious misuse of the "Jewish Holocaust", but I ask myself: do the Jews and the gentiles a Propter Hoc in this Ergo Hoc ?

The trauma of the Death Camps has against all expectations hardly led to a renewed wave of religiosity, but it has rekindled a sense of national belonging, has deepened the pride in the national heritage. To my mind this indicates also a reawakened faith in the Jewish fate, a resurgence of the knowledge that there is a predetermined destiny of the Jewish people. We can today also perceive a definite slowdown in the relentless process of assimilation. It is difficult to predict, if this is only a temporary phenomenon, nourished by an exuberant acknowledgement of and a honour-pledged adherence to the Jewish-national-historic tradition. It is today the accepted norm for a Jew to acknowledge with pride - often only to the one or other of his gentile associates and not always to himself too - his identification with Israel, and he is wont to recite some indeleably preserved but easily honoured traditions which his "mother has taught" him. A sense of belonging to the Jewish people in association with the - loyally and constitutionally interchangeable - nationality of the host country is proclaimed by large segments of the diaspora Jews. This is a welcome and promising phenomenon. It promises to renew and to consolidate the Jewish people in its entirety. Political and social upheavals in Israel and elsewhere do at times force a re-awakened sense of Jewishness on otherwise indifferent and secularist Jews. If you are inclined to do so , you may see in these manifestations the 'hand of God'.

Our rabbis of times past insisted that every Jew in every generation should consider himself to have stood with trembling knees and fluttering heart at the shores of the Red Sea, and that he should feel in himself

that same elation of victory as the Israelites when they crossed over with "dry feet"; that he should feel within himself to have stood with awe and trepidation at the foot of Mount Sinai and be filled with that same sense of ~~elation~~ ~~elation~~ as the Israelites in the knowledge of having himself been appointed the elected trustee of God's words and message. In that same sense and on a like injunction I want to implant into every Jew the idea that he should consider himself to have been starved and humiliated in a concentration camp or a German jail with a pauseless fear in his heart and the smell of burning flesh in his nostrils. He will then, hopefully, be blessed with the knowledge that there is some divine intention and direction in what he has experienced in person, that the enormity of the evil he has witnessed and the depth of human depravity he has experienced on his body and in his soul are guarantees of his ultimate elevation to supremacy, not over but within human society.

2. And there is Lesson.....

This conflagration which had come over the Jews has had an enormous effect on them, as you can well imagine. They were profoundly shaken. The outcry was terrible. A sense of deep shame and of profound guilt overcame all these Jews, who had been far away from the centres of murder and crime, those who were safely settled in America, Canada S. Africa and so on. I am convinced that most of the Jews in the world, in the light of these terrible occurrences were induced to look into themselves, to check their consciences, to weigh their guilt. And there must have been quite a number of these Jews who have realized how much they had sinned. But most all of them must have clearly understood that there does not exist anymore a way out of our Jewish destiny through the process of assimilation, nor through the portals of the churches. For most of the western Jews the greatest personal tragedy was the discovery, that they had in reality no friends, that nobody cared if they lived or died. They could not but conclude that their safety and their salvation were not to be found in the places in which they resided, not with the gentiles among whom they lived, not in the countries which they had until then considered their homelands. Those who were not still blinded by their old illusions understood quite well now that their sufferings had

not only been possible but had been made more painful by the fact that they had been told by the governments, had read in the laws of the land, had felt assured by the society that they were equal to everyone of the other citizens. They had to conclude now that they had remained in reality strangers everywhere, and that the world at large showed very little inclination - if any - to help them in their hours of despair. They concluded that the situation, the outcome, the fate of those affected by the murderous events would have been different, had the Jews had a country of their own. Under these auspices, in the shadow of these sufferings, in the wake of these disillusionments and under the banner of a determined hope, Israel, the new national home of the Jews, was established. I know very well from my personal involvement how convinced so many of us were that a skeptical world was going to be given ample proof that our ancient people with its well developed intellect and organized by a newly stimulated determination, would be able to overcome all difficulties which were encountered in its path; that it could achieve a goal which sounded even to all of us often too ambitious. I have no doubt that God must have been very pleased with the exhibition of such a courage, with the outline of such a program, because this new energy and resolute vigour were leading His people quite definitely along the path ~~by~~ which the final redemption could be reached.

If up to this point you have been in agreement with, or have at least found an understanding for, my views of God and mankind, and also of God and the Jews, you will have to agree with me that the homecoming of the Jewish people has to have a momentous importance also for mankind at large. The gentile peoples of the world must perceive in Israel's "Return to the Holy Land" the literal fulfillment of the ancient promise which God has long ago given to our forefathers, directly ~~and~~ through the mouth of the Prophets. All the fateful occurrences and all the radical changes which took place in the history of the Jews in the first half of this century, and in some form or other even before that, are certain to effect also the world as a whole. Future historians will fill innumerable tractates with the analysis and the coordination of those very events of which we ourselves, you and I, have been witnesses. I shall not live - but you most likely will - to see if these writers and explorers, theologians and philosophers will depict these days of ours in the right light, and whether they will explain them as the pre-

liminaries of the coming events in which the Jews have so doubtlessly been predestined for an important role.

If you agree with the above interpretations, I invite you to accompany me a step further. For in view of all I have underlined as being indicative and significant we have to conclude that the last 2000 years of Jewish history can only have been a preliminary, a necessary, a corrective and an educative phase in the evolvment and the maturation of the Jews for the achievement of that for which they have been elected and maintained. If such a definition is justified, then it would have to lead us to the conclusion that we find ourselves actually in a decisive stage, that the Jews have by necessity to recognize now that they cannot fail again, cannot slip again, cannot let their latest - possibly last - opportunity go by/ Nobody can deny the fact that throughout their existence the Jews have exerted - even though sporadically and unperceptively - a beneficial impact on the spiritual and ethical evolution of mankind. At every stage of their dispersion have they exerted a stimulating influence on the cultures and civilizations. Today, given the modern communication facilities and the actual geopolitical facts, the situation is more urgent and their task more important; and it is imperative that the outlines of the aim and the strategy of reaching it are changed. You may conclude - as I do - that it is a sign pointing to the unique opportunity and the singular circumstance that, in order to help Israel along its path and task. it has been restored to its ancient home and its geographic centrality. For Israel will only be able to perform its predestined role and its metaphysical program as a nation on its own soil.

I am induced to see some of my conceptions shared in the most unlikely quarters and for apparently different reasons: the religious establishment in Israel has made use of its increased political punch to impose progressively oppressive rulings. They insist in particular on strict halachic proceedings with regard to conversions; thus they insist on the immersion of the Ethiopian Jews in the 'Mikveh', the ritual bath, as the prerequisite for their being accepted as 'kosher' Jews. They will not recognize conversions performed by Reform Rabbis. I cannot, of course, agree with the assumptions of these men appointed by the Chief Rabbis of Israel, but it is significant in my eyes that they explain their insistence with the demand

imposed on the Jews that they prove themselves holy and ready to take on the task of a 'Chosen People'. The 'business' of the immersion in a ritual bath, ancient though as a ritual, must be viewed by its defenders as of great significance in rendering a Jew a true Jew. I view it as a perversion into a rigidified procedure of the basic ceremony which renders the individual assured of his selection and that he is called to his vocation. However, the arguments one hears from the "Mikveh Defenders" are less metaphysical than simply views of primitive people. It is therefore no too much of a surprise that even liberal, educated Jews agree with the demands of the orthodox rabbis that only immersion in a 'Mikveh' bath, in full accordance with the prescribed rigid rules and strict details, can make a Jew a true Jew. The appropriate laws are researched by legal and theological experts and are studied in the Yeshivoth with a zeal and an energy which would be impressive even in the case of scientific research. These rabbis appear to believe that such a 'baptism' has a decisive magic influence on the 'Jewishness' of a person, on his morals and on his character. They appear to believe that God could really care for or agree with what the rabbis decide. Do you need any further proof that God does not interfere in the petty affairs of humankind, but leaves it to each of us to choose the ways how to grow and how to develop, even if such foolish methods are invented and imposed ?

After this short deviation let us return to our theme.

Historians are researching a long list of geopolitical, economic and various other issues as the basic or contributory causes for the fateful encounter of the Jews with the Nazi evil. The tragic experiences through which Jewry in particular, but also the entire civilized world had to live in this century, should not be viewed as an insolated feature of this epoch. We have to ask for certain additional features and interpretations to get an explanation for what historians have begun to catalogize as a "historic event brought on by a confluence of a series of specific historic developments": I have, I believe, heard and studied all the events, currents and constellations moving and shaking the equilibrium of the hundred years preceding of the German people into madness, but I can interpret the "confluence of events" in any to me satisfying and logic - you may call it metaphysically logic - manner only as a

divine arrangement, as a manifestation of the active part which God has taken on in the fate of humanity for the sake of the Jewish people. I shall go even further. I perceive it as an additional evidence of God's direct intervention that He chose the German people for the role of "executioners of the century". He turned the Germans, for so long the most arrogant among the nations of the world and the most blatant anti-Semites of our time, into a despised, predatory, bloodthirsty and cruel race. They will forever, as long as the world exists, carry on their forehead the mark of a nation of murderers. But this is not all! Along with the Germans, though in a more direct and unsophisticated way, He punished the Poles and the Russians who for centuries had excelled in the maltreatment of and hatred for the Jews, and He made them suffer, next to the Jews, most from the furor of the war. And He finally broke the pride and the arrogance of the British Empire, whose officers and officials, more than those of any other allied nation, had callously stood by in face of the Jewish tragedy, and whose at that time still mighty Empire had allowed so many Jews to perish in Concentration Camps and on their way to the Holy Land.

I feel inclined to mention another "concatenation of circumstances" as the miraculous events and the so illogical appearing happenings are so often labelled. At the time Zionism appeared as the banner pointing into the direction of liberation, Israel's cause prevailed again against all the calculation and odds. What had appeared as a wild fantasy of ~~the~~ Theodor Herzl was to become seen as an acceptable formula by most world powers. Chaim Weizman, an unknown Chemistry lecturer, who had to emigrate from Russia because his career had been stunted there, succeeded within less than two years to make Zionism a factor in world politics. After World War II David Ben Gurion made the poorly settled, poorly trained and equipped Land of Israel into an international centre of attention, and the United Nations, to everybody's surprise, went on to vote Israel into nationhood. In 1967 nobody in the world would have agreed to accept a bet that Israel could win the war against a hundredfold stronger enemy. In the Yom Kippur War, when everything appeared lost, victory was torn from the hands of the enemies. A new Hagada could be filled with the tales of a new series of unbelievable events - which would to be called 'miracles' in order to be accepted and believed - which came together to save the Jewish people from disaster and

defeat. Or better said: to describe and to explain why the total destruction and eradication of Israel, Jewry, Judaism was not possible--was not permitted.

3. What some believe.....

I agree with you - and I confess that I myself have asked this same question - if the above outlined conclusions cannot be bundled up and dispensed with as the outcome of my wishful thinking. You should, however, pause here and reflect on the fact that what I have told you in these pages, is not by all means my own exclusive or idea or fantasy- produces of a restricted group of esoterics, but that it most significantly expresses also the instinctively felt craving of a large part of the gentile world which wants us to grow into the to us prescribed role of a morally superior people in the expectation that we take over at last the spiritual guidance of the nations of the world. I am sure you are surprised by what I have said just now. It has been a no less great surprise also to me when I heard and read the statements to this effect from many sides and sources, all of which point out that we Jews have long ago been elected for great things, but that we have for many reasons been unwilling and unable to fulfill our duty or that we may have been unconscious of our calling, but that now, after having been shaken up by the Holocaust and with our return to the Holy Land events of tremendous importance have taken place in the history of the Jews and no less also in that of the entire world. Strangely enough I have never heard anything of this nature, any such theological association or any such historic interpretation of our recent experiences expressed by the Jews themselves. I have never learned or heard from Jewish sources what so many gentiles say, in unusually and clear and explicit words, viz:- that the establishment of the Jewish State has initiated a new era, that mankind is going to gain now, if not yet its salvation at least a clear cognition of an ascent to higher ethical values. You can hear such words and such sentiments expressed unequivocally expressed not only by many christian individuals, but you can discover that this is an integral part of the program and an important ingredient of organized church committees. You may point out that also the Charter of the

State Of Israel speaks of the 'beginning redemption' but this hope refers to the future of Israel and not to that of humankind.

The christian 'Fundamentalists' are a phenomenon which points to an intensively rekindled religious consciousness in many parts of the world. The Fundamentalists are strict Christians; they believe that the Bible does not err, that Jesus was born by a virgin, that by his death Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world and that Jesus was bodily resurrected. They accept the biblical miracles as authentic and they are sure that after Jesus' return a millenium of happiness on earth will set in. They work willingly - without apparently being fully conscious of this - in assisting in the task with which the Jews have been entrusted,

The 'Fundamentalist-Evangelists' are nearly the only christians who welcome the "Jewish peoplehood" and accept that Jews have a special status in God's plan for humankind. They see in the Jews the 'Chosen People' and they have no doubt that God has not forgotten and that He will never abandon the Jews. You should not confuse the Fundamentalists and the 'Evangelist Believers' with the Protestant Liberals who preach that the Jews have forfeited God's promise and that the Established Christian Church was now the 'spiritual Israel'. These 'Liberals', along with the 'World Council of Churches' make every effort to damage Israel and they actively support - politically and financially - the enemies of the State of Israel.

The Jews play a critical role in the theology of the Fundamentalists. Most of them preach that the Jews have to be converted in order to bring on the 'Redemption', while others think that all the Jews will be converted to Christianity after redemption is achieved, when they cannot any more avoid to "see the light". However, a new exegesis of the biblical references has made another interpretation more and more acceptable to the 'Believers', viz:- that "the Jews will be fulfilled in their Jewishness in welcoming their long-awaited Messiah who will turn out to be Jesus of Nazareth". He will not be a christian Messiah but a Jewish one, as he was a Jew long before Christianity was known. Herein can you see the explanation why these protestant groups of Fundamentalists who believe in biblical prophecies, are such determined friends of the State of Israel.

I find this a strange situation indeed. Let me say it again. A large part of the gentile world is firmly convinced that it has recognized in the times in which we actually live a new opportunity for mankind, a new confirmation of the divine guidance, a new hope for the world to come about through the medium of the Jewish people; for God, by returning Israel to Jerusalem has provided a new confirmation of the very promises which He had given to Abraham. But you will never hear such an interpretation of the great changes which have taken place in the position, the fortunes and the respectability of the Jewish people from the spiritual leadership of Jewry itself. The mainly arreligious mass of Jews will shrug off such a way of thinking; it will laugh away any metaphysical interpretation of the things, recent or past, which have affected them directly no less than the Jewish people as a whole. And most of the orthodox-religious elements, especially so their extreme fanatic fringes, speak of Zionism, as well as of the newly established State of Israel and all it implies, only with disrespect at best, and as a damnable interference in God's messianic plans as a rule. For in their view Israel's rebirth as a State had to await the obstetric assistance of the Messiah whose arrival on a white donkey has so far not been announced. These orthodox elements have the same expectation of the "messianic time" as the Christians have of the effect of the return of the "Redeemer". I find more substance in the interpretations given by Maimonides who does not accept the idyllic depiction of the Prophets. He does not think that the messianic age will differ very much from the actual one, except for it being based on a higher developed society patterned on the knowledge of God and His righteousness. It seems to me that the prayer and the hope for the arrival of the Messiah are abused by so many to shift all responsibility into a vague future. Those who do not pray and hope in this direction do not spend much thought about their and their people's future either. I have so often to fight off my suspicion that the Jews do not want to accept their cosmic role, that they feel uncomfortable with their having to carry such a divinely imposed duty, that they would feel fully satisfied with the material advantages they can obtain as an independent nation, that they do not want to be more nor any less than all the other nations in the world.

4 What some do.....

In addition, that other phenomenon to which I have pointed on a previous occasion, has again become noticeable: the Jews are unable to overcome their reluctance to accept their freedom whenever it is available to them. Strange as it may sound, it is a fact. They do not want to be free. They do not want to give up their life as 'guests' in foreign countries. They refuse in particular that internal freedom and that outer liberty which would be theirs by virtue of and within an independent Jewish State. Again when the State of Israel was established - as had been the case on former occasions - only a small portion of the Jewish people voted for a life of freedom; most other Jews prefer a life of comfort without freedom. Nobody will deny that life in Israel is hard, even dangerous at times, but with all this it is the most beautiful kind of life anyone can ask for; it is especially so for the Jews who have never known the thrill of such a life. There can be nothing in the life of a human being which is worth of being exchanged for a life in freedom. But a majority of today's Jews appears to deny that a life of independence and of self-respect is superior to anything which a life of physical comfort can offer elsewhere. A Jew should never forget the past experiences of his people. He should always count with the likelihood that also in future the Jews of the Diaspora may be made the scapegoats, the victims whenever tensions and discontent within their host country are on the lookout for a release. Do you think that I exaggerate, that I am too pessimistic? You may be right. I may have been sensitized to the humiliation and the offensive attitude of and in one's gentile environment, and this may be the reason why I am totally unable to understand how Jews can continue to live in certain countries of the world where they are treated as socially ostracized inferior citizens. I cannot understand how Jews, even if they live in very democratic and most tolerant countries can prefer a life of luxury and the attractions of physical comfort to a life - often harder and usually simpler, it is true - in a home country where they are their own masters. The most depressing effect - and it is still more so because of the simplicity of its explanation - had on me the

realization, that the Jews of my own generation, as well as their children and grandchildren, who some 40-60 years ago had lived in times and in countries where a Jew was never welcome, and as a rule was badly treated, could continue to live not only in the diaspora but furthermore in countries in which they had such bad experiences in the past. Every stone, every tree there must harbour for them a painful memory, a degrading remembrance. I have asked myself whenever I see or hear about such Jews who have returned to Germany, to Poland, to Austria how they will be able to face their children on the day when these in turn will encounter hostilities from official institutions, when they too will be denied the rights and opportunities due to them as human beings, should, in the wake of some political upheaval or of an economic crisis the momentarily prevailing sanity become unhinged again. Have you ever been told that to this day in many parts of the so-called civilized world a Jew has no kind of private social contact with his gentile neighbours, that he is still excluded from certain clubs and higher appointments? In many of the countries in which the Jews tell themselves that they "feel at home" there they still continue to live among themselves in a kind of wall-less ghetto, that they have to establish their own golf clubs and county clubs because those nearby are only open to gentiles and Jews, as well as Blacks are not admitted there? Show me a country where the Jews do not live under the constant apprehension that anything which they or Jews anywhere else do or do not do, might antagonize their gentile countrymen and lead these to open manifestations and expressions of that anti-Semitism which, as we all know, has not been at all eradicated.

But notwithstanding the negative picture I have painted you will by yourselves have realized that a tremendous change has occurred in Jewish self-consciousness. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising has been since the time of BarKochba, nearly 1850 years ago, the first instance when Jews have taken up arms in an active fight against their anti-Semitic enemies; and the military prowess exhibited by the Jews of Israel has given further proof of a changed self-recognition of the Jewish image. A kind of newly arisen prideful strength was a necessary ingredient for the definite establishment of the Jews as a factor in the future of mankind. It is a consoling feature of the situation that none of the Jews saw or sees more than a necessary evil in this, that all

wish for the abrogation of all arms and wars, that all pray for a peaceful solution of all human conflicts. In this I see evidence that the great promise may be nearing realization.

5.and how they react.

For quite a long time our generation has cherished the thought that the mass murders of our correligionists in the 1940s would have left a lasting effect on the gentile world, would for ever have made every kind of anti-Semitic excesses unthinkable. We were soon enough proved wrong. I think the great disillusionment started in 1967, hardly 25 years after the tragic massacres in Europe, when Egypt and her allies threatened the very existence of Israel and without restrained promised to bring about a new holocaust of the Jews of Israel. What happened was that what nobody had everythought could happen. Only the United States of America offered support and help ; all the democratic european countries not only refused any help and support but also denied American aircraft, enroute to Israel with vital supplies, the permission to be refuelled in any of their airports. The european powers comported themselves in a similar manner in 1973. It was made unequivocally clear to all that the world at large hardly cared that Israel was in mortal danger and that the Jews faced again total annihilation. Germany was no exception ! I can understand that Germans try to sublimate, repress, rationalize their own and their countr's past, but I cannot accept and forgive that a German, any German returns to the mentality, the ideology and the language of his country's anti-Semitic past, that he supports, that he associates with individuals and elements whose program is the annihilation of Jewry and Israel.

Just now similar experiences have made Israel aware that it has lost much moral support in the world. The reasons for this it will find within its own ranks and actions. It is the outcome of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The world at large was shocked by the brutality of - and the lack of justification for - the ensuing war. It was not the matter that

in view of the morals of our days such a war was in no way unusual, but the fact that it was Israel which had broken the code of moral conduct, was responsible for the resulting universal outrage. You may take it for granted that the cause for the vehement and often hysteric world-wide condemnation of Israel was not an exacerbation of an anti-Israel attitude but the generalized disappointment in the violation of a higher ethical level expected from Israel. Israel, it should be said to its honour, and for our hope, did indeed realize that she had failed to observe the humanitarian principles which are expected from her more than from anybody else. Few were the Israelites who did not feel uneasy, who tried to hide the collective guilt they felt. Jews abroad were no less involved and with justification they felt uncomfortable with the reminder how much their own status is associated with Israel's very existence. A process which has been noticeable since some years was now accelerated: many of the Jews in the Galuth view the frequent imbroglios in which Israel has become involved as a licence to distantiate themselves from it and to take another step towards an accelerated assimilation.

It may appear surprising to you - but it would not be to a psychologist - that the western countries try to clear their own guilty past by picturing Menachem Begin as a Hitler and the Israeli soldiers as Nazi stormtroopers, while the PLO terrorists, who have endangered not only Israel and Jewry but also the entire world, are being depicted as heroes. The christian world which has no compunction to embrace Yasar Arafat and the PLO has not changed from the protagonists of Christianity, who since the past 2000 years have indulged in the blood libel and have enjoyed watching Jews burning at the stake. We have to regard these calumnies as well as the trials to which the Jews have since some years again been exposed as moral tests for us all. Unfortunately many of us have failed. Many of the Israelites have become brutalized, and in their policy of 'quid pro quo' towards the Arabs they have passed the limits of the permissible. And - as I have said already - in the Diaspora many Jews refuse today to be identified with Israel - and often do their utmost not to be identified as Jews either.

There are many causes for Israel to feel isolated. We may take it for granted that the hostile attitude of most of the civilized world - and of those less civilized - is to a great extent dictated by selfish reasons,

be they commercial be they psychological. The outcome is that the Jews are again inclined to endanger themselves and their position in the world by a renewed inclination of self-pity. They have made out of the Holocaust tragedy a shelter underneath which they can conglomerate to weep and to lament. They have no occasion let pass when they do not force the gentile world to lower its flags in honour of the six million dead Jews, in eternal admission of the national guilt of each and every country in the world, and in atonement for the indifference which the gentiles everywhere, in particular in Germany, have shown for the sufferings of the Jews. Jewish spokesmen and leaders are still successful in making foreign statesmen and politicians stand with lowered heads in front of memorials for the Holocaust victims. On occasion a politician will lower himself even to his knees. The Germans have reeled under the disclosures of the Nazi cruelties - and the Holocaust is the main factor for the Germans to rethink their relationship with the Jews and for the Church to recognize its common roots with Judaism. The again and again resurging anti-Semitism has reawakened a new sense of guilt only in a limited number of Germans and churchmen.

I fully accept it that with all justification that Israel will and should not forget ever the Holocaust. On the other hand let us not consent to Israel's tendency to elevate the Holocaust into an object of eternal commiseration and morbid significance in the history of the Jews comparable to the Exodus from Egypt. We must not omit to take into account the painful truth that during the war, - even prior to that, i.e. during the NAZI YEARS - the majority of the Galuth Jews has made very few efforts to identify with and to fight for the imperilled Jews of Europe. Let us keep in mind while we commemorate the Exodus as a divine intervention which has brought about the creation of the Jewish nation, the Holocaust is with some justification to be seen as the punishment of a stubborn people. To the Jews and the gentiles alike the Holocaust should be an object of a dignified memorial and an ever hurting memory. It should not be waded into the face of the gentile world, notwithstanding the extreme guilt of this gentile world. We can act in a dignified way without letting the world ever forget its guilt. Remember that the pride in all we have achieved as a Jewish people arises from the ashes of Auschwitz. Our pride of our having become transformed into a renewed

Jewish nation is recognized as justified by the entire world. We should carry our pride with dignity. We for ourselves and by ourselves should, however, temper this our pride with the silent acknowledgement that Israel has not been able to encompass and approach the majority of the Jews in the world, has failed to attract the majority of world Jewry, has not awakened in them the desire to share its labours, its dangers and its difficulties.

6. Galuth Jews inside and outside Isreal.

I must confess: I feel this disappointment very much. The greatest part of the Jews abroad kept its distance from Israel, physically and ideologically. After all my studying and pondering of this fact I have not found a satisfactory explanation for it. That the Jews occupy to this day a special status as well as a particular one all over the world - and of this the Diaspora Jews are surely well aware - is shown by the fact that foreigners of whatever nationality, be they Swiss or Portuguese, Mexicans or Indians are never looked at or treated with that resentment by a native population as the Jews are and have been everywhere and at any time. Hardly without an exception the Jews, dispersed all over the world, must be conscious of the fact that they have gained many advantages from the resurrection of the State of Israel. Many of the Jews in the diaspora do in some way and in some form support Israel, but surveys have revealed the surprising fact that the majority, perhaps 75% of the Jews living abroad, have never visited Israel at all. Let me say it again: three out of four Jews have never felt the need, the wish, the urge to visit the country to which they own so much, to which they are bound by history, religion and tradition, even though they may deny any sentimental association. Even among the Jews, who at times send large contributions to Israel for the one or the other charitable purpose, you will find a considerable number who have never felt the need to spend one of their regular annual vacations in the homeland of the Jewish people, in the newly established State of Israel. What do these people fear? For they must be kept back by some kind of fear! I feel

inclined to see in this phenomenon evidence of a beginning distantiation from Judaism, of a never totally uprooted trend to assimilate into their gentile environment, even though they know that they will never be fully accepted there. They do not appear to realize that by presenting themselves as conscious and proud Jews they would not only have support and acceptance from their own people, but also the respect and the esteem of the very same host nation whom they think they can please by the denial of their Jewishness. Again, as with such regularity in the past, we have to count with the certainty that a large peripheral part of Jewry will disappear into the gentile world for ever - if they are allowed to do so.

Let me say this again in a few words: it is a fact that the majority of the Jews of the world of today prefer to live in a country, any country outside Israel, outside their own homeland. They prefer instead to be among strangers, not rarely ostracized and often even outright despised there. They realize that they are victims of their own subconscious inhibitions, as they never pay a visit to Israel, spend their visits anywhere else but to Israel. They must be conscious of their unexplainable attitudes, as only being cognizant of them makes these understandable and excusable to them. To this end they have even forced the American Government to give support to the settlement of the Russian Jews on the American continent and not in Israel. It is a sad truth that whenever among the criminal elements in foreign countries "Yordim", i.e. former Israelis are discovered, the newsmedia abroad will never fail to mention their country of origin. This phenomenon cannot fail to induce many of the 'goyim' to recall quite explicitly and vividly the not so long passed times, when the Jews were everywhere a priori categorized as asocial elements. If you study the behaviour of the Diaspora Jews you will discover with pain that they - and the 'goyim' - are again approaching that status, in many a place and country with the gleeful support of a large part of the newsmedia.

My picture of the Diaspora Jew, who labours at times so pitifully to find an explanation for his continued residence outside the reborn Jewish State, would not be complete without a word about the 'Y o r e d', the Israel-born individual or the one who has once upon a time immigrated into Israel and has, with manifold explanations and excuses emigrated again

from Israel. As a rule he will tell you that he has left Israel "for a short time only", but in reality he almost never returns. He prefers to live abroad among gentile peoples, usually among a large group of other emigrés within the big Jewish communities of New York or Los Angeles. The usual reason for his emigration is his intention to avoid the obligatory military service for himself or his children, or his hope to become a rich man abroad. The truth is that many of these people live at a far lower economic and social level than the one they have quit in Israel. There are, of course, many others who are financially successful. Interestingly enough, this type of Israeli is not only exposed to the disrespect of the gentiles but also to the hatred of the Jews who had long before him established residence in the diaspora and who carry a guilt complex for the reasons I have already mentioned. The escapees from Israel somehow irritate the conscience of the Galuth Jews who see in them 'traitors to the Jewish cause'. The Yordim, men and women alike, return again to that fate and life from which the Jews have endeavoured to escape over the centuries past.

Into this chapter is also a special category of the newly made Israeli who asks for special rights as an immigrant, because he dares to say that HE HAS Made a sacrifice by coming to Israel. He succeeds in his claim. He is given mortgages and loans, tax and customs facilities; he is provided with an apartment and considered a hero. He thinks, all this is due to him. In a recent controversy the new immigrants rose to demand exemption from the 'travel tax' as they think they have the right to travel abroad more often than anybody else in Israel, to visit their family left behind. Apparently the threat raised by many Israelis who emigrate as soon as he or she thinks the country is in danger or in the presence of economic difficulties, has been accepted by the Government of Israel as a fact of life. During the recent severe economic crisis the Prime Minister showed his nakedness by the explanation that he would not introduce hard measures as this would "make so many pack up and leave". I wonder, if immigrants to Australia or Canada, who are without doubt provided with far less privileges, would ever dream of raising such demands or of holding the governments at ransom with the threat of re-emigration. It is a sad experience that none of these noisy immigrants

here, who have acquired very early the Israeli custom of demonstrating and sloganeering, ever speaks of his or her gratitude for the chance and the right to live in Israel. None of the old men and women, who make up a large part of the immigrants, who settle with a nice pension from their former employers or governments abroad, and who get in addition all the facilities and benefits a 'New Oleh' receives, has ever asked himself or herself what kind of benefit, if any, the State of Israel might ever get from their being now citizens of the country.

I mention all these negative matters because they are for me an indication that at this crossroad in the fate and history of Jewry we are in danger of slipping again into the abyss of selfishness and carelessness from which we have been saved more than once in the past - but we are now face to face with a situation and with conditions in which our own weaknesses, magnified by the dangers which threaten all mankind, Jews and non-Jews alike, may throw us back for many centuries.

I will not let this opportunity pass by without registering also another phenomenon which appears to indicate an inbuilt self-destructive process in the Jew, but which, hopefully, will ultimately have a self-cleaning outcome. I refer here to the arrogance which has burdened the Jewish people since its history has been recorded, and which has somehow always remained active, though mostly in subdued form. This Jewish trend to arrogance has often taken on quite incongruous features during the times when they were humiliated and persecuted. This arrogance has today again flared up into a dangerously self-damaging characteristic. I view this phenomenon with trepidation because it may not only shorten the world's patience with the Jewish people but may also affect the security of the State of Israel. It is an affliction not only of the Jews of Israel but regretfully far more so of the Jews abroad, because in them it is so unjustified and also so shameless. This arrogance is the outcome of a subconscious sense of guilt with which they feel burdened or possibly an unconscious urge to make the gentile world to feel more the guilt it has to carry? Or does this arrogance indicate a suppressed fear? Whatever the explanation may be, I would like to think that such a kind of arrogance could not have been exhibited without there being present also an at least subconsciously felt sense of superiority,

that it is an instinctive acknowledgement that we Jews occupy a special position in the scheme of things. However, I never allow my elation to overshadow my sense of reality; I have to remind myself again and again that an arrogant, and therefore provocative behaviour is not justified in a people which is commanded to move forward to ethical completion, towards a state of perfection to which the Bible gives the distinction of 'holiness'. Humility is, unfortunately, a rare human qualification and the Jews' lack of this is remarkable. Much education, much effort, much time is required before the Jews will have learned this truth. It is not enough to establish higher moral qualities and to build greater intellectual capacities in order to inspire and to impress people, in order to make them admire and imitate you. You have also to regain their respect and their love - and in this Israel has failed since the time, 3000 years ago, when it became established as a nation. Neither did the Jews learn and apply this truth in the course of the last 2000 years when they were dispersed among the nations of the world. And in this regard there is no change also to this day.

7. Crime and Guilt/

We have been living under the illusion that the irrational hatred for the Jew is a matter of the past, that a repentant mankind would not again maltreat the Jews, that the Churches would not abuse the Jews anymore. This illusion is slowly dying away. We are made to take notice of the fact that the meaning of the Holocaust is slowly fading from the conscience of the democratic world. This reality is more of a shame for the gentile world than it should be a surprise to the Jewish people. It should not surprise us that the western world makes every effort to suppress and to forget the guilt it bears. It is significant that those very countries which have most reason to feel guilty - the two Germanies, France, Austria - find so much delight in making use of every opportunity to employ a newly risen "Anti-Zionism" - which they have persuaded themselves is an acceptable and also legitimate political expression - to mask their ingrained anti-Semitism., while Holland and the Scandinavian countries who have a far better record

in the endless field-game of Jew-hatred , are far less likely to indulge in the modern antics of Israel-baiting.

The guilt which the gentiles of today feel towards the Jews, the realization of how much their forefathers and their cultures have contributed to the growth of anti-Semitism and ultimately to the Holocaust, and to what degree their hatred for the Jews has become an important ingredient of that line of theology and of that type of philosophy which have arisen in the persecution of the Jews and which see in the persecution of the Jews a necessary, a convenient and a welcome medium by which to assuage their own shortcomings and doubts, is a phenomenon which has not been known before the Second World War. The main protagonists of this openly expressed and frankly conceded guilt are the German people and the Christian churches which have indeed figured as the principle culprits responsible for the main anti-Semitic warfare against the Jews.

The Germans, who have reason to know that they are the perpetrators of the greatest crime against humanity ever recorded, know that they will never know a future in which they will not always have to witness their guilt. They are responsible for having started the war in which 55 million died. In cold blood they have murdered six million Jews. Nobody in Germany denies today that Hitler had enjoyed the general and enthusiastic support of the vast majority of the German people. This truth makes the entire German nation responsible for the Nazi crime, and while some excuses can be acceptable for the ward dead on both sides, none is possible for the crimes committed against the Jews.

8. The Church and We.

The Christian churches - some more tacitly than the others - have accepted the responsibility not only for their failure to prevent the Holocaust and for having taken the fugitive Nazi criminals under their protection, but also for having, as the primary and principal organizers, perpetrators and legitimizers of that senseless, that ferocious anti-Semitism, made the bestial killing of the Jews at all possible. Of course, both in

Germany and in the ecclesiastic world we encounter an understandable reluctance to carry the full responsibility. They all make strenuous efforts to deny or to divert their guilt, but Israel and world Jewry in general do not grant any leniency. We have, however, to concede that the unrelenting use which Israel and Jewry make of the readiness of the Germans and of the theologians to hide their head in shame, is in danger to become counter-effective mostly due to the moral weakness which Israel exhibits in her struggle against her inner and her outer enemies. This weakness can extend itself into a lack of pride and posture. It is in my eyes a degrading spectacle to observe the flow of self-appointed self-serving publicists, businessmen, intellectuals - and criminals - who develop a steadily deepening selective amnesia in order to please their German counterparts. But I am certain that I express a general consensus if I predict that whatever our leaders and politicians, and more so what our self-appointed judges of past anti-jewish crimes may today say or do, will not bind, blind or influence future generations. I am convinced that the guilt of the Germans and the churches will never be eradicated.

The christian churches face today difficulties which they have never known before. We can say with confidence that the main cause for the loss of trust and faith of most humankind in the ethics of the leaders of the churches is somehow related to the painful history of the Jews. If one includes the protestant theologians to an honest reply, they will concede that they do not anymore believe in the old and basic dogmas of Christianity like the Creation, the Fall, God's turning up in human form, in the resurrection of Jesus, in Hell and Punishment, in Heaven and Redemption. Today's churches are frantically engaged to remove everything which smacks of transcendental interpretation of their creed. They do this in the hope of avoiding the criticism and the ridicule with which modern viewers like to face the activities, the expressions and the demands of the organized religions. In this respect Judaism has the advantage that the association of its new national potential with the, though slightly vanishing, historical viewpoint of Judaism is acting as a saving factor.

Inspired by Pope John XXIII, the 'Second Vatican Council' was convened in 1965 and it demanded the abolishment of the traditional christian teaching that the Jews were and are guilty in all ages of the crime of 'deicide' of having caused the death of Jesus. Ten years later the Vatican issued 'guidelines' to implement the Council's decision to condemn anti-Semitism and to

pave the way for jewish-christian understanding. The guide-lines advised the Christians to acquire better knowledge of the religious traditions of their 'Jewish brothers'. In 1985 the Vatican, even though stressing again the Jewish roots of Christianity, seems to have suffered a relapse. It demanded that the Old Testament "be read in the light of the Christian interpretation." This new document shows that the old christian attitudes are undergoing a resurrection; and notwithstanding the history of the Church's failures in the past and the disarray in the present culminating in a great loss of faith and trust among the Christians, the Vatican has proclaimed again that old and disproved slogan, that the Church now occupies the place Judaism had in the Covenant with God. "The Jews have been chosen to prepare the coming of Christ", the document concludes. At least we have to concede that it is less outspoken than the deep knowledge professed by some leading protestant theologians that God does not listen to the prayers of the Jews. But still, these good christian theologians are of a less bloodthirsty nature than the Greek-Catholic bishop of Lebanon who preaches that his countrymen continue their highjacking in order to kill as many Jews as possible.

We may hope against hope that this prelate will realize the damage he does to his church and repent. He may copy the step the actual occupier of S. Peter's throne, Pope, John-Paul II, took by vaguely indicating such repentance in visiting the Rome synagogue. It has made a good impression on many that he called us his "dearly beloved brethren"; and he added that in a certain way it could be said "that you are our elder brothers". There has been much discussion and criticism about the appearance of the pope inside a synagogue, that he did not say anything decisively important, that he did not even mention the State of Israel. I agree that the visit has to be judged as a political and not, as the Pope claims, as a religious gesture. After all he had to correct his relapse into the antiquated Church lingo. But I also maintain that I am ready to enter the Pope's visit and gesture into the list of miraculous events which can serve as road signs on the way to redemption.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the large contingent of the 'ancient guards' of enemies of Jewry, of those who cannot forgive the Jews the crime of 'deicide', and notwithstanding the silence of the churches whenever Israel has been threatened in the last 30-40 years, I am strengthened

in my belief that times are at last changing, that , conscious or not, the world realizes the threat it faces, and the needs it has. Many of the leaders of the various christian denominations show a repentant behaviour. Nevermind their reluctance to bend their stiff necks more than necessary, nevermind the frequently erupting manifestations of the hostility they still harbour, and nevermind their continued political distastiation. Notwithstanding the churches' shameless retreat and their cowardly reactions in the face of Arab threats, we can witness a tremendous change in the churches' public utterances, and many are the sermons of a large part of the christian clergy which never cease their demands that the churches correct their irreligious and illogical practices which they have inherited from the past. They leave me in no doubt that they sense, that not only their survival but also their revival depend on their coming to terms with their Jewish past and their Jewish part; that the invectives and the insults which in the past have characterized relations between Jews and Christians have harmed the Church more than the Jews; that apologetic monologues have not absolved Christianity; and that only humility and an honestly felt confession of guilt will bring humankind forward.

In our days we encounter strong and influential organizations, mostly in the guilt-ridden ecclesiastic establishments of Europe, which try to cultivate jewish-christian contacts, which aim at a continuous dialogue between Jews and Christians and which work for a deepened relationship between the two creeds. The hoped-for effect will certainly exert a therapeutic effect on the christian conscience; and although there appears to have occurred a reduction in interest and activity in recent days, this is most likely due to certain political winds bringing whiffs of decay from the anti-Semitic desert. The contacts between Jewish and Christian intellectuals have the aim to free the latter from the guilt of, and to absolve it from, the debasing past and the infamous behaviour of the churches with regard to the Jews. Every Jew should welcome this movement of christian-jewish rapprochement and should see it as a promising trend, provided that these encounters are more than an item on the program of pleasant social meetings of the church leaders with a few self-appointed Jewish exponents of a complimentary trend. Let us wish that the ideas and the tendencies which should be indicative of understanding and humanitarianism, of repentance and of forgiveness, will extend down to the most peripherically placed and least educated men and women in

Christendom. Every single one of the ecclesiastic and lay leaders should be made to learn that henceforth not only the life but also the dignity of an individual has to be granted a dominant place in whatever program and plan they institute or direct. Once such an ethical sine qua non is recognized, it must ultimately lead to that generalized ideal of humanity without which so much is endangered today. The various ecclesiastic establishments should really believe that in the scheme of things to come, and in the preparation and organization of the ultimate peace among the nations, Israel has a definite and decisive role to play. It has to act as a catalyst, has to be an example. It has nowhere been told, nor has anybody anywhere assumed, that Israel would ever be granted or offered control over the ~~world~~. It has never been promised that it would dominate the world, that it would be the ruling nation. It has only been told that it is equal to and on the same level with other nations. All this great Prophet Isaiah formulated in words which his contemporaries could well understand and which for us are no less clear: "That day Israel making the third with Egypt and Assyria, will be blessed in the centre of the universe...Blessed be my people Egypt, Assyria my creature and Israel my heritage..." (19:24)

You will ask me why I have thought it necessary to bring these last few chapters to your notice. Not only is so much of their content already known to you and even to those who deny such knowledge, but you are liable to think that I have far too much deviated from the plan and ~~the~~ program you thought I had firmly mapped out for my story. And if I am not mistaken you think you can detect quite some contradiction in what I told you in the last few minutes with my so often presented point of view.

Please ! Have some patience ! I shall soon present you with my answer to your questions and your doubts.

9. You and your Destiny.

Not only has Israel now embarked on a new chapter in its history, but also the world has entered into a decisive phase of its existence. I was surprised, perhaps even more than that, I was deeply moved by the discovery some years ago that these thoughts, ideas and hypotheses regarding God, mankind and the Jews, which I have applied here more playfully than seriously, of which I have made use to find an explanation for things past, present and future, had already been seriously entertained and actively lived by vast segments of the Christian population of our world, by people who believe in one God, who bless God's involvement with us and of us in an eschatological plan of His. Although I had not yet the opportunity to enquire - to investigate would be a better expression - if the Muslim world possesses any similar theological views, I am sorrowfully left in no doubt, that even if there were such a common denominator encompassed in Islam's monotheism, it would today most likely have been completely anesthetized by political poisons.

Most likely you know already from remarks I have made in previous pages about the 'Fundamentalists' that in these days millions of 'Christian Believers' are convinced that the decisive moment, the last chance has arrived for mankind to move determinedly forward to redemption, and that the necessary impetus will come from the Jewish people whose predestined function in this respect has more than ever become evident by the resurrection of Israel as a nation. A primarily spiritually configured and esoterically illuminated urgency is made more pressing still by the brutal fact, that a nuclear destruction of the world is a reality and that a cataclysmatic outcome will be difficult to avoid unless a true and definite, honest and unrestricted peace is arranged for all the world. Mankind is at last learning the truth that the hope for peace which precedes the hope for salvation and permits the hope for redemption, can only find its realization if the character of man can be changed, if the hatred in man can be abolished, if the evil images driving man can be eradicated.

Should you still have doubts that what I have tried to teach you, and what is also nourishing the hope of a large and steadily growing section of the gentile world, viz:- that God has specific plans for Israel,

that He has reserved a special place for Israel in the things to come, that there is here now a palpable proof of the ever-present 'hand of God' hovering over the fate and the history of the Jews, you may be made to change your mind, if you look with open eyes at the situation as it presents itself today.

Sit next to me, merge with me to observe and judge with me the phenomenon Israel.. Never overlook for a moment that Israel is today the most important factor in the strength of Judaism and the sine qua non for the existence of Jewry. The State of Israel has been created only a bare generation ago by and for the remnants of ~~Jewry~~ with the hands and the sweat and the love of men and women most of whom had gone through the bitter experiences of the Hitler period. They have with their successes overcome the indifference which the western world has shown to Jewish suffering. They have defeated those who denied the Jews the right to survive. That right to survive has not been granted to the Jews of Israel by the grace of Hitler or thanks to his murderous helpers, but it was grabbed with courage and by force by those who were inspired by a desperate urgency while often overcoming if not the opposition at least the indifference of those who fought the German armies in World War II on the many battlefields and on the many seas. From recent disclosures we have learned with an ever increasing horror that even the allied governments, the declared powerful enemies of Hitler, have failed us Jews when they were called upon to save those of our Jews who were still alive in the German occupied territories. It has been proven without any reasonable doubt that the excuses which the Allies, England in particular, brought forth, viz:- that there was available enough transport with which, and no suitable territory to which to bring the Jews from Europe, were nothing but blatant lies. The true reason is amply documented by the statements of high government officials: it is plainly the result of that old ingrained anti-Semitism which one thought one had the right to think had vanished, be it only temporarily, under those terrible circumstances.

Notwithstanding these great obstacles, many Jews have been saved from destruction at the hands of the Germans. The most remarkable, never to be denied and never to be minimized factor is that the Jews on their own, through their own efforts and with their own means, through their sacrifices and their own powerful fighting forces, have saved those remnants of Europe's Jewry surviving in misery and anger in the Dispersed Persons Camps. These

Jews rebuilt their own country Israel using simple tools; they defended themselves against strongly armed enemies , disposing themselves only of primitive weapons. The entire civilized world looked on with admiration - and with pessimis. It seemed to them very unlikely that the Jews and their State would survive. Miraculously the Jews won one victory after the other over an enemy a hundred times stronger. But it did not take very long and that same old Jewish weakness came again to the foreground: the Jews became arrogant, they fought among themselves, they turned egotistic. They denied God and they disregarded the basic commandments on which only a Jewish state and society can be constructed. They did not take sufficient care of their first and foremost duty: they did not teach their children the morals and duties arising from Jewish history and tradition. These, in the main, would and should have taught the new generation the fundamental truth, that they belong to a people elected to a special place in the destiny of the world. The first two generations which grew up in the newly created Israel did not like having pointed out to them that because they are Jews with a long and painful past, and because they were provided with a renewed hope for the future, they had the special obligation to prove to the world that they were not only brave men and courageous pioneers, but that they were also made of morally sterner material, that they wanted to face the world and be recorded as a people with clean hands and a pure heart, that they, that they had now the liberty and the leisure to enjoy a long desired perusal of humanitarian principles, that they were now at last able to live on a higher moral level.

Had the Jews reacted as one might have expected from a people which in the past had been hunted, misplaced, and despoiled, had only known an existence as an eternal minority in exile and which was now gathered into a newly established homeland, their economic, political and spiritual future would have been secured and safe. They would have been enabled to create a protected and balanced existence. But things did not turn out as desired and expected. The cause for the ensuing disappointments were mainly external in nature. It is unfortunate that Israel had to put social concerns and spiritual interests on the backburner in order to cope with the problems of defense and military safeguarding. Had Israel been populated by some 5-6 million Jewish inhabitants, you may be certain that her borders would be secure and her economic situation safe. Israel would at least have had the

opportunity to develop its immense scientific and doctrinal capabilities, as a safer situation would have permitted a smaller military budget and an increased growth in wealth; and, undoubtedly, the consequences would also have been a steady flow of immigrants. The conditions of life I am outlining here are by no means a Utopia; they are the basic rights and justified expectations of every independent nation. And in the case of Israel the eventual benefits would have been far greater still because of her greater potentialities in every respect and in every field.

I hope you will accept my point of view - which is possible if you evaluate our destiny as I do. You can only agree with me that the Arabs who are living with us in Israel are the wetstones on which we have to sharpen our humanitarian weapons, are the field laboratory in which we can test our ethical value system and where we must prove that we have learned our lessons and our duties, and that we are ready to apply what we have learned. So far we have failed not only to apply these groundrules but even to recognize that these are our first priorities. Religiosity - or what the Orthodox define as such - and a stubborn chauvinistic anti-Arab attitude have usurped the foreground of today's Zionist version. Very little is left of the original Zionist ideology which knew that coexistence with the Arabs made Jewish existence possible. Wisdom dressed up as commonsense has been replaced by nonsense garbed in nationalistic terms. Zionism's concerns had once been entirely in conformity with those of a moral society. It was conceived as a historic-ethic movement with a democratic basis and either religious or socialist overtones. This image of Israel abroad, among Jews and gentiles, was Israel's greatest strength and support. Once doubts arose or hostile propaganda created or strengthened such doubts, there appeared an upsurge of hostility against Israel which may always have existed in certain centres awaiting removal of inhibitions and restraints, while in others the outcome was a genuine disappointment. Such a situation became evident in the aftermath of the Lebanon War of 1982-85 when hostile forces organized and tried to change Israel's image in a negative sense. Israel's government and society realize very well the importance of this problem, but the fact that this represents one of the main problems of Israel today, that a moral crisis occupies such a great part of Israel's attention, augurs well, as this is to me an indication that the Jews have put their ethic giro compass again.

into function and that they are now aiming into the right direction. Let us hope that conditions will soon improve internally and globally to offer us the chance to show ourselves and the world that we have realized our moral duty. Why, do you think, are we severely judged and in general also condemned by the world ~~the way~~ way we behave towards "our Arabs" ? The criticisms and the reproaches are far more exaggerated than the reality warrants. I see in this attitude of friends and foes alike an important indication that the gentile world has better understood than we ourselves so far, tht we are here and now involved in a basic moral test. I am quite sure in myself that we shall overcome the dangers which are lurking ahead, that we shall not fail in this test. We have a great and difficult test ahead of us. We shall have to organize ourselves and our society to be always conscious of our duty to aspire to higher moral conduct, that we have always and in every way to act as a holy people, that we have to make every effort that we are everywhere, also in ourselves, respected for our moral fortitude.

I am the last one to deny that this will be a difficult task indeed, and that few, or relatively few of us will pass the test. At this moment a thought comes to me, which I am going to formulate into a question: don't you think that in view of this great and difficult program which lies ahead of us it does not matter ~~ror~~ that it may even be an advantage - that not all the Jews of the world have been 'ingathered' in Israel, that so many do emigrate again ? You will hardly classify the 'Yordim' as valuable Jews. I suppose you will neither think well of those who through assimilation and conversion disappear from the totality of Jewry; such human material would hardly been able and willing, when the need arises to make sacrifices on behalf of Judaism, and to stand firm and upright in face of temptations. I think, when you take all this in ~~cons~~ideration, if you weigh the advantages and the disadvantages and make final accounts, you will conclude that the removal of that category of Jews from the mainbody of Israel can only be an advantage for us, and an obstacle less in the path of the moral demands which we have to fulfill. You may interject that such arguments, such prog-noses, such projects can only be a chance possibility to be lived and to be recognized by a religious society, by people who believe in God and His demands for Israel's holiness, and that the majority of the Jews living here in Israel as well as those abroad in the Diaspora are hardly religious

or obedient to the rabbinically prescribed obligations. I do not deny that this is an established reality. It is a surprise, an incomprehensible experience for many a non-Jew that the Jews in Israel who live in the Holy Land, who speak Hebrew and who read the Bible, can proclaim that for them religion is irrelevant. You will have understood, I hope, from what I have told you so far, that neither the obedience to the antiquated rules of the Halacha nor the regular visits to the synagogue do make up the 'good type of a Jew'. The man and the woman who are honest and decent individuals, who accept and live the higher principles of morality, who obey the specific Jewish ethics, make up the nucleus of Jewry which carries in with it Jewry's fate and mankind's hope. These Jews serve also as guides to the gentile world which is looking for the promised bearers of the light to lead it forwards to what each one of us perceives as redemption.

10. Your and ~~moral~~ duties.

I have the impression that you are somewhat restless and disappointed that I have been speaking for so long and so often about the duties, the tasks, the specifics of Judaism, the ethics prescribed and the morals demanded, without ever defining and circumscribing them in clear and exact terms. I realize that I have indeed been remiss in this, and I apologize. I may be forgiven if I thought that no detailed explanation is necessary.

All the demands placed before us and all the duties imposed upon us, derive from the fact that we Jews have been commanded to be 'holy' because God is holy. You remember that I have explained to you already the meaning and the implications of this demand. God wants us to be nearer to Him, as near as we possibly can, to exhibit as much of His qualities as is possible for us to achieve. The acquisition and the exhibition of such qualities, unique in a living person, have been particularly imposed, at least as an aim, on the Jewish people. God has created a humankind which He wanted to be superior to all other living things, a humankind which has to acquire god-like qualities. Out of all mankind the Jewish people are chosen, have been appointed to become paragons, prototypes with such superior

and specific qualities. We know that God is omnipotent, omniscient and wise, and that we cannot ever hope to achieve, even approximately, such heights. There are many qualities which we mortals can share with God; they are love, justice, mercy, holiness, forgiveness, repentance. God is above all 'Justice' and our aspiration to grow and mature with the acquisition of a maximum of the divine gift of justice should occupy the centre of all our endeavours and should be the stepping stone to any possible higher achievement. The feeling what justice implies has no more to be imposed upon us as a command or as a law by God. It has become an autonomous factor in the Jew. The duties and obligations imposed on mankind were created at the same moment when mankind was created; they did not pre-exist man. Morality is an ambience in which divine grace will allow mankind's redemption to come to pass. Man has by his own efforts to create the tools by which he can obtain the promised grace both in his individual existence as well as in mankind's ultimate destiny. It is morality which differs man from animal. Morality is given legal form and shape and thus made factual. The moral law is expressed as moral obligation, is imposed on us as the outline of certain things which we have to do or not to do. We should aspire to develop into moral subjects because only as such are we able to understand and to accept a moral order as a moral obligation. Our duties, our obligations, our morals become significant and gain sense if they acquire a religious dimension. This applies to us as individuals as well as to our newly compacting Jewish nation. It is my conviction that by discovering morality and its divinely ordained sense of obligations in everything we do in our daily lives, we can inject our personal ethics as a vital energy into our existence before it takes on mechanistic features dressed with pseudo-ethical principles.

It is in this program and with these principles that the Jewish society has to be particularly and consciously involved. You should not be surprised if pessimists and defeatists mock me and the like of me, if they argue that in the shadow of the Holocaust there is no room for such kind of ideas, and that we should stop pretending that we Jews have been called to be "a light unto the nations". No !, my dear children, more than ever should we take upon ourselves this nomination and this election. We are to be "the Light unto the Nations"; and also the light arising from the fire of the crematoria and the flames of the pyres will serve as a light which will lead

even the major part of those who have perpetrated the latest crimes on such a global scale against Jewry and humanity, onto the path of cognition and repentance.

You are surprised, I suppose, that again and again I underline and repeat that our people must be conscious of the superior qualities with which it has been endowed and blessed and which we have to use in the service of mankind. Israel and the land of its inhabitants are the focus of attention in the entire world. We have to accept this as a fact, and I have tried in the preceding pages to make the reason obvious. We Jews have to act and we have to behave as if we are exposed in a glass case. We are criticised and blamed for minor things which would be and are accepted whenever they are done by others. We should never forget that we, the Jewish nation in Israel, are today confronted by a world more brutalized than ever. All through our past history great demands have been made on the ethical conduct and for an at times unrealistic selflessness of the Children of Israel. This is so today and this will for ever be the case. In the past the Jews have been the target of all possible abuse and humiliation, the victims of every kind of punishment and suffering. They were trampled underfoot, they were persecuted, they were victimized. This has been their fate every time they had disregarded the demands placed upon them by God - or to define it differently, the demands made on them by humankind in the name of God. Indeed the gentile world acted as judges and executioners and it punished the Jews whenever they did not come up to the moral standards expected from them. If you examine the history of the Jewish people of the last two centuries - you may go even far beyond that - you will find that there was never a period when the gentile world did not expect of the Jews that they be different, that they be superior, that they be better than their persecutors themselves. You will ask me, full of indignation, "how could the Jews ever have fulfilled this kind of unjustified demands - or even if they were justified - considering their miserable living conditions?" You are right. They had very little opportunity to confront the gentiles with any superiority of achievement while they were fettered to a life of fear and affliction. They could, however, - and to a great extent they did - show by their deeds and by their comportment a moral superiority,

a great degree of dignity and admirable selflessness. You must take into account that in the cruel, lawless and brutal society of the centuries past, selflessness, morality, human kindness were unknown manifestations and an unheard of behaviour among human beings. In that environment and in that world the fact that every Jew felt responsible for the wellbeing and the safety of other Jews anywhere in the world, was definite evidence of moral superiority and of an unusual attitude to social duty. As you know, charitable work has always been one of the most laudable characteristics of Jewry. Regrettably this has also led to class distinction among the Jews which has often reached unacceptable unethical proportions. This is an unfortunate development but we should accept it as one of the many human failings which we should aim to correct. The rich Jew believed himself entitled to conclude that his fortune proved to be favoured by God and superior to other Jews. In compensation there was luckily and blessedly always that saving feature of Judaism which prescribed that the learned man, the educated person has precedence over the rich, must be given due respect and deference. There is another Jewish characteristic which we should count as a blessing and as an advantage, although in this many excesses do occur. I am speaking of the respect for learning and the value given to study. Learned men created a definite layer of the Jewish society, and though non-productive in an economic sense, they did produce a spiritual atmosphere in which the ethical values of Judaism were steadily distilled and maintained in a pure state and with a clear definition. We should not count it as the fault of these studious men that superstition and escapism were so often their companions; these in many instances encountered degenerative infusions into Judaism are hardly the doings of these sages; they were conceded by the demands of their flocks and the exigencies of time.

All through the ages there were many kinds of currents and movements. There were many simple and wise men who might have been the suitable guides and the qualified leaders - but it somehow never came to pass that such men emerged to bring the Jewish people forward whenever the environment was right the people were not ready or the situation proved not to be propitious for the great changes which had been promised and which were expected. The clock of progress towards salvation was again and again put back, the Jewish exile continued, and the Jews' freedom remained curtailed. But do not despair. Do not lament that the Jewish people have been maltreated without justification, because you might discover also something positive in their

misfortune, something which is good. The constant delay, the frequent postponements, the prayerful expectations may have served to reinforce the inner faith of the Jews, and also to eliminate the danger which a starkly materialistic trend prevailing in those barbaric centuries might have presented to the physical survival of the Jews. But in our ~~own~~ days such a delay is no more valid or justified. The time available to mankind is getting short. Today's Jewry serves no more as the scales on which the world can weigh its own shortcomings, nor is it anymore the sacrificial lamb which the gentiles offer for their own failures. Not only Israel but also the nations of the entire world are now affected by, are involved in and are judged for the flood of mishaps and dangers which are the order of the day. If a solution is not found very soon for mankind's ineptitudes, and if the irrational denials of the nations of their own responsibility do not cease soon, this our world will cease to exist. One thing, however, is certain: Mankind will never survive without Israel.

This fact - observe that I use the word 'fact' - the human world knows quite well. All those who believe that man and his existence are not to be explained as a higher stage of a developmental process out of an animal origin, know this well enough. The recognition that man has been created for a purpose, that he has been 'created in the image of God', explains to some degree why an increasing part of mankind has today the wish to atone for the crimes it has in the past committed against Jewry. In this newly awakened global consciousness you can include also the publicly mumbled confessions of the Church that she has caused so much Jewish suffering, that she has remembered that after all Christianity is unthinkable without the acknowledgement of a past Jewish base and a future Jewish association.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT.

What has all I have told you and what has all we have experienced taught us ? What conclusion can we draw from it all and how have we to react ?

What I have told you now in a rather superficial way would have merited much more time and space. They are thoughts and associations which have occupied my mind since many years. I would have liked to elaborate on them still further, to tell you more details and to provide you with further examples, but there has to be a limit to every tale. Without enlarging this hypothesis into a thesis, let me tell you in simple words that I see quite clearly in all what I have told you, have described to you, in all which goes on and in all which in some way affects us Jews that God has a definite plan for the future of mankind and that all which goes on and that all which happens is part of the work and of the process of this divine plan. A priori you will have to accept that Israel takes up today a pivotal position in the destiny and fate of the Jewish people, of all the Jewish people. All the gentile world agrees on this point - except for those large segments of Jewry which drift assimilationwards or the strictly orthodox backward-looking traditionalists. This is the reason why I feel encouraged, why I feel permitted to say that all our hopes for that happy outcome and for that satisfying solution of mankind's problems, which we all wish and expect, will come to materialize. I do not deny - as you are likely to point out to me - that here and there, still and again, we can observe signs of hesitation and evidence of regression. You may even say that much of what goes on looks to you like a wilful and directed sabotage of what I define as God's plan. Yes, you are justified to point to the more and more frequent reports of a reawakened anti-Semitism. You can enumerate in addition also many instances of Israel's failures. You may remind me that Israel tends at times to relapse and to misbehave and that it is stupid and selfish at others. But your arguments will lose much of their sting when you come to see that these obstacles on the way to progress are weakened and hopefully soon also invalidated by an awakened human conscience. Never in human history has a generation than ours been more aware of human duties and responsibilities, of the demands of ethics and the duties of morality. You should interpret the difficulties

and obstacles which we still encounter not as possibly leading to setbacks but as necessary corrective measures to put Israel and the world back on the right track. You may also point out that the Jewish trend to self-denigration is still not totally repressed, is still much in evidence, but I can accept and live with this situation as I see in this another facet of our irrepressible arrogance. All in all we can discover a great change in the attitude of the Jews. They have come to view their errors and mistakes not any more as due to their own weakness or to their enemies' superiority, not as the outcome of coincidental concatenations or of an inevitable fate. It depends on the onlooker or on the instance ~~of~~ one judges it all as a change for the better or not. However, you must register it with pleasure that whatever self-criticism comes into effect it does not anymore lower itself into self-abasement, except when we are faced with the strange conception which the orthodox Jews entertain about God, that He can be bribed by man humiliating ~~himself~~ and abusing himself. In the daily life of the Jew, and in the convolutions of the political relationships of the Israelis, their self-denial is checked and kept within limits by the in the Jewish people so strongly developed human ambition to succeed and to impress. I have the impression that also the arrogance which I have so frequently mentioned and criticised, is at last checked - at least to a great degree - by the recognition of the negative effects it produces; and it is further corrected by the nowadays more damaging blows of fate it is liable to bring on the entire nation. I am inclined to see in the nation's frequently occurring but always astounding economic failures such a self-correcting measure; and painful as it is, I am glad to see that the arrogance of the Establishment has been blunted by the illogical war it has started in Lebanon. It is impossible for me to figure out, what would have been the reaction, the situation, the mentality, and possibly the fate of Israel, had she not been exposed by its Arab neighbours to the constant threat to her existence. The defeat Israel has again and again inflicted on these enemies - you will agree that the victories have at times approached the miraculous - have contributed to the strengthening ~~of~~ the instinctive - and often openly expressed - trust and hope of large segments of the gentile world that Israel was being readied to lead the world to redemption. But it is an extraordinary fact all these victories and achievements have never had the same effect on the Israelis themselves, less even than on

the Jews living abroad. The Arab oil weapon has been miraculously and incomprehensibly blunted. I shudder to think what the effect would have been on and for the Israelis had this not been the case. But somehow I was never worried about that new instrument of power which the Arabs developed in 1973. I felt assured and secure. I felt from the onset of the crisis that this had to be the outcome. What I want to convey to you is that we live through times and events which are so unmistakably of a tremendous importance and are of a significant indication. They appear to me to clearly push and shift a still reluctant Israel through the shoals of its reticence, direct and pull it through the gaps of its denials to lift it over the obstacles raised by its resistance and toss it over the barriers she has created in her desire to ignore her task, to refuse her duty and to neglect her destiny.

It appears to me that today in large parts of Jewry at last the feeling begins to prevail that we are at the threshold of great changes. Since the Six Days' War a nationalistic trend with messianic overtones has become manifest in Israel. It forcefully expresses a belief in forthcoming radical changes both in a physical as well as a metaphysical direction. The astounding victory of 1967 has been interpreted by the religious nationalists as a divine miracle. Since the creation of the State of Israel prayers in the synagogues of the land contain the acknowledgement that the "era of your redemption has started", and the very fact of the existence of Israel, the miraculous survival of Israel, the string of victories won by Israel are perceived by these religious elements in Jewry as a confirmation of that statement. Unfortunately, these religious nationalists have not yet learned their lesson and have remained blind to the ethical, heritage-bound ethical element which is missing in their demands of the conquest of the "remaining lands" which they claim are "holy to Israel". The occupation of the West Bank in 1967 has turned large sections of the 'old-fashioned' and 'modern' orthodox groups into chauvinists and reactionaries for whom the retaining of the entire biblical Israel is a question of faith. This may appear to you and to many of our friends evidence of regression but it is nothing more than the still incorrigible trait of arrogance. But what is to my mind far more important and promising is the large wave of revulsion against the religious exclusivity, the intolerance ranging into racism

which has been evoked and is expressed by large sections of Jewry. This is a promising and significant involvement. I am going still further and maintain that both the parties show a positive declaration of faith and that they make thereby a positive contribution to the role Israel has to play.

I say this , although for this type of chauvinistic and reactionary Jew there is little reason to differentiate between the interpretation of Jewish history past and present, in particular the recently enacted drama of the creation of the Jewish State on the one hand, and the series of temptations, the tests and pitfalls of which the Jewish history is made up, and their simplicistic explanation for all that has occurred. That is the reason why the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 , the "Operation Peace for Galilee", as it is vainglorious called - which is in truth a failed test of Israel's power to resist temptation - is accepted by the growing religious - nationalistic groups as nothing more or less than a step and an effort towards the fulfillment of the divine promise that Israel was going to "own every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread...". This kind of literal and radical messianism not only does not know limits or restraints, but it does in creation create a lamentable brood of Jewish terrorists. These men do not realize that they present a deterioration in religious values and ethical norms which will, on the contrary, delay 'the coming of the Messiah'.

And again I have overcome the despair by which I felt oppressed for a long time by my coming to realize that these radicals have succeeded in awakening in a far greater number of Jews the very real and valuable reactions which are typical, and should be specific, for ethical Judaism. However, I want to present you with an idea to mill over. The ultra-orthodox rely on the interpretation of certain talmudic passages that nobody can predict the day the Messiah will come, and for this they refuse to recognize the State of Israel because it had not been inaugurated by the Messiah. They are an ineffective group, vocal though they may be; but they have a refraining influence on the machinery of government of the country insofar as their uncompromising messianic hopes refrain the secular forces from escaping unhindered into secular political conceptions and insofar as they control the social establishment from dismantling the ethical values of Judaism. If

you ask me full of surprise if I am ready to accept these ultra-orthodox men in black caftans and their backers in America and Belgium, I can reply in the affirmative, as in my views they have a role to play in the way Israel progresses. But I pray that these men and women comprehend that the Messiah will arrive, that redemption will come only when a peaceful and selfless acceptance of the rights of other human beings have become self-evident. when they remember that all human beings alike are endowed with the same unstainable soul too. The recognition of the rights of other human beings can only be denied, can only be overlooked, if one forgets for a single moment even that our forefathers have been slaves and strangers and our fathers hostages and migrants. And one has in addition to acknowledge that the Jewish people have survived all the miseries and dangers past not by wars and not through battles but by virtue of the values and hopes which are contained in Judaism. The militant Jews in our midst with the Bible in one hand and the granate in the other, should be reminded afresh that the Messiah will come a f t e r the swords have been turned into ploughshares and not before. They will have finally to overcome their restricted outlook on others if they accept that the "Messiah" is a process, a message - and not a person, not some fabulous descendant of a non-existent "House of David". The recital of all the divine promises which are laid down in the Scriptures cannot suppress the changed realities, cannot undo the actual facts; but they can to some degree be harmonized with our hopes and wishes, our own sufferings, in the face of the sufferings we are ourselves about to inflict on others. It is neither a shameful behaviour, no cowardly retreat nor does it mean ~~A DISREGARD~~ for God's promises, if we make use of compromise as the best weapon by which to achieve peace and to do justice. An honourably offered and accepted, an honestly arrived at compromise for the sake of peace and decency never fails to assuage the conscience of a decent individual.

Manifold are the theological currents in Judaism. I am happy that it is thus. But I am unhappy that there is so much antagonism between the various currents and that there is abuse of the political power usurped in our days by the orthodox. Pluralism is a necessity, an important ingredient in fermenting today's Judaism. There is no need anymore to erect a fence around Judaism against outside influences and inside dissent. Even though

every road leading to man's perfection and mankind's completion has to maintain a relationship to - though not necessarily with - God, this is not always the case and the reformatory energies are blocked by a residuary conservative trench or are likely to disappear into the sands of a spiritual desert.

The conservative stream of Judaism has contributed to manifold such currents and has granted a considerable latitude of expression to each. One of these is the 'Reconstructionist Movement' which has been ini-tiated Rabbi Mordechai M. Kaplan. It is based on the concept that the Jewish religion exists for the Jewish people and not vice versa. The Reconstructionists see Judaism as a civilization in which religion plays an important though not the only role. Religion is one of the many forms of expression while language, literature, law and art are other such forms of expression. In the eyes of these Reconstructionists religion has the character of a folk-religion, where God is not perceived as the Supreme Being and Creator of the Universe, but as a Principle which can be identified "with the aspect of reality which...enhances the traits of individual human work and furthers social unity". This movement denies Israel's elevation and election and any involvement of God in the Creation. It seems to me that the most fervent followers of M.M.Kaplan's theology do not in practice take on all his concepts.

The pluralism which every sincere Jew would welcome as a soothing mean to bridge the various sections in Jewry is far from being achieved. Still and again great rifts separate the various religious groupings ranging from the ultra-orthodox to the reform-liberals. Side by side with them exist the various shades of the secularists. The tragic situation which face us today - to use the simplest explanation possible - is attributable to the one-sided education to which every one of these groups and sub-groups has been exposed. The religious among the Jews do not conceive the possibility that there might exist a divine spirit and supreme intellect beyond the artificial borders within which these often extremely orthodox Jews want to encompass their illegitimately usurped territory, and which they intend to build up into a strongly fortified domain kept impenetrable by creating an atmosphere of rigid intolerance. The secularists on the other hand do create out of their usually painful past and from other actual unpleasant experiences a God-negatin

philosophy, because in the absence of any sincere search and any deeper knowledge they cannot and do not know better.

We may concede to the orthodox group of Jewry that there have been times over the last many centuries when the introduction of the strictest orthodox religious legislation may have greatly contributed to the survival of Judaism in the Diaspora; and we may even accept that in our own days they intend to give to a great extent a specific Jewish character to the State of Israel, but we must nevertheless point out in these our days such rigid religious principles defend nothing more than a formality. Times and circumstances have changed. We have now an independent and internationally recognized State of our own, and the Jewishness of this State has to be reflected by the true values of Judaism. A rigidified ritual and a codified conduct do not contribute to the value of the religion. Nobody will deny that tradition provides a lustre, and that a socially equilibrated environment can provide a happy atmosphere. While most will agree that an environment made up by a generalized and generally accepted religiosity could in certain intellectual quarters be aspired to as an ideal atmosphere, it should not and in no circumstance be forced into the mould of a religious formalism. By all means let the orthodox-religious elements dress in their heavy black garb, even though this habit approaches the imposition of physical torture in the hot climate of Israel. We should not make it our business if they insist on their lack of adaptability from and an enslavement to the in no sense Jewish ways of life which they have, over the centuries, calcified into customs and habits which by now have been labelled as sacred and have been sanctified as 'tradition'. Neither have I any objection if these men and women continue to live in their halachic world with its literal interpretations, its symbolic expressions and its allegoric activities - but they have no right to imagine themselves as the only true Jews in existence; and above all they should not usurp to themselves the power to condemn, attack and accuse all other Jews as sinners and blasphemers. Those Jews who have lost their faith in a Supreme Being, and those who consider themselves Jews but do not follow the halachic rules, are not a priori less 'good Jews' than their orthodox counterparts.

As long as their conception of a relationship with God and as long as this satisfies the elementary principles of Judaism, these orthodox

elements should be granted the right to continue in their precepts and their principles and to go on living as they please. But they should not interfere in the ways and arrangements of life which are preferred by other Jews; neither should they abuse certain political situations to their advantage. I am not going to compare the various values scales, and I am not going to the other extreme and side with those who insist that the strictly religious, and especially the extremely orthodox groups among the Jews are wrong or even ridiculous with regard to their interpretation of the meaning of Judaism. By far not ! But woe to them, to all of us and to Jewry's future if any of the groups I have mentioned, from the secular to the orthodox, does not learn to acquiesce in the right of every Jew to express himself in his own ways, if people in general do not acquire that minimal degree of tolerance without which we shall continue in the same cycle of disaster and destruction which has until now been our and mankind's fate. The orthodox elements in Jewry conclude from the leniency they have encountered from the side of the political parties in Israel, from the increasing competition which marks the political spectrum of the country, and from the inducements which are offered to them by the politicians of the right as well as of the left who want to gain the "religious votes", that they have the power to demand, that they have the right to what they have achieved. But what makes the situation most dangerous and intolerable is the impression the orthodox Jewish groups have gained, viz:- that they have God's consent in all they do and gain, and that they conclude from all this that only they fulfill God's wishes. These self-satisfied orthodox Jews in their self-centred faith, in their ignorance of worldly affairs and with their blindness for other people's intellectual honesty, want all the Jews to follow their strict and entirely religious precepts; but they achieve only an unpardonable alienation of, a bitter opposition by and a profound hatred from the large masses of secularists. Such a situation - which if uncontrolled can only result in a fratricidal strife - has also in the past repeatedly split the Jewish nation and has, every time this occurred, ruined Jewry's immediate future. The process which I have described appears to continue also today on its unrelenting advance - and the implications this may have for all of us make me think that what goes on today could not happen without

divine consent, that it represents a trial, a test - and a warning.

It is a clearly documented fact that many Jews throughout the world are abandoning Judaism and are severing their ties with the Jewish people. The causes are most likely to be found in a decrease in overt anti-Semitism and the failure of the Jewish educational authorities to provide a sufficient degree of knowledge of the emanating of Judaism. There is also the additional attraction that one can nowadays become a non-Jew without converting to the Christian, the Muslim or any other religion.

On the other hand we can observe a considerable 'religious survival' and a marked 'religious revival' - the latter remarkably shown in the 'return' of large number of secular Jews to the orthodox observation of the Jewish laws. This is an impressive phenomenon, but observers do not grant much weight to the movements as an effective counter-measure to the relentlessly progressing assimilation.

The basic argument the secularists, the reformists and all the other fringe elements in modern Judaism bring forth in their refusal to accept what I have underlined as the basic motif in Judaism, viz:- the postulate that we Jews have been chosen for a divine mission in this world. However, I state here again, and categorically so, that in my opinion nobody who does not have this belief and does not adhere to this maxim can possibly have faith and trust in a Jewish survival. Without such a belief also Zionism is emptied of its basic value, because the return to Zion had and has only a moral justification and a historic validification if it was and is viewed as " the beginning of the redemption ". Those who saw and see their aim and ambition in becoming " like any other nation ", who saw and see Zionism in the main as the provider of a refuge for the persecuted Jews and as the best as a bollwerk against anti-Semitism, have betrayed their Zionist mission and have legitimized their and other' assimilation. Who will take it upon himself to assure me that non-Zionist secular Jewry will survive for more than another generation or two in the Diaspora ? Even the ultra-orthodox and the chassidic groups will perish morally into a new ghetto if they withdraw the foot they have hesitantly planted inside the Land of Israel. '~~Jewish~~ religion' as perceived and taught in the Diaspora can hardly be identical with Judaism; those who have thus been educated will soon become arreligious. After having themselves loosened from the outer frame of Judaism

they quasi automatically will take the next step which will inevitably and definitely make them exclude themselves from Jewry. A secular Jew can only remain secured for Judaism if he accepts it as a truth, as axiomatic, that the cultural, the ethical and the national heritage are his to claim as long as he treasures in himself a sense of true religiosity - which does not mean a strict or any observance of the Halacha.

Inevitably I shall now be presented with the question: what is it that I want in fact, if not demand outright? What is the minimum that I hope for? Let me answer clearly and unequivocally that I do not demand anything from anybody, as I think that interference in the faith and belief systems others have created for themselves are dangerous and disrupting, and because today harmony and cohesion among us surviving Jews, the threatened and endangered Jews, are of crucial importance. I do wish and pray for a minimal degree at least of tolerance and humility among the various factions and groupings of Jews in Israel and abroad. We cannot survive without the commonly shared understanding that each of us has the god-given right to express himself according to his way of believing, perceiving, thinking. I unhesitatingly grant you and all who try to argue this point that the masses at large are in need of a systematized religion, of the availability of an exactly determined scheme of beliefs and of the provision of a well defined structure of a creed with its rites and ceremonies, its traditions and customs. I fervently wish and pray that the religious one among the Jews will find full satisfaction and suitable engagement in a religious system of their own; but I also wish and pray that those others among us, who want to express their approach to the Supreme Being, to the Creator of our world with the help of their own interpretation of the facts they perceive. And I finally wish and pray that all sections and fractions of Jewry will grant the recently emerged "secular-humanistic" stream in Judaism the right to create and live their own religious Weltanschauung. It is clear to me that all kinds of religious pluralisms must be the only and fundamental law ever granted by God, that the restricting exclusiveness and the theological rigidity, man-made and self-imposed by the orthodox religious leadership, had full justification at the time it had been introduced, when the survival of the Jewish people would otherwise have been in jeopardy, but has in these

our days no suitable and no in any way justifiable application. It is horrifying to be told that the refusal of accepting the orthodox' principles and viewpoint is for the latter not only the lithmus test of a true Jew but also an indication whether or not a Jew is worthy of carrying this name. Fortunately Judaism and Jewry have been liberated from these restricting chains. Today nothing can prevent those of us, who recognize my definition as an important rule, to form their own ideas and to provide their own formulations. Fortunately none of the humans around us can censure our thoughts, and it is my own good luck that I at least do not feel charged with any missionary duty whatsoever and that I do not feel any urge to propagate my thoughts be it from a soapbox among the crowds in the marketplace, be it from the pulpit, be it through pamphlets.

I can, therefore, permit myself to state that I have experienced in recent years a steadily increasing distantiation from organized religion, which is not to mean that I have "lost my religion". On the contrary! The attitude and the position which are now mine, have contributed to my having experienced a deepening of my religious perception, to having freed myself from certain atavistically originated or early implanted dogmatic perceptions of things of faith. Thus I am granted to view myself and my religion in a light in which, if not ~~at least~~ least most of my questions are finding their answer. I am ready to confess that my steady loss of respect for and trust in nearly everyone of the 'professional Jews', that is in those who have been nominated - and those who present themselves without an appointment - the leaders of Jewish religious thought and the judges of the application of Jewish ethics, has facilitated, if not initially stimulated, my independent and self-fulfilling conception of myself as a Jew. The way in which I have presented my "narrative" may already have made you suppose that it represents such a spiritual evolution and intellectual emancipation; but I would still like to outline, as concretely and as shortly as I possibly can, this my Weltanschauung. I want to tell you in a few words what kind of conclusions I have drawn for myself - and I have somehow the impression that by now you have been sufficiently 'prepared' to understand what I am going to say.

Mankind finds itself confronted now with an overwhelmingly serious situation and with demands for far-reaching decisions. The conditions which prevail in the world indicate ~~that~~ something has to give, that at least

something or possibly everything has to change. We can only hope that there will be a change for the better. It must be for the better, as otherwise there is no hope. Every further step in the direction we have so far made will lead to an abyss, unless humankind is able, is ready - and is still in time - to build a bridge over this abyss on which our feet can be safely set for the next steps we have to take.

You are right ! These words do sound pessimistic. You have every right to interpret them as evidence that I am facing the future without any great hope. To me the most devastating recognition of human failure and weakness is in the fact that wherever there are human beings you will find blind egotism and deaf superficiality facing any situation which demands a deeper and also a profitless involvement into the sufferings of depressed humans, and a feeling of selfless participation in the interests of the underprivileged masses.

You must have noticed with horror that the Jews, wherever they are, are not always an exception to this statement. It is true that they do raise their voices against injustice and that they do add their dollars to the collections, but they do not always lead, they do not always shine as examples of humanitarian sentiments. Neither do they impress the world, or themselves, as paradigms of morality. If you draw the balance, you will have to conclude that in this our world which is exposed to greater dangers than ever, threatened with the total extinction of mankind, you will find most of the people anesthetized in a selfish pursuit of interests and occupied with the superficial issues of their immediate day. Today, when we have more than ever the opportunity to know and to learn of the next man's problems and have the chance to gain a satisfactory insight into the gifts with which we are endowed, we do not care to look deeper into ourselves and we do not show interest to enquire about the values of life. This is a situation where mankind has shown itself worthy to be preserved. And it seems to me as if we all know this as true. Unusual disasters threaten us today more than ever. We face knowingly the possibility of self-destruction, for we are in the same life-threatening situation as the child playing with a primed bomb.

You will ask me quite rightly how I can harmonize my pessimism-

tic descriptions with my absolut sounding certainty which I have expressed in the preceding pages, be it with regard to God's program, be it with Israel's destiny, be it with the divine promises and assurances.

I can harmonize both, the depressive situation and the optimistic program~~s~~ because I am deeply convinced that I can detect the working of the programmed developing - and I have every trust that in case of a definite need some 'miracle' will turn the vehicle of destiny back again into the right direction. In these our days filled with Israel's wars, with the activities of the terrorists ever more threatening the citizens of the country, we witness not only hysteric outbursts of the populace demanding revenge and of crazed Jews themselves planning and at times even executing terrorist acts and murders, but you can also more and more hear voices of protest, of warnings of lamentation that whatever other peoples do or other nations commit Israel cannot, should not, will not do, as Israel has higher standards of ethics, as Israel knows higher moral values, as Israel has been called to higher duties, as Israel has been chosen for a special role, as Israel has been appointed to be "a light to other nations".

Yes, this is the ever increasing tenor of the public announcements in Israel, not by mystics, not only of the spiritual leaders, but mostly of the intellectual leadership and no less among the agnostic people filling the political vehicle. This demand for strict observation of the ethic duties specifically laid upon the Jews, is a phenomenon you will only encounter among the Jews it is by implication also expressed in the hostility of most of the enemies of Israel. It has become an increasingly heard chorus of demand among the Jews. It has become a growing realization among the Jews. It has become the more and more underlined program of Jewry. All this augurs well for the future. And all this reinforces my optimism beyond any need of a scientific proof.

I have at length described, criticised, and lamented the shortcomings which are - and always were - evident in the character of our people. I have enumerated their failings and the opportunities they have lost. I have compiled a long list of the lessons we should learn from our history. I have illuminated the danger all of us now alive will have to face if there is no

change, no radical change very soon. We, who do realize the dangers to which are exposed, should not shirk facing them. Formerly ~~changers~~ of such a kind have been 'handled' by the various religions; we should resist this tendency to go on relying on them - for the problems of every day life are for us to resolve by ourselves.

Did I sound pessimistic ? Did you get the impression that my enumeration of all the problems without whose solution humankind has no future indicates that I despair ? If so, you are wrong. For I am , on the contrary, full of hope and inner certainty that the light at the end of the tunnel has become noticeable. The phenomena, the growth of interest in the wellbeing of the underdeveloped masses, we have all been witnessing in recent years all over the world, and in particular in Israel, confirm my optimism. The countless protest marches filling the streets of the capitals and in their repercussions in the newsmedia, demanding justice for all, clamouring for peace under any circumstance, prove that we are progressing. The predominance of the demands for morality in every phase of our daily life, indicates to me quite distinctly that we are on our way out of the quagmire which our world has inherited from its barbaric and cruel ancestors, and the no less barbaric and cruel 'civilized' generation just preceding ours. In this re-evaluation, in this re-education of our rules of life and laws of behaviour Israel is definitely and absolutely in the leading role. It does not count in the fact that the world is not ready to concede Israel this merit. Tell me, if you know of any other place, any other country or any other people in the world where such a selfless wish for justice is heard, or where such strenuous and sustained efforts to help the underprivileged and starving masses of the world is seen or known ?

The Jews have now established their own state. Here they have the opportunity, here they have the environment, here they have the machinery to exhibit a life style which is morally superior and humanitarianly blameless. And , my children , I mention this as the culminating proof of and the most satisfying evidence indeed for my prognosis: they do so in fact. They make a conscious effort to realize and to effect what has been their moral heritage. It is humanly impossible that they do not make mistakes; it is under-

standable and acceptable that they do commit blunders. But in every instance where they misuse or disregard their highly sensitized ethic or democratic principles, you will find large segments of the population become vocal; and they unreservedly point out these errors and mistakes. You will find that they do not so much insist on the punishment of those who have erred but that they demand that these recognize and admit the fact that such mistakes, such trespasses have occurred. Today you are bound to get the undisputable impression that Israel tries to appear - disregarding whatever anguish and cost - as a country based on a strict morality, that it endeavours to evolve into a nation directed by higher concepts of its duty to mankind. The moment everyone in Israel recognizes this, and as soon as the world allows Israel the time and the leisure to do so, Israel will be the first nation in the world to teach, to prove and to practise the highest ideals mankind can ever aspire to: that man will no more fight man, that there will be nothing left for hatred and prejudice to feed on, that man's spiritual faculties will have ample opportunities to mature, and that the deadly abuse of Nature's will cease and its gifts will find only peaceful application for the benefit of all. For we must become conscious of the truth that the urge of man to make war against man, that the outflow of hatred for hatred's sake, that the unleashing of one's destructive instincts for the pleasure it produces, were not part of the original characteristics and gifts with which God has endowed man. I maintain that the first human beings on earth behaved on a socially and ethically higher level - if not purer level. They were unspoiled. They killed only for their requirements in food or whenever they felt threatened. They lived in groups or communes, and these did not intrude into the domain or interests of other similar communes. Only when man acquired a 'higher culture' did he learn to kill other human beings, to threaten other peoples. At that stage he learned warfare. Also cruelty was a later development in man. The earliest records show that cruelty and crime were hardly known. The conquered enemy was treated with mercy until the craving for power became an important factor, whereupon wars were not anymore fought for reasons of security only but for expansion and acquisition. Ponder the fact that animals do not know crime! At the most they know greed. Man recognized and acquired all his evil traits on his way upwards, on his path to civilization. This burden of

evil has prevented him from gaining perfection. Only after getting conscious of this load he carries, endeavouring to get rid of these trends he has acquired, will bring on that state of grace and peace, that future which Israel has been promised, the "Kingdom of God on Earth". Signs indicate that Israel has become conscious now, more than ever before, of her duty towards herself and others, because you will find nowhere that longing - and that impatience - to be given at last a chance to live on a higher level, to live in peace and harmony, for at last having become conscious of such a task, as much in the foreground as in Israel.

CHAPTER V.

An Epilogue.

I have at last completed my tale, and I ask myself not if I have told you in sufficiently clear words what I have thought is worth telling, but what I myself may have learned since I have begun to brood about the implications of all what has been churning in my mind for so long, and which, after much hesitation, I have decided to set down in writing for your benefit. It had to be a short and condensed story - and this makes it inevitably also a superficial tale. For this I apologize, although this fault is minimized if you realize that all I have intended to off can be compressed into two or three simple questions which I want to formulate in these words: What have the Jews achieved over the ages apart from having survived? Have the Jews anything specific to teach to the world which could not have been otherwise taught? And finally, what is so important and so significant, so unique and so special in being a Jew?

I have in the preceding pages given you already the answers to all these questions, and I am not going to repeat myself again and again. I know I have written so much that it has kept you busy for quite some time already in case you have had the patience to read it all, page by page. I would not be surprised if I am told that I have written far too much and that I may have therewith offered you a reason and an excuse to put these pages aside, mostly unread. Should this indeed be the case, I would be truly sorry for you; but I do not regret my labours as lost, as I cannot hide from you, that if there is anybody who has learned anything and gained something from what I have written, it is first and foremost I myself.

I have written the story of the world and of the Jews in terms which may earn me the reproach that I have a poor opinion of your intellect and that I have the arrogant view of myself that my own poorly developed

intelligence is the right medium with which to view and offer such wide ranging and deeply prodding problems and issues.

Far be it from me to have such intentions and such a self-image lead me to write my 'story'. I was entirely guided by the wish to explain to you how I have for myself solved the puzzle which makes up our existence as humans and in particular as Jews. So far nobody has been able to give me an answer which could satisfy me and which would at least not offend my intelligence. You may have come to the same conclusion as I, If I offer to share with you the solution I have found for myself, it is certainly not because I want you to accept my ideas or beliefs, but because I may provide you with a starting point for your own chain of thoughts bubbling off, and because I hope that you may find the courage to evolve a positive attitude to your existence. Am I perhaps wrong if I face you with the statement that most of those people, I say even of all the people, who have not mechanically adopted the predigested spiritual health food spooned out by the organized religions - rabbis, priests or sheikhs - have closed their minds to the entry of any thought or speculation about the question of God, of life, of our past, present and future. To hold the mirror in front of your eyes and to make you recognize that such an attitude is - if not cowardice it is at least mental lassitude - unworthy of you that I have written this 'story'.

I know I have lingered on certain details more than it might have been wise to do, but in general this was the case whenever I wanted to put on record an interpretation, a viewpoint, a conception which disagree with the accepted opinion of exegetics and biblical experts - a liberty which I can claim for myself as I do not insist that my ideas are absolutely right, that they are in every case originally mine, that they are more acceptable than those of anybody else, and that I would be ready to fight for their recognition. You must have noticed that I have 'jumped' over large stretches of human and Jewish history, but I claim that I could do this with justification, because I have done so whenever I had nothing to add to nor to distract from what you can read by yourselves now, or whenever you are ready to do so in comfort, in the Bible and the other specialized books of theology and history. When you do start on your studies, keep your mind open and do not let philosophers spoil your conceptions right from the beginning. Let me give

you some example for my warning. The view of the Epicureans is that since everything is 'chance' we may well make the best of it. The view of the Stoics is that everything results from the unfolding of 'necessity' to which we had better accommodate ourselves. At least you can interpret according to your taste Marx's famous formula: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please....the tradition of all the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living". Now you understand that it would only confuse you, should you start with the philosophers instead of placing your ready faith in front of your eyes.

I have pointed out to you occasions where a definite, often miraculous coming together of circumstances, unusual or not, and of situations, unlikely or not, turned out to be of decisive significance for the Jews. I could enlarge this list still further by analyzing the long history of the Jewish people with such an interpretation in kind, but I fear that this would make you yawn - and protest. Let me only compact my point of view into the question: can you deny that the survival of the Jews to this day can be explained by anything but a miracle?

You could ridicule my opinion and the resulting 'prognosis' as utopian and as neglecting to take note of the geopolitical realities with which Israel is faced. But I do take these in consideration, knowing well that those relating to Israel cannot be separated from those of the Middle East and these not from those of the entire globe. I know very well indeed that the future of our world is intimately associated with that of Israel, and that the existence of the one is unthinkable without the other.

I know that Judaism has been entrusted with a spiritual role; and this can now be undertaken more effectively within the potential of the Jewish State on a higher - and also on a metaphysical level, as a collective which has been imposed by history on all Jews. The call to become 'the shining light', to become a model society, the Zion from which guidance and instruction will come, is still valid and all Jews have to stay tuned to this wavelength. Today's Israel must face the truth that it has become the focal point of Judaism's message, that it is as a nation that it has taken upon itself to spread the humanitarian messianic message of universalism as it has been preached by the Prophets. I am convinced that

the first spark has been lit in Israel's conscience, that already large numbers of Jews are today conscious of this truth and that they strive for these ideals not as modern humans but as conscious Jewish human beings. The importance of this newly opening source of social energy lies for me in the fact that it is nourished by Jews here and everywhere who proclaim religion irrelevant and the Bible of only historic value.

We do not know what kind of world there will be only a generation from now, nor do I know what kind of Israel will face what kind of world in the coming century. The changes we ourselves have seen take place in our lifetime make the most fanciful and daring predictions possible - and risky. But we may consider it a certainty that with the increase in technology, in communication and in population mankind will have matured enough as to have banned strife and warfare for ever; that the coming generations will accept it as an axiom that only peaceful coexistence, reciprocal respect and cultural interchange will grant humankind the fulfillment of its just demands, viz;- to enjoy all the benefits of life and the blessings of faith to which it is entitled.

As many feel instinctively, and as the founders of the State had the courage to proclaim, Israel's redemption has started with the rebirth as a State. We can assure the other nations of the world that their redemption will set in when the coming generations will by banning all wars achieve a peaceful coexistence, will be able to provide for every single human being a state of happiness and security. It is here that Israel's duty will set off, has to become involved, has to find application. It is to me quite clear that Israel will soon have learned to live with the basic truth that it will always, even in the best of circumstances, remain one of the smallest independent countries harbouring one of the least numerous populations. Her strength cannot continue to be her haunted military prowess, but will have to be her moral qualities and her ethical heritage. I am sure that the time will come when ~~she will~~ see her neighbours, and soon all the world, share these gifts with her. The world will undoubtedly soon overcome the actual and continuing drift of the peoples all over the world towards agnosticism and atheism. Demands of life and conditions of the world will build up the need for new concepts of God, of religion, of morals and of salvation - and these will be shared by all mankind in some form and expression or other.

Then at last will be eliminated the fundamental reasons for conflict and that potential cause for disaster which until now have been the motivation for the unwillingness of one party to grant spiritual independence to the other, and the causes for the lawless urge of one religion to eliminate all the others.

Soon Israel will be forced - it may be so already in the coming generation - to face a great challenge. It has to fit into the world community and at the same time it will have to steer the world away from the plethora of theological disputes which have so often served as a cover for the deep-seated human inclination to see in cruelty and deceit the tools by which to arrange a foothold on the world stage. Israel has not only the advantage of its spiritual and cultural heritage, but it is also the melting pot of many cultures and civilizations, as well as the never ceasing fountain from which the religions are fed and the civilizations and morals of the world are nourished. The problem facing now Israel - which is soon bound to increase further - arises from its relationship with her Arab neighbours; add the test Israel has to undergo with regard to the minorities in her midst will be of immense importance. I have no doubt that Israel will find the right solution. I am confident that the Jews will find the right answers. Here and in this will come the fulfillment of a duty to which Israel has been called.

Let me resume. There is no doubt in my mind - and this I state with quite some emphasis - that we have the right to expect great changes in the psychological and moral make-up of mankind. The mankind of which I am speaking here has during the last many centuries hardly made any progress in a spiritual or moral direction. On the contrary! It has, with the acquisition of so much knowledge and the provision of such greater facilities become more brutalized and spiritually more flattened. You may be sure, however, that the very deep wounds which have recently been inflicted on mankind's spirituality, the severe trauma to which its soul has been exposed, cannot fail to have their inevitable effects. The final outcome of the recent turmoil will have to be a change of humankind for the better. It has to be so. I myself shall not live to see these changes, but you, the younger generation, may be the blessed one. You may become part of a new and cleaner world. Mankind cannot ever again return to an existence and to a world which w

world which will be again as evil and as full of peril as the actual one, although there has until recently been neither the wish nor the trend to get rid of these burdens. The spiritual maturation and the moral purification of which we notice the initial stages, can only disarm the trap which we ourselves, by our scientific and technical progress, have set for our physical annihilation. One of the indicators of the safeguards that this trap will not be sprung, is the certainty that the world will never be able to forget the sins and crimes it has committed on the Jewish people. You do not have to point to all the strenuous efforts this our actual world makes - in the main the chief culprits Germany and Austria - to forget and to change, to suppress and to minimize the memory of these misdeeds, but you may be certain that all these efforts will be in vein. The misdeed - literates and priests call them sins; but I do not know what a sin is, at least I do not believe that "God has created or permitted sin". - committed against the Jews are burnt deeply into mankind's forehead, and that scar will always be clearly discernable, even after the application of otherwise most efficient cosmetic tricks. On the other hand Israel must be made to comprehend that she can neither ~~ignore~~ deviate from, nor stop in her final spurt to take over the leadership towards the goal of salvation and redemption which is clearly and so definitely entrusted to her. There is for Judaism no hope - and for that matter neither is there for Christianity - for a future without the recall of the original values for man and without the cultivation of the intrinsic goodness in man. Man has been provided with the spiritual and moral working tools for his salvation. The main part of the work ahead is to clean the path by controlling and suppressing all the evil instincts and trends we harbour in ourselves. Above all we must have the courage to declare honestly, clearly and unrestrainedly that we want to pursue our aims without harming others; and we should unashamedly express our regrets for all the misdeeds all of us have committed, individually and collectively, ourselves and our ancestors, now and in the past. Having reached this decision, having recognized these goals, we shall all of us suddenly discover I am sure to our delight - that the fulfillment of such marvellous and by no means unachievable programs is no more the exclusive reserve of any special religion, of any specific call, or any particular culture. It will have become a common task and a collective aim and it will be realisable with a common effort and a

golleatigoodwill. And above all, the reluctance and the resistance of the gentile world - the christian and the islamic foremost of all - against the Jews taking their rightful position and enjoying a peaceful existence will have to cease once for all. The world has to admit that it is Israel, the Jewish people, which have to play a leading role in the march towards the realization of such a program. With such an admission will come salvation.

I would not be surprised, after you have read through all these pages, to be told that there has grown in you the curiosity to know what might have been my intention in writing down all this. The explanation I have given you at the beginning of this chapter may not appear to be enough. You might ask if there is a message I wanted to communicate. Of course, I had a purpose in mind with this essay. I have wanted to convey to you certain ideas of mine, or it would be better if I say that I intend to convey to you certain definite concepts and conclusions which, in the course of the years have taken shape in my mind and which have now matured into an at least to me satisfying, maintaining and sustaining conviction. With this statement I do not want to point to my belief, the to me basic truth which is perceivable like a red thread throughout the fabric of this 'narrative', and which, I faintly hope, will by now have to some degree your own conclusion, viz:- that Israel occupies a special place within 'the scheme of things', that we Jews have been selected for a definite task in the eternal and definite program of and for mankind, and that our people have more or less an exclusive appointment to act as the enzyme, to function as the catalyst among the - surely today to all sensitive persons apparent indications of the imminent entry of humankind, of our world, of our nation into a decisive phase of human existence and survival.

At a somewhat less urgent level I have expressed my conviction that we Jews have also a special duty to ourselves as a nation and we each of us to himself as an individual, to realize that it is given into our own hands to achieve, gain and obtain what we have prayed for and hoped for all through our existence.

However, we have first to make function in us our specifically Jewish giro of consciousness which serves as our constant reminder that we cannot advance on the path towards our aim, that we cannot overcome the mighty obstacles of fear, hatred and greed in our path if we do not acquire as a spontaneous reaction, as a reflex reaction that degree of tolerance which teaches us, that although the goal is clearly outlined and the direction fully indicated that there are innumerable roads leading thereto, and that everyone has the right to chose his path, to apply his own methods, to use his own transport according to his own conception, understanding and reaction. The realization of such a truth, of such a knowledge of the divine basic message to humankind is a sine qua non for that stage of maturation to which we Jews have the assignment to lead the world at large. We shouldnot fail to make it clear to ourselves that there is not, that there should not and could not be any jealousy nor any competition with regard to the achievements in this program. It is of the foremost importance that we render ourselves conscious of the fact that we have set out on the right path, that we have acknowledged our duty, that we have at last decided to arise and to fulfill our destiny. This resolution, this inner conviction alone is not sufficient to remove from our past all burdens of guilt, to free us from having to suffer ourselves the fateful punishment and awful disasters which have been afflicted upon on our forefathers - and no less already upon our generation too - Who can deny or refute that the standards I want to apply to my own duties, that the principles which I have elaborated for my own conduct, could fit, should be made to fit to every Jew, to every single member of human society. I am sure this is feasible, is possible. All these principles and standards I have mentioned are given their right expression and their suitable form if we only will it. They will find application in and by the various - and often conflicting - intellectual, spiritual and religious divisions which make up Judiasm and Jewry today.

I cannot visualize this our world and my position within this world without starting from the indispensable truth that all which we see and all that we are is the result and outcome of a directed and divine creation. If this is so, this creation must have a purpose. This purpose cannot be anything else than the evolvment of man to a true state of perfection and

and a great height of morality. This purpose must from the outset have been the aim of the Creator. The aim cannot have had as a goal the mechanical, technical and scientific development or evolvement of mankind, but the spiritual perfection of the human being, his growing into a morally superior and ethically pure individual which has recognized, eliminated, overcome the negative traits and the moral defects which man has acquired and accumulated in the process of his growing out of and his separation from the animal-like state in which he has started his existence.

Nobody can deny that the Creator, who has created the Universe, and who at every stage of the evolution of the world and its inhabitants has given manifold evidence of His overwhelming and total omnipotence, could easily have produced a human race which was perfect in every sense from the outset, and that He would not, over the billions of years, have had to shift and to choose the composition and the suitability of the most adequate genes in order to produce the type of human being which would eventually be endowed with dignity and god-like qualities. This form of reasoning permits me the conclusion that - apart from a constant supervision and an occasional intervention - it has been the Creator's plan and intention that man evolves by his own mechanism, matures through his own experience and learns from his own insight.

I am unable to explain our existence in any other way. Such a statement I could not grant to all the other explanations filling so many millions of books now in circulation. I regret that I have not the time nor the inclination to explain this my thought-complex at greater length. However, this is the understanding I have found for and in myself to view the world, mankind, Israel and the Jews in a way and in a light which removes any and every doubt I ever had in a bright future for mankind; and this gives me the right to claim that you and I are contributing, even though unconsciously in our days, to the attainment of that hope.

It grants me in addition also a special place, a definite observation point from which I can survive our past and present history, and which grants me further a secured niche in which I can feel safe. And it grants me furthermore a peaceful attitude with which I can face myself and my future existence. The combination of all this provides me also with the opportunity to know myself and through me a knowing and released relationship with my Creator.

You will have come to know by now how I perceive the Creator of the Universe, the God in and with me of whose existence I have in the preceding pages expressed an absolute certainty. God is outside our comprehension except for the realization that He is a concept and a principle which exists and is. This God does not depend on us human beings, but we and everything else in existence do depend on Him. However, one thing is clear to me - and I suppose that this become understandable also to you from the perusal of the many pages I have written so far - that God is not physically, i.e. anthropologically involved with us, though He is always with us as He is always within us. This God does not interfere, nor does He have an active part in the way our individual existence takes its course or our individual destiny takes its shape, except for those very rare occasions which I have defined before. By our being alive and by recognizing our moral duty to ourselves and all that lives, that something we carry in us and which we realize as a divine spark within us, urges us on to a higher development and to our acknowledgement of our duty to carry mankind forward to the goal of redemption.

I hope you will see my viewpoint which I can vest in the simple sentence: that whatever goes on in our lives, happens around us, is an indication of our special place in 'the scheme of things'. We human beings are the only creatures who know hope and shame, who plan beyond their immediate needs and who can construct a spiritual system into which to wave one's hopes and fears, wishes and expectations. It is a fact of life that the major part of mankind does not want to sail forth on its own initiative but wants to be provided with a fully organized religious system, a faith-package into which it can fit somewhat satisfactorily its existence full of dangers and its life full of worries. Over the millenia the most manifold types of religions - starting from the most primitive forms of expressions of such fears and hopes to the very highly organized ones with complex theologies and intricate philosophies - have searched to provide for the masses - which means all human beings - a well regulated spiritual menu. In their usual primitivity and their commonplace argumentation the religious systems will hardly suffice to give fulfillment and satisfaction to all and everybody. This is hardly compensated by adding a layer of complex interpretations,

because due to their human imperfection the bulk of the religious leaders will determinedly repulse the assistance of the very large and still increasing number of sensitive and thinking men and women, who do perceive that behind the smoke-screen of organized religions a different message and a fuller truth are hidden.

I do not ask you to accept my conclusions. I would even warn you not to identify with my personal point of view as long as you have not discovered within yourselves a deep faith in a Supreme Being, and as long as you have not realized for yourselves that something spiritual, something eternal has been implanted within you, which demands recognition and identification - and which not only makes demands on your conduct, but assures you also that there is a purpose in your existence, by which you are enrolled to contribute to mankind's betterment.

From what I have presented here I could come to one conclusion only: that something is wrong with the way humankind approaches its fate, its task and its destiny. This includes you no less than me; but if you think you are not ignorant of this fact, and if you think it contains at least some truth, you may take my assurance, that this knowledge is this revelation of our shortcomings, does not oblige you to mount a missionary campaign or to set out on a 'crusade', i.e. that you ought to spread your newly acquired insight. I venture even to say, that you have not the right to do so, that you should not impose on others your knowledge and all the conclusions you have drawn therefrom. You should not even draw the attention of others on your philosophy of life by your behaviour and your conduct. Lecturing and instructions are not effective or adequate. Everybody has to find for himself the right way. You can only indicate to others the starting point and the direction which has to be taken.

Eventually, and not too soon, you will come to realize in what a primitive and often ridiculous manner the organized religions conduct themselves, and how they try to impose their belief system on the public. To my mind this applies to all that is labelled as religion in the past and today. I am not going to drag you into an exhibition of the distinctive traits of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam in order to further elaborate on my statement, as today's Judaism can provide us with sufficient material.

I hope you will agree with me that our religion, the vehicle of our obligations towards ourselves and our neighbours as well as to our Creator and to the world, does not depend on the way in which the 613 'mitzvot', which generations of rabbis have categorized for us, are being fulfilled, especially as you have all and every reason to view with disdain and disrespect today's guardians of these mitzvot, who want us to believe that it pleases God, that it indicates our devotion and that it advances our redemption and that of the world, if we follow their extremely detailed prescription of the way certain elevators can function of the Shabbath, who decide on how much of a special recognition and reward from God the purchaser of a perfectly pointed 'lulav' and an unblemished 'ethrog' can count, and how absolutely necessary it is to dip in a 'mikveh' in order to legitimize an individual as a Jew.

You will agree that once you have gained a deeper understanding of yourselves and the world your relationship with your Creator will also have become real; you will have found the right wavelength on which to approach Him; that you can count now on gaining mental relief and inner peace. In your urge to pray you will not have to follow anymore or exclusively the words and phrases which have been prescribed by the Rabbis many hundreds of years ago, and which have been consolidated under different-and often special circumstances - into an exactly constituted liturgy made to fit every season and every holiday. Let us freely concede that most of the prayers filling the prayerbooks are masterpieces of literature and poetry, that they are well phrased and projected to have a psychologically beneficial effect on the praying individual. However, I do not think that God hears and checks the millions and billions of praying individuals, who by constant repetition of the pious words and thoughts, promises and adorations think they can give their approach a more promising effect. Do you think that the omission, the misinterpretation or the mispronunciation of a prayer text will annul the value of the prayer, that fasting will give greater value to prayer, that only a complicated ritual will give effect to prayer? Are we still at the same stage of education as our forefathers, who in ancient times accepted and believed, that the sacrifice of a dumb and innocent animal had to be performed with a strict and minutely detailed ritual in order to be effective in gaining God's pardon or favour?

If you think along these lines you can only conclude , that the ecstatically praying individual in the "stiebles" , that the desperately imploring individual kneeling in the church , and that humblu prostrated muslim in the mosque have not comprehended , what they are and what God wants of them - and that mankind's future is not advanced by even a degree through these their efforts , and possibly by their existence in general.

Do not think that these words of mine are meant as a complaint about such people , that I had wanted to register my disrespect for them. No ! , I do not in any way look down upon them. They are justified in all they are doing and in the way they interpret their prayers and its meaning. To them it is the way they express how they understand their life, their existence and their duties. In most instances they gain full satisfaction from their prayers. But - and this is my reservation - they are not entitled to the illusion that by their prayers they are absolved from their misdeeds, that because they pray so long, so often and so loud they are superior to other believers, that that they can with and in their prayers work up such an intensity that they must be granted a greater latitude in their profane life. And above all they should abuse themselves of the thought, that they are delegated by God to force others to accept their interpretation , that they can make others follow their conception of the divine will.

I realize that you may think you have now discovered here the apparent contradiction which makes you unsure whether I accept and advocate the need of prayers, and if so , how I think they are to be formulayed and offered.

Let me explain to you how I see and feel the value and the purpose of prayer. Let me call it my 'Credo'.

I have already pointed to the fact that nobody has ever seen God, that nobody has ever been able to provide "a description" of God. At the most we learn about qualifications attributed to God as they have been perceived by mortal beings. When the most privilged one among these did once ask God to reveal Himself, he was given the reply: "E' je asher e' jeh". This phrase has been interpreted, translated, explained in many ways, and all and everybody is dissatisfied with the result. The greatest number of

experts reluctantly accepts as the best translation : " I am who I am". You will be no less dissatisfied - possibly even puzzled - by these words. I , at least , cannot find any meaning of substance in this phrase. I have , however , the impression that with these words is meant to convey to us the grant :
" I am as you perceive Me. I am as you feel and believe I am. I am all that you wish and hope for from your God ".

I cannot imagine, as I have made it already clear to you before, that God sits somewhere above us in the heavens, that he listens to every single prayer uttered somewhere on earth; that He weighs the words we use; that He is made happy or distressed by our conduct; that He judges or condemns, praises or pardons us mortal beings. If this were truly so, I would not be able to understand how mankind, the religions, the temples and the priestly elements could have survived to this day. However, we do know that we exist and live as human beings because there is something divine within us, that a divine spark has been implanted in us, that something of the Essence of God is contained within each of us. Therefore, whatever we do and say, how we act and behave must have some relation to, must be known to what is of God within us. If we do something which is wrong, or if we commit something which is immoral, it cannot be hidden from what is of divine instance in us. In other words, we can never avoid the responsibility for whatever we do and commit, think and say , as the controlling and judging instance is immediate, is within us. God the Creator has created the world; all and everything therein moves according to His program and plan. A part of Him is within us; and this means that we are in a special relationship with our Creator. That is the reason - or better said , this has to be the only conclusion - why God knows and sees everything we do and think. You may sense Him in your subconscious, in your conscience, in your instincts, in everything which guides and leads you, teaches and punishes you. Everyone of us has to accept for himself and by himself the responsibility for whatever we do. You can deny your responsibility; you can ignore your conscience; you can delude yourself that you can escape your inner control. You can remain as you are. What will you be in such a case ? What ?

Essentially this knowledge has also to form and to regulate our approach to God, be it by way of our religious outlook, be it as the basis

of our philosophical reasoning. The recognition of our responsibility can be expressed by the cognition of our duty to God or by our view of our responsibility to our ethical Weltanschauung. The one approach is not superior to the other. Man must aim to take both of them. This is possible and advisable by the help of a prayer. I venture to say that even the secularist, the atheist and the agnostic do pray - although they do so in their own manner, with their own words and within their own outlook. For you and those who believe in the God of the Universe, the prayer is surely best directed to Him, and whether it is accepted or not, corrected or not, whether you are punished or not, or compensated or not, will depend on the moral demands and on the ethical commands which are contained in you, will depend on your personal attitude towards the duty you have to the deity. For those of us who think and believe along these lines the approach to an understanding of our obligation, for the strength to fulfill our duties, for the success in our struggles, is by prayer.

Pray as often as you want and desire. Pray whenever you feel the need. Pray every time you are in doubt and difficulty. Pray to God whenever you are unhappy. However, in your prayer to your God - however the appellation you may use - do not list all possible sins and the entire register of crimes you or the liturgy-composer could muster. Do not go again and again through the repetitive catalogue of all the glories and attributes of God which ancient poets and liturgists have composed. Do not present a large list of wishes and complaints which in any case make hardly any sense. Do not enumerate all the positive and negative events in the history of our people in the belief that it will help you in your argument. Above all do not blame others, or even God, for your mishaps and misdeeds. But pray truly, personally and intimately to your God, to the God whom you harbour within yourself.

I know of only one way how to pray: pray for guidance that you may know yourself. Pray for the insight to know and recognize your defects, and pray for the fortitude that you may correct these defects, and pray for the strength that you will not repeat these mistakes. Yes, mostly you should ask that you may be fortunate and will in future be successful in avoiding any any of the errors you have committed in the past. Pray to God that He may help you and support you in your endeavours to become a

better individual. Let me say it again: Pray to God that you will have sufficient insight to recognize your faults and to control your urges. Pray to God that He may give you the strength to overcome your weaknesses and to know your imperfections. And pray to God that He may help you to realize at every moment of your life that the wellbeing of a l l people and peoples near and far can only be to your own benefit and advantage.

You may possibly have gained the impression that the organized prayers, the contents of the prayerbooks are, according to my way of thinking, without value and meaning. This is by far not the case. There are very many prayers which fulfil exactly the criteria I have outlined above, and which contain exactly those very guidelines which I have postulated. You cannot fail to agree with the advice of the religious leadership which urges you to dedicate the Yom Kippur Day to introspection and to concentrate your efforts to gain an insight in your character. This should be the sense and purpose of every prayer of every day, and should not be the program of ~~oneday~~ every year. This very same advice should apply to your daily prayers, to every occasion when you feel the need to pray, whenever you think and ponder about what you have done or ~~abe~~ about to do. There is nothing wrong with your applying and using the Yom Kippur prayers all through the year. When you pray in this way and with such intention, you will find all the strength of which you may be in need every day of your life. You will also find all the consolation which you do require every day of your life. And most of all you will find all the inner peace you surely must want every hour of your life. This is what prayers in truth means; and this is the kind of prayer which will be heard and accepted by God, as He is always near you, because He is in you. You will not require an intermediary as do the masses of humans and who thereby justify the strict and rigid organization of faith systems. You will not need to be softened up by the implant of guilt complexes with which no true God could ever have burdened mankind. For your approach to God and for your peace of mind you will not have to look for luxurious temples nor for soaring cathedrals. You will feel happy without the interference of black-coated stubborn rabbis, of purple-covered sanctimonious prelates nor of fanatic blood-curling mullahs. The realization of your direct and immediate relationship with your God, your own God, the God you harbour within yourself will guide you through life.

You will appreciate this your religion if you remember the fate of your people, the destiny of your people, the history of the people. You are fortunate, even blessed, that you have so much to remember - even so much which is sad, painful and shameful. Learn about your people. Learn about the treasures which make up your past.

You should make it a point to read at least once in your lifetime the Bible from one end to the other. You should make it also a point to read once at least the New testament and the Q'ran. You should also find the time to read the weekly portion of the Bible as Jews are asked to do. Read carefully and attentively, and you will greatly benefit. Read the Bible without the critical and negative attitude which the negative opinion I have occasionally voiced may awaken in you. Concentrate on the ethics of which the Bible abounds, for this is value and the purpose of the revelations contained in the Bible. Basically the Bible is less concerned with man than with God; theology and ethics flow into each other. The Bible has not lost its meaning and important - and its truth - over the last 3-4000 years. You may be lucky and feel directly addressed in the Bible as the ancient Israelites must have felt. You will clearly learn what is good and what is evil. If you are not inclined to spend too much time with Bible-reading because you think you have better things to do, study at least the writings of the Prophets and the 5th Book of Moses - Deuteronomy; you will find great moral truth woven into the stories of the Pentateuch, especially in Genesis. You will find that the entire complex of the 'Covenant' is of central significance. Study the Bible with this factor in mind and you may share with me the view that the claim of Israel of a special relationship with its God is nourished by this conviction of uniqueness. God entered into a covenant with Noah, later with Abraham but the entire Israel was a partner of the Covenant at Sinai. There Israel was not only welded into a nation, but it was also instructed in moral laws until then not practiced. This was harmonized well - and affected by - God revealing Himself as a God of love and mercy. The Ten Commandments clearly pronounce that man's laws come from God and that man is responsible to God for all he does in life.

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Hermann M. SELZER coll

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Essays

T H E S W I S S A N D I .

Since a year and more - and in a crescendo so - not only have the Switzerland and its people as a whole become the objects of controversy, but it is in particular their honesty and decency that have become the targets of attacks. These attacks relate not only to their financial activities. The Swiss are blamed, that by acting during the war years as Nazi Germany's bankers they had supported Nazi Germany's war efforts and therewith prolonged the war; that in payment for their material and monetary supplies they had accepted not only the gold the Nazis had robbed from the State Banks of the countries they had invaded but also the gold the Germans had melted down from the teeth, the wedding rings, the watches and other jewelry of the Jews they had killed in the Concentration Camps; that, furthermore, they had refused refuge to the Jews fleeing the Nazi terror and, in order to make the selection from among those with german passports crowding outside the swiss borders easier, had persuaded the Nazis to stamp a large "J" in the Jews' german passports.

Another well documented grudge, born not only by the Jews but also by the democratic world at large, is the swiss banks' refusal to give a full and honest account of the assets - deposits and safety boxes - Jews of Germany and the east-european countries had before the war entrusted to the banks; and to honour the life insurances policies Jews had taken out in the various swiss insurance companies.

The anger of those affected - the majority is made up of the children of Jews who had perished in the Extermination Camps - grew manifold, and was further supported by a deep disgust, when it was discovered that the banks had destroyed all relevant records and that, where definite proof for such assets entrusted to the banks was presented, the banks demanded death certificates of the victims who had perished in Auschwitz and the other Camps !!!

When the Jews of America - supported by the American Administration

- readied itself to organize a boycott of the swiss banks, the latter toned down the decibels of their defensive campaign and offered some money as compensation, but refused to accept whatever responsibility for the past. The jewish side in this battle for the rights of the Nazi victims' descendants refused, as not only insufficient but also offensive to the memory of the dead, the sums of money and the size of the funds the swiss banks and insurance companies had offered, until the Swiss doubled up the sum of money they offered in settlement of all the jewish claims

This is the situation at the time of my writing these pages. I hope a by all sides acceptable solution will soon be found, and the entire unpleasant "business" can become another painful episode of recent jewish history.

Since some time I have felt interested in this complex swiss-jewish controversy, not because I am one of those who has been damaged by a swiss bank; or because I have a personal grudge against the Swiss; or because I feel in any other way directly affected. Since I left Germany I had a series of experiences with the Swiss, and also with swiss banks, but I would not classify any of these contacts and experiences to have been as detrimental as to have me left with a negative, or even hostile feeling.

To lay to rest my recently appeared, quasi obsessive tendency to rummage among my past memories, I give in to the otherwise not calmed need to register all I have been thinking and remembering in this connection.

The most I knew as a youth of and felt about Switzerland and the Swiss were, next to the geographic data, the untiring references - often loaded with antisemitic undertones - of our history teacher to William Tell, the swiss national hero. I knew, of course, about the relationship of Switzerland to the Alps, to the Rhine and to its adjoining countries, but it was a non-involved, a purely intellectual databank expected to make part of the knowledge of an educated Central European.

Switzerland entered my immediate sphere of interest in June 1933

when I was "on the run" from the Gestapo. Also then my relationship with Switzerland was purely of an indirect nature: Venice, in Italy, was the only place which had offered me a refuge; and to reach Venice I had to pass through Switzerland. I remember to this moment how fervently I prayed that I might safely cross the German-Swiss border at Basel.

And it became true that my apprehension was justified: for at that crossing point I faced the threat of being again arrested and of being returned to a Nazi jail.

When the train stopped at the Swiss-German frontier, a group made up of a German frontier guard, a Gestapo official and a Swiss policeman passed through the train checking the passports and travel papers of all the passengers. In due course the three men entered also my compartment. The Gestapoman checked on the list he carried in his hand the passports of the two Germans and the one Swiss in my compartment, and without a word returned them to their owners. I saw him hesitate, compare again and again my passport with a name on his list; saw him point out to the Swiss policeman and the German frontier guard, whose curiosity had been aroused, an entry in his list; saw the other two officials too bent over the list; saw them compare my face with the photo in my passport; and I knew that my name was on that Gestapo list.

"What is your name?", the Gestapoman asked, finally turning to me.

"My name is Hermann Markus Selzer", I replied. I was surprised how calm my voice sounded.

"What is your citizenship?", he continued.

"I am a Polish citizen as you can see from my passport", I answered.

From the conversation that ensued between the three men I could conclude that the list did indeed contain my name, but without my second name "Markus", and that I was registered on their list as a German citizen.

"Don't you know how truly common the Selzers are all over the world?", I heard the Swiss policeman say. "We have quite a number of them here in Basel".

At last I received my passport back. The three turned and left. And while the Swiss policeman closed the compartment door, he turned his head, slightly closed his right eye and gave me a conspiratorial smile.

My two German co-travelers looked at each other and raised their eyebrows. The Swiss looked at me with a broad smile.

I have no doubt that I owe my life to this apparently decisive remark of the Swiss policeman.

I will add another entry on the credit side of the Swiss:

After the train had been shunted to the Swiss side of the Basel railway station, I had the compartment entirely to myself. I stretched out on the seatbench and fell into a relieved and exhausted sleep. I woke up two hours later and found the compartment filled with young Swiss who, as I could deduce from their conversation, were returning from a wedding. They appeared to be a happy and tired crowd, but they had not woken me

to have me make room for those who could not find seats on the other bench.

Since that night in the train from Berlin to Chiasso, I have always thought fondly of the Swiss, not only of their policemen.

The time was to come for me to have still more and direct contact with the Swiss, mainly bankers and business people; and though not all of them qualified as likable and pleasant people, most were correct and straight in their dealings with me, and I never had a cause to change my positive opinion about the Swiss in general.

I am not thinking now of Kate's cousin Wolfgang Jacobs, who had qualified as an engineer, had settled in Zürich and was married to Loni Dreyfuss, a swiss Jewess, and whom we visited whenever we were in Zürich. Nor do I have in mind the pleasant contacts I had with various swiss Freemasons and Rotarians.

I mean my for long going on contacts with the swiss banking world.

These started in 1934 with the visits to Rome, where we were living at that time, of Moritz and Regina Neumann, Kate's parents. They confided in us their intention to safeguard as much as possible of their hard-earned money. Any regular transfers of money abroad having been "verboten" by the Nazis, they saw no other way than - illegal though it was - of smuggling out the money. They intended to come on frequent visits to Italy, and every time to bring along with them as many deutschmarks as they could hide on their body and in their luggage. We had to advise them, however, not to bank their money in Italy as the strict monetary controls prevailed also there would make it impossible to take the money again out of Italy. They should, instead, open an account in a swiss bank and pay in whatever they could take with them on their visits abroad. They accepted our advice, but having heard it rumoured in Germany that there were numerous german spies in Switzerland who checked on the german Jews and kept a watch on the swiss banks, they were reluctant to have a swiss account in their name, or even to be seen entering a swiss bank. They proposed that I meet them each time in Zürich, open there an account in my name with a swiss bank, and transfer the money - less the quite considerable share they wanted Kate to have - back to them or their sons Ernst and Kurt when so requested.

Thus during those years a quite considerable "transfer business" - involving me in frequent travels from Rome to Zürich - was set in motion. It came to an end when we left for India in 1937. But by that time I had handed over to Ernst the contents of the swiss bank accounts except for that portion which her parents had reserved for Kate.

In view of the undoubted illegality of this enterprise, I could not ask the advice of any of my italien friends - who had some experience

in this respect, especially of Ettore Bassan who was himself a banker, - in which bank in Zürich I should deposit the money. On my first visit to Zürich my first task was, therefore, to find a for our purposes appropriate bank. There were imposing bank structures all over Zürich's Bahnhofstrasse, but I had no knowledge of the intrinsic swiss banking system, of their international standing, and of what I had to look for. I decided on a small private bank bearing a jewish name. I felt no inhibition to explain to the director-owner why I wanted to open an account in his bank, wherefrom and how the money originated, and that I was only a go-between. The apparent suspicion with which he had first listened appeared to dissipate as soon he became persuaded that I was a pure innocent. He waxed even enthusiastic in his enlarging on my plans: he proposed that I open an office in Liechtenstein - a tiny independent principality situated between Switzerland and Austria - in which my ownership of the swiss account would rest; and though the "bureau" was in my name I was going to appoint his bank as my fully empowered trustee. Such an arrangement would be simple: the bank's lawyer in Liechtenstein would have my name entered in the local business register; a small plaque with my name would join hundreds of similar ones in the entrance hall to that lawyer's office; I would have to pay only sfrs. 500,- for that registration and thereafter the same sum annually to the lawyer for the space I was renting on his board; and the swiss-jewish bank would, "in compensation for looking after my interests", regularly charge a certain percentage of my bank account's contents.

I am ashamed now to confess that I fell in with this "spiel". I signed the considerable number of papers the clerk spread out in front of me.

I was shocked when I saw the "statement of accounts" we received a few months later. That jewish-swiss bank had indeed found an easily fleeced innocent. On my next visit to Zürich I told that jewish banker that I was closing my account in his bank; that I was closing "my office" in Liechtenstein; that I was withdrawing his power-of-attorney.

That man did not protest or argue. He only smiled. He must have quite a number of such suddenly wisened-up clients.

I was indeed the wiser now - and a few thousands francs the poorer.

It had now become easier for me to find an alternative. On my visits to Zürich the many banks I saw had made me understand that Switzerland, and especially Zürich, were the banking centre of the world. On my walks

along the Bahnhofstrasse I had been particularly impressed by the majestic building of the Schweizerische Bankverein (Swiss Bank Corporation) and I was awed when one day I entered it. I had no difficulty to take the solidity of the Schweizerische Bankverein for granted and to entrust it with the money I was to administer on behalf of the Neumann family. This continued until, in preparation of our leaving Europe in 1973, I transferred the Neumann share into the hands of Ernst who had by that time already settled in Palestine.

And after we had decided on Lahore as our future residence I dissolved the swiss bank account and transferred the balance to Lloyds Bank in Lahore.

In this connection I recall another instance of my blind trust in people. (I still feel ashamed to give it its real characterization). Before I left Rome in March 1937 - I traveled to India on my own, Kate having to stay back as her final examinations were not due until August - I asked the Schweizerische Bankverein to send me, in an envelope by registered mail, poste restante to Cairo's main post office, \$5000,- in banknotes. Knowing what I know now about the risk I had undergone, I am still surprised that I received the money in an intact envelope.

In Lahore - at that time still a part of India - we were from the first months onward quite successful in our professional work. In those years we would never had problems with exchanging our rupees for pounds sterling - had we wished to do so, but we did not have the need to do so - as we were living in the British Empire which did not know then exchange restrictions of any kind.

After the war had ended and we had returned from the Camps, and after the subcontinent was divided into two the independent units India and Pakistan, we found things radically changed. Pakistan was then, and is now, a country which having very few raw materials and having little to export, is dependant on hand-outs from the major powers or the rich moslem countries. In consequence it introduced from the onset restrictions on the transfer of money abroad. Soon these restrictions were to turn into quite a problem for us: for, all the good connections we could mobilize notwithstanding, the State Bank of Pakistan never granted us sufficient foreign exchange for our needs. And these needs grew with the years, when we took our 3-yearly, as a rule three months lasting, study vacations abroad and had to bring in - and pay in £-sterling - the locums we engaged

from abroad; when, in our ambition to keep step with the advances in medicine, we had to import from abroad a very expensive apparatus and other equipment for which the State Bank refused - often to avoid the criticism of our pakistani colleagues - to grant us the necessary foreign exchange; when we had to face the not inconsiderable expenses for our children's education in England; and when we had to plan for our eventual retirement abroad.

We had a good income, but the rupees in our bank accounts and our other investments were useless for all these purposes. We had to find means to transfer abroad as much as possible of our assets.

This was not achievable by legal means. The only way we could do so was to have our american and british patients pay their bills not in rupees but in their country's valuta. All of them did so with great pleasure, as we paid them twice, later thrice and later still four times the official exchange rate, while they received their medical bills repaid at the official exchange rate by their governments or employers. I cannot recall any of these patients - be they engineers, business managers, consuls or ambassadors - having refused to enter into this arrangement with us. (The only exception, as far as I remember, was the wife of the German Ambassador who preferred to fly to Kabul-Afghanisrtan where, I heard, she received a still more favourable exchange rate.)

It is difficult for me to describe the feeling of discomfort and shame these activities caused us, but we had no other way out of our dilemmas. On more than one occasion the Director of the State Bank, whenever I approached him for the permit for a larger sum of foreign exchange for our journeys abroad, or the Minister of Trade from whom I requested a license to import an x-ray apparatus or other costly equipment, telling me that they could not make an exception for us, as otherwise "the other doctors too would come with similar demands". And when I told them that this would force us to buy the required foreign exchange on the black-market, they regularly replied that they considered this the best solution.

I have not the slightest doubt that the Authorities knew about these "business transactions", but we never had any trouble therefrom. We never had problems with sending the £ or \$ cheques to our Swiss Bank; nor, when passing customs control in Karachi with numerous boxes and crates.

This time, however, we had not to worry about the bank to which to entrust these foreign cheques. We chose again the Swiss Bank Corporation, and till the end of our stay in Lahore - that is until we came to Israel - we kept our money and other valuables in that bank.

But even with this bank we were to know some disappointments. This happened at the time we had already settled in Jerusalem. We kept only a small sum in our cash account, and had the major portion was invested in shares. And whereas we could not, and knew not - and Kate knew even less than I - to decide about changing the composition of our portfolio in accordance with the opportunities coming up in the sharemarket, we requested the bank people in charge of our account to sell or to buy shares in accordance with the market trend; or to reinvest as they thought best the interests from the shares; or to acquire the special additions offered from time to time. In other words: we gave the bank full authority to act in our interest.

But there came the day when we started to get worried: the half-yearly statements I received regularly showed a massive, I may say an often nearly total, turnover of the portfolio; and usually we missed the good shares I knew we had purchased. After this had gone on for two years, I asked, on my next visit to the bank, to see the officer-in-charge of our account. I had met him a few times before. His name was Mandel. He was as usual very friendly, and before I could complete formulating my complaint he informed me, that the two young men, whom I had met each time I had visited the bank, had tried to gain a higher commission by the frequent turnover of our and other similar accounts; that they had been dismissed, and that he, Mandel, would now take personal charge of our shares.

He did so, and never again had I cause to complain - until Mandel told me that he had been appointed a director of the bank and as such could not anymore care for individual accounts. He assured me that another trustworthy officer would in future take care of our interests.

I did not like this arrangement. I had learned my lesson and - I may have reacted exaggeratedly - I did not anymore feel like placing my full trust, and all our money, into the hands of a person I did not know. Therefore, on my return to Jerusalem and after talking the matter over with Kate, I phoned Mandel and requested him to sell all our shares and to invest the money in gold bars. This proved a good decision. In those days the price of an ounce of gold was around Sfrs 200. Within a few

months the value of gold rose to Sfrs.800.-; but before I could act the price had dropped to 400.-. I was now wary of taking further risks. I contacted Mandel telephonically and asked him to sell all the gold we had in deposit with the bank and to pay the sum received into our current account.

We never had reason to regret our decision - except that I did not miss the opportunity to squander whatever we had in deposit on our account with the Swiss Bank Corporation.

I had also otherwise on a few occasions contact with the swiss business world. Once, when we were still living in Lahore, I thought I had found the solution for our chronic exchange worries, i.e. how to solve our problem regarding the transfer of our money out of Pakistan: on one of our 3-yearly vacations abroad I took with me a small box with what the Kashmir dealer assured me were "first-class quality" emeralds. These I showed to a jeweler in Zürich who had been pointed out to me as one of the leading gem dealers. I explained him, of course, the reason why I had come with that boxful of gems - and to my surprise he was not at all surprised. The man seemed disinterested, however; he did not even examine more than a few of the stones because, as he explained, there was at that time "no market in Switzerland for such types of stones". He advised me to approach a gem dealer in New York.

(This I did when we came to New York in 1964. The gem dealer - also a Jew to whom I had been recommended - examined the stones carefully and then explained to me, with evident regret and sympathy, why I should give up involving myself in emerald dealings:

"These are at best second-class quality stones. In quality they cannot be compared with the emeralds coming from Colombia. These dominate the emerald market. And even if this were not so, I see no chance for you in this business as the son of your Pakistan President comes to me every six months or so with a boxfull of quite good semi-precious stones of many a kind that had been found in Kashmir.)

After we had settled in Israel we visited Switzerland many a time, and thus had the occasion - next to the opportunity to discuss in person with the Swiss Bank Corporation people whatever issues there had arisen since our last visit - also to come into contact with the swiss business

world. This was during the grace period when as new immigrants we were still permitted to bring into Israel, free of customs duties, more or less whatever we believed we required for our wellbeing. For a number of years - more than really necessary, I am ready to confess - we made use of this facility granted to us as new immigrants, and we usually returned with a large number of packages and boxes. We were always impressed with the no-nonsense and honest business manners of the Swiss. This impressed us the more, as we had, over the many years, hardly ever known a time and a place when we had not to complain about the ethics or the tactics of the business world in our environments.

And finally there is the other experience I had with the Swiss and Switzerland. Next to my first adventure with the Jewish banker, this involves the only other encounter I had with Swiss Jews and with Swiss officialdom. I am writing about our wedding in 1935.

(I would have written "about the farce in which we became involved", were weddings in general not a serious affair and our own wedding, to us in particular, of real value and of great importance)

I have already elsewhere described in greater detail the problems Kate and I had with the realization of our marriage plans, and the long string of obstacles that cropped up on the path to realize them. I shall, therefore only briefly mention now what went on.

In 1935 Kate and I decided to get married and we informed our parents accordingly. But the matter was not easily arranged. We agreed that we did not want to get married in Rome, as a religious wedding by the local Rabbinate would have to be preceded by a civil one such, staged in the company of a few hundred other couples in a mass ceremony in Piazza Venezia and performed by the Podestà, the Lord Mayor of Rome.

We chose, therefore, Switzerland as the place where to get married.

Accordingly, I wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Jewish Community in Zürich. In reply the latter expressed his willingness to arrange a religious marriage for us, but he could only do so after we had been married in a civil marriage by the Registrar of Marriages in Zürich.

Accordingly, I addressed the Registrar of Marriages in Zürich. In his prompt reply the official cited the documents we would have to provide before he could "join us in marriage". But now we were placed before

an unsurmountable appearing hurdle: while Kate could have her parents produce all the necessary papers, I could not request my parents for these, as they told the Gestapo people whenever these came to their house to enquire about my whereabouts, that they had no knowledge of where I was.

We decided, therefore, to find a country where we could get married without having to present the kind of documents the Swiss had demanded. We set out on this quest during the University's summer vacations. We tried our luck in Budapest, in Vienna, in Lubliana, in Istambul, in Cairo and finally in Jerusalem. Everywhere we were asked to first provide a similar set of documents as those listed by the Registrar in Zürich, or to prove a residence of from 3 to 6 months.

After that long voyage in search of a country ready to help us get married, we had to acknowledge defeat and returned to Rome.

But I did not give up. Again I wrote to the Registrar of Marriages in Zürich. I described to him in detail what we had gone through on our search for a civil wedding certificate; and I ended my letter with the words:

"Sir ! I give you my word of honour as a medical doctor that neither I nor Miss Kate Neumann have ever been married before".

Within a few days the Registrar replied that he accepted my word of honour, and that he was willing to marry us without the usually required papers. And he closed with the request that we inform him of the date of our arrival in Zürich.

I could now write to the Jewish Community that we had completed the arrangements with the Registrar; that we were going to be married by him on November 2, 1935; and that we would like the civil marriage to be completed on that same day with a religious ceremony.

Also the Secretary of the Jewish Community replied very promptly. He congratulated us on our having overcome all difficulties, and that he would be happy to arrange our "Chuppa" at the date I had proposed. He requested me to inform him of the "class of wedding" we might select from the list he enclosed.

That list enumerated 12 classes of weddings: for the first class the synagogue was going to be decorated with flowers and green plants; a choir of white-clad girls would sing; and the Chief Rabbi, who was going to be on vacation on that date, would return to perform the ceremony. The price of such a wedding was Sfrs 24.000.-

A dispute over the missing savings of Holocaust victims erupted, Dr. Gabriel Padon felt like a witness to a particularly nasty divorce with both sides making a point of not understanding each other, at the top of their voices.

Despite the \$1.2 billion settlement reached on Wednesday in New York between Swiss banks and Jewish claimants, says Padon, a bad taste will long linger.

Padon, who retired from the foreign service when he returned from his Bern posting last October at age 66, believes that the Swiss bankers behaved with heavy-handed obtuseness and arrogance. But he also believes that the Jewish negotiators, and their American political supporters, should not be viewed as selfless knights righting a historic wrong. Their angry rhetoric, Padon believes, unnecessarily complicated the issue and was often aimed at their own varied constituencies rather than the Swiss.

With both sides accusing the other of greed, duplicity and blindness to history, the highly emotional dispute threatened to spin out of control.

Sanctions against Swiss banks amounting to some \$20 billion were mooted in several American states and Swiss politicians warned that such moves would be countered with sanctions against American companies.

Mutual demonization reached the point where the Swiss Jewish community came to fear for its safety, says Padon. Hundreds of anonymous hate letters and calls over the banking issue were received at the Israeli embassy during his tour.

In an interview this week, the retired diplomat said the Israeli government should have become involved in the dispute.

"It should at least have counseled the Jewish negotiating partners to find an equitable solution and not let this thing continue forever."

Before taking up his Swiss posting in 1995, Padon asked foreign minister Shimon Peres what position he should adopt on the bank issue.

"He told me that the government had authorized the World Jewish Restitution Organization to deal with the matter and that I should not intervene. I was just to observe and report."

The WJRO is headed by Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, and includes nine international Jewish organizations. Its prominent spokesmen include Israel Singer, secretary-general of the WJC, and Avraham Burg, head of the Jewish Agency.

In the past, Israel did attempt to negotiate the bank issue with the Swiss but was repeatedly rebuffed on the grounds that the state was not in existence during the Second World War and therefore had no standing in the matter.

"At one point, around 1960, the Israeli ambassador was accused, when he brought this up, of interfering in internal Swiss affairs," says Padon. One of the reasons for this attitude, he says, was Switzerland's desire not to upset the Arabs. The Swiss did discuss

Committee but there was little headway.

The attitude of the Swiss bankers over the years to the question of Holocaust deposits was as cold and unfeeling as a Zurich bank vault.

When heirs of Holocaust victims attempted to inquire about deposits their relatives may have made before the war, says Padon, they were told that they must inquire separately at every one of the bank's branches around the country at a charge of \$400 for each branch inquiry. In those instances where the name of a relative was indeed found, the person inquiring was asked to produce a death certificate. If the bank officials accepted the argument that the Germans had not issued death certificates at Auschwitz, they nevertheless demanded a will showing that the applicant was entitled to the money.

When the bank issue began to heat up in 1995, some leading Swiss bankers stoked the flames with outrageous remarks.

"Robert Studer, who was president of the Union Bank of Switzerland, one of the country's three biggest banks, said that all the money of Holocaust victims added up to peanuts," says Padon. "He said that the Jews murdered at Auschwitz were barefoot and didn't have Swiss bank accounts."

When stories about the behavior of Swiss bankers towards Holocaust heirs were first made public two years ago, says Padon, there was widespread shock in the Swiss public and a sense of shame. "People couldn't believe that Swiss banks had behaved like that."

This feeling was accompanied by a strong wave of sympathy for Holocaust survivors. At the initiative of schoolchildren in Bern, a nationwide collection was launched for needy Holocaust survivors, mainly in eastern Europe, who had never received compensation. Some of the money went to Amcha, an Israeli organization which provides psychological counseling and other services to aged Holocaust survivors.

Gradually, however, the atmosphere changed as negotiations between the Swiss bankers and the WJRO grew more acrimonious.

"I think the Jewish representatives made a lot of mistakes with fiery rhetoric that was not necessary," says Padon. "They didn't understand the Swiss mentality. They didn't speak of Swiss banks but of 'the Swiss.' Exaggerated statements like 'The Swiss are just interested in money' made the Swiss feel that their whole nation was in the dock."

The issue rapidly broadened from bank deposits to Switzerland's role in the war, including its trade with Germany.

"The Swiss didn't have a choice," says Padon. "They were completely surrounded and they needed coal from the Germans and other materials. All neutral countries traded with Germany. So did the US before it entered the war. It sold Germany material that was very useful to its war industries."

There was, however, no mitigating factor to offset Switzerland's

attitude towards Jewish refugees. Some 30,000 Jews were turned back from its borders to almost certain death. After the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, many Austrian Jews tried to flee across the border and Switzerland asked Germany to indicate Jewish citizens by putting a "J" in their passports so that the Swiss could keep them out.

"But there's no justification to

demonize the Swiss like some leaders of the World Jewish Congress and others did," says Padon. "There were statements that made it appear like the Swiss made the Holocaust. They haven't got a clear conscience but they didn't make the Holocaust. There were a lot of Swiss who helped Jews enter illegally. The chief of police in St. Gallen helped thousands of Jews in from Austria and

was sent to jail for this 'crime.'" The Swiss, says Padon, were honestly baffled by the fury of the attack launched against them by the WJRO and its supporters. The anti-Swiss invective directly contradicted the image of Switzerland's upright behavior during the war inculcated into every Swiss child, an image central to the national myth.

And the list continued to describe the other 11 "classes". The twelveth one was far simpler, I might say really primitive: the ceremony would not be performed by one of the rabbis but by the schoolteacher; not in the synagogue but in a sideroom; not under the synagogue baldachin but under a talith. And I would have to provide on my own a congregation of the ten Jews who have to witness the ceremony. This kind of a "less luxurious" wedding would only cost Sfrs. 600.- I wrote back and - pointing out that we were refugees - told the Secretary of the Jewish Community of Zürich that, in case there was not a 13th class, we liked to book the 12th class.

And so we were married on November 2, 1935 first in the morning by a friendly Registrar of Marriages, and later in the afternoon in an truly poor-man's wedding by a grumbling, half-asleep schoolteacher, in a small, dark furniture storeroom adjoining the synagogue.

All these pictures have emerged from my memory bank; and, because of the ongoing debate about the ethical conduct of the Swiss in general and their business world in general, I followed my awakened memories' demand that they be put to paper.

And this I have been doing.....

I am in no way condoning or excusing the immoral behaviour of the banks, and that of the war-time Swiss Government which must have had full knowledge of the banks' traffic in Nazi gold; nor that of the actual Government, which tries to dissociate itself, and does not mind to use antisemitic threats while doing so; and I fully support the efforts of the world-wide jewish organizations who fight the swiss banks and insurance companies with the aim of forcing them to return what they have stolen from the Jews.

The business acumen of the Swiss - generally envied if not admired - did not know ethical limits, it appears. They like to bring forth the excuse that they had to deal with the Nazis because they were a small land-locked country surrounded by german armies. This excuse should have been drained away by a strong sense of morality. The Germans did not force the Swiss to buy at bargain prices jewish owned real estate and plundered art objects. The swiss industry worked with enthusaism and full time for the german war effort and thereby prolonged the war. Swiss

banks had no scruples to launder gold they knew had been looted from the state banks of countries the Germans had overrun; and they accepted in payment for services rendered to Nazi Germany gold bars made of melted down teeth, wedding rings, watches and other jewelry of the Jewish victims. They had hoped to pocket the unclaimed dormant accounts of the Holocaust victims.

The Swiss Government was no less culpable: it was the Swiss Government that demanded Jews with German passports to be identified as Jews by a "J" stamped into their passports; and in return the Germans demanded - and succeeded in obtaining - from the Swiss Government that also the passports of Swiss Jews be thus identified. Even the little humanity shown by the Swiss Government was tainted: the maintenance costs of the limited number of refugees who had been allowed to stay in Switzerland had to be paid for by the Jewish Community of Switzerland. And those Jews - with German or other passports - who had been able to enter Switzerland before the strict immigration laws had come into force, were expelled to Germany - and to a certain death - when their visas expired.

No ! I am not defending the Swiss, neither the Government, nor the people nor the banking system. I am glad my own experiences had been so favourable, and that I am convinced that it is wrong to put all Swiss into one negative category. I know I owe a great part of my favourable impression to the fact that during the Nazi years I never entered their country with a German passport; that also later I entered from elsewhere than Germany; and that we could each time persuade the frontier guards that we had come on "genuine business" and for a few days only. Our bank account, and that of the Neumanns, were never in danger of disappearing under the label "owners cannot be traced", because we never gave the bank a chance to forget our whereabouts.

No ! I do not want to see what I have written as even an attempt at an apology. I follow the fight of the Jewish World Organization against the Swiss banks and insurance companies with great attention, and am happy to see that the latter are on the defensive.

And finally I want to add something which has no connection with any of what I have written so far, but with which I want to conclude this essay.

In the '50s, when we lived in Lahore-Pakistan, we were allotted a new telephone number when, for some reason or other, the entire telephone system was re-organized. Our new number was 2370.

Our "numbered account" with the Swiss Bank Corporation in Zürich had also been number 2370.

WHAT HAPPENED ?

(An adventure in the Old City of Jerusalem.)

Hermann M. Selzer

There came the day when Kate and I decided to realize what we had since long dreamed of, and had so often planned in every detail: after having spent more than thirty happy and interesting years in Pakistan, we decided to terminate our professional activities there, to give up our comfortable living conditions and to come home to Israel. We transferred our medical offices to our principal assistants, settled all our obligations, had the Income-tax Authorities check on our dues for the preceding five years and left. We left with a sense of sadness mixed with that of relief and expectations.

We came to Israel and settled in Jerusalem. We never doubted our having made the right decision. Soon, after having found a suitable apartment, after having made a number of friends, and after having lived through our share of psychological, material and human problems, we felt to have qualified as Jerusalemites. But for many years, starting from the day of our arrival, we never lost the curiosity with which only tourists are supposedly affected. We explored the town from one end to the other. We spent entire days in the Old City. We frequently sat for hours in the plaza in front of the Western Wall. And for years we never missed an opportunity to tour the country on our own or as participants in a guided tour. And still, to this day our curiosity to see more of the country and our thirst for knowing more of its history, have not abated.

This will explain why we eagerly accepted the invitation of Professor Rigby - whom we have come to know and befriended through the Ulpan, the hebrew language school, we attended for a year - to join the group of his students he was taking on a tour through the walled Old City of Jerusalem.

"It will be a pleasant walk", Rigby promised, "for we shall set out in the evening after the actual summer heat has greatly abated. You will be seeing parts of the Old City, I can assure you, which are never included in the itinerary of any of the professional guides; and which you will unlikely discover if you circulate there by yourselves".

We welcomed the Professor's invitation and keenly looked forward to the visit of Jerusalem's ancient quarters under his expert guidance. We had no doubt that, notwithstanding our repeated visits to the Old City, there was still much that had remained hidden from us.

At 6.00 in the evening of the appointed day we met Rigby and his small group of students inside the Jaffa Gate. We were early as, against expectations, I had been lucky to find a nearby parking space for our car.

The air was refreshing and the star-rich sky was cloudless. Rigby led us through byways and narrow alleys, over covered stairs and along dark lanes which we would never have dared to enter by ourselves (and most of which we never found again whenever we later on visited the Old City on our own or with visitors we were "showing around").

After nearly two hours Professor Rigby made us sit down near a fountain for a well-earned rest; but with great regret we had to take our leave, as we had arranged for a technician to come at 9 o'clock to check on the alarm system we had newly installed in our apartment.

When we said our thanks and farewells, Rigby took us to the head of the street through which we had just now come. There he indicated to us the general direction we had to take to reach the Jaffa Gate.

The street we entered was relatively well illuminated not only by the occasional streetlight but more so by the full moon and the star-studded sky.

Kate took my arm and we marched on. After about a hundred and

fifty meter or so we came to a bifurcation of the road. There was no signboard nor any other indication which one of the two branches we were to take. We looked along the road we had come. We looked along each of the two streets ahead of us, but there was not a soul to be seen anywhere, although the three streets were well illuminated for at least thirty meter in each direction. And there was not a single shop or restaurant nearby - or at least one which was open and lighted - where we might have enquired about the road we had to take to reach our car.

Suddenly a man appeared at our left. Truly, he seemed suddenly to have manifested from nowhere. Most likely he had emerged from one of the dark houses at our left or from a side lane we could not see.

He was about 25-30 years old, over six feet in height, obese with a barrel chest and a low-hanging abdomen. His shaven head was big and round; his eyes somewhat protruding; his mouth was open and salivating; he was knock-kneed and his bare feet were flattened.

Under normal circumstances I would not have felt the slightest inclination to address such an unsavoury type of man; and I would certainly not have asked him for information. But the condition in which we found ourselves was unusual and we had no choice.

After again looking around to see if there was anybody else in sight whom I could ask for direction - and far and wide there was nobody to be seen - I took two steps towards the man and addressed him in carefully pronounced english:

"Sir ! Can you help us ? We want to reach the Jaffa Gate. Which is the right way ?", I asked, pointing to the two streets ahead of us.

Without answering - without even looking at us - the man indicated with a movement of his head the right side of the bifurcation; and gesturing with his right hand he invited us to follow him.

I took Kate's arm and was about to follow him into the street at the right, when all of a sudden two men stood at my left. They were two young men, dressed in black, with tzizith-fringes hanging from underneath their jackets, and with black fedorahs on their heads. Quite evidently they were Yeshiva students, who could only have come along the very same street as we had taken.

"Don't follow him", one of the young men said, also in english.
"Take the left road !"

I turned slightly to the right to ask the Arab why he had tried to mislead us, but I could not do so, because I saw the fellow waddling quickly into the right-sided street. I turned now to the two young students to express our thanks, but they had disappeared. They were nowhere to be seen, not in the left street indicated to us by the two young men as the one leading to the Jaffa Gate, nor in the street whence we had come which led in the direction of the Western Wall.

I took Kate's arm and we entered the street the Yeshiva student had advised us to take. All along Kate had not uttered a word. She was trembling slightly. She remained silent even after we had reached the Jaffa Gate. While I was helping her to enter our car, I noticed that her shivering had become stronger.

She never mentioned the Old City episode either that evening nor at any time later on; and, sensing that she would be reluctant to discuss or analyze it, neither did I.

I wonder what had been going on that evening in the Old City. And no less must Kate have been wondering.

HOW MY DAUGHTER ONCE EMBARRASSED ME.

.....and how greatly was I embarrassed on that occasion when I was embarrassed by my daughter Hazel ! Because of the fact that it was the first time she had embarrassed me, that feeling of embarrassment is still very vivid in mind. However, let me make it clear that, due to the innocence which had made her cause my embarrassment it is by far not a traumatic memory; and I even chuckle always with enjoyment whenever I recall that embarrassment, because Hazel was only three years old when that embarrassing episode occurred.

It was sometime in 1943. We - Kate and I and Hazel and Michael - were inmates of the Internment Camp in Purandhar. Like some ten or so other children in the camp also our two had been interned along with their parents. It can be said that for all these children camp life had not the depressing and degrading character as it had for us adults. I would even go so far as to say that, on the contrary, our 5½ years lasting imprisonment in the camp had for the children many a beneficial side: they were shown love and attention by most all the nearly 300 adults in the camp; and, above all, Kate and I could - something which under "normal" conditions would not have been possible for us - make ourselves more or less all day available to our two children.

In addition, we had engaged for the mornings a middle-aged indian woman from a village at the foot of the hill on which Purandhar was situated, to act as the children's Ayah - i.e. as their Nanny - mainly to do their washings, to play with them when we were otherwise engaged. Her main contribution to the children's education were the songs she taught them, and which the children learned to sing with the uneducated Indians' typical pronunciation of the english words.

These songs Hazel loved to sing to us - Michael already at his age

of two disdained singing such songs as "a girlish affair" - and she seems to have taken a special liking to the song of the Pussycat who had boasted of its special relationship with a queen.

The children had no difficulty to visualize a Pussycat because some, mostly miserable, cat specimen did roam the camp; but notwithstanding all descriptive attempts of the Ayah - further elaborated by Kate and myself - they had, in the absence of a suitable model, difficulty to form a concept of a queen.

"Daddy, what is a Queen", Hazel would often ask after one of her singing performances for us parents or for our friends. "I want to see a queen, Daddy", was to become an often tearsome refrain.

Came the day when I was at last offered the opportunity to fulfill her wish, i.e. to make her meet a true queen, a living queen.

During the first 2½ years of our internment we spent in the Camp of Purandhar, some 4-5 of my, more than usual influential, former patients had repeatedly received the Central Government's permission - this grant was canceled, however, when we were transferred to the Satara Internment Camp - to have me come to Bombay for a professional consultation. It was a pleasure-loaded relief for me to smell again the air of freedom, and to have the company - I was on all these occasions the guest of my Bombay friends, the Franvis Klein's - of normal people, i.e. of the kind not oppressed by their confinement to a barbed-wire-enclosed camp. (Let me mention that, though I had been appointed the - miserably paid - Camp Physician, my usually 3-days lasting "Parole Leave" did not interfere with my duties, as I had in turn engaged a young physician-internee to act as my assistant.)

On the occasion I am now describing I had been called to Bombay to be consulted by the Dowager Maharani of Baroda. She had already on repeated occasions in the past been my patient, especially during the summers she too was wont to spend in Kashmir.

A number of Maharajahs and Maharanis - airconditioning not yet being known in those years - usually left their in summer often intolerably hot residences in India either for a visit abroad or for a prolonged stay in one of the summer resorts in the mountains. A handful of these rulers or their families - especially those whose states were situated in Northern India - had built their own summer palaces in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir.

One of these Srinagar palaces - as well as one in Bombay - was owned by the ruler of Baroda, but was placed, for use during her life-time, at the disposal of the Dowager Maharani I just now mentioned, to compensate her for having been banned from ever setting foot in Baroda State because of her having attempted to poison the actual Maharajah - the son of the Maharani senior to "my" Maharani - in the execution of her plan to make

it thereby possible for her own son to occupy the Baroda throne at the death of her husband, the now "former" Ruler of Baroda.

In the preceding years I had, during our summer practice in Kashmir, regularly to attend to the Maharani for one or the other of her ailments.

When the Commandant handed me the letter of the Maharani's Secretary "requesting my presence in Bombay to advise Her Highness on some of her specific health problems", I at once replied - through the office of the Camp Commandant - that I would come to Bombay to see her no sooner all the formalities for my journey had been fulfilled. At the same time I sent a note to Herta Klein asking whether I could again stay with them during my 3-days' visit to Bombay, and whether I could on that occasion bring Hazel along. For, the moment I had read the Secretary's letter, the thought had come to me that this would be an opportunity for Pipsi - this was her pet name, the result of her Lahore Ayah's pronunciation of the german word "Püppchen" (= dolly) as her Grandparents Neumann had, during the time they lived with us in Lahore, called the baby; and this continues to be for us Hazel's appellation to this day - to meet a queen of flesh and blood.

After Kate had agreed - and thereafter the Commandant had given his blessing - that I take the child along with me to Bombay; and after I had received the Kleins' cordial invitation to stay with them, I sat down, took Pipsi on my knees and asked her:

"Pipsi, would you like to see a queen?"

"The pussycat's queen?", she breathlessly asked, her eyes wide with wonder.

"A real queen, Pipsi, a living queen".

"Oh yes, Daddy. When can I see her? And where?"

"We shall have to travel to Bombay where the Queen lives, and you can have a good look at her and even talk to her".

I nearly regretted having made such plans, or specifically of having told Pipsi about them; for during the four days before we left the Camp by bus for Poona, and from there by train for Bombay, the child was in a constant state of excitement. She told all her friends, young and adult, that she was going with her Daddy to see the Queen. And all day long, and with enthousiasm, she sang to us her own version of the Pussycat song:

"I am going to Bombay to look at and talk to the Queen....."

Kate was nearly as excited as the child, and the Ayah no less. Under Pipsi's supervision they readied her best party dress, her red party shoes and white ankle socks and other accessories. And when at last we could leave, Pipsi was dressed in her "second-best" party dress; her hair had been arranged in cork-screw curls and her head was decorated with a pink ribbon.

The Kleins - Herta, Francis and their two daughters - were delighted to see the Pipsi; and the two girls and their Ayah took immediate care, and possession, of the child.

I phoned the Maharani's residence and arranged with her secretary that I would come to see the patient the following morning at 11 o'clock.

"There is one thing more", I hastened to add before the secretary could put down the microphone. "I have my 3-year-old daughter with me. Will you, please, ask Her Highness whether I could bring her along tomorrow as the child would very much like to see a real queen?"

After a short time the secretary took the microphone up again.

"Her Highness will be very pleased to see the child along with you at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning".

During the afternoon I spent a considerable time to ready Hazel for the forthcoming visit.

"Tomorrow morning we shall see the queen, Pipsi. When we stay in front of her, you will make a nice curtsy and nicely say 'How do you do, Queen?' Can you do this, Pipsi?"

"Of course, Daddy", the child answered in a most self-assured voice.

Again and again during that afternoon and evening I took Hazel's hand in mine and marched her along the room in which we were staying; and when I signalled her with a slight pressure of my hand that the moment of her performance had arrived, she stopped, made her curtsy and firmly asked "How do you do, Queen?"

I had no doubt that everything would go according to plan.

This certainty was confirmed at the dress rehearsal the next morning in the presence of the Klein ladies. The only problem we had was with her cork-screw curls which neither the Ayah nor Herta nor the girls could restore to their pristine perfection.

At the appropriate hour the Kleins' chauffeur-driven car brought us to the Baroda Palace, where the Major-domo received us at the entrance. And while the latter went in to inform his mistress of our arrival, I asked the child if everything was allright with her; if she knew what to do and what to say.

"Of course, Daddy. When I stand before the Queen I make a curtsy and ask her nicely "How do you do, Queen ?"

The Major-domo returned, invited us to follow him. We entered the palace's large audience hall at the end of which I saw the Maharani seated on a raised platform in a throne-like chair. She was dressed in a white cotton sari - as was the proper dress for a hindu widow - and the white blouse with its long sleeves could cover most of the coffee-brown spots on her leukodermic skin but not those on her hands and face. At her side, slightly behind her, stood the youngest of her daughters and two of her granddaughters.

Slowly we advanced.

"Where is the queen, Daddy", Pipsi whispered.

"There, in front of us, seated in the big chair".

I noticed that Pipsi's hand was trembling; and again I had some misgivings for having exposed the child to such an emotional stress.

At last we reached the elevated platform on which the Maharani sat. I noticed that Pipsi's hand was wet and still more atremble.

After my having greeted the Maharani in appropriate words, I gave Pipsi the arranged signal. But the child was quiet. I looked at her, and saw her stare with wide eyes at the Maharani; and with surprise I noticed that tears had began to run down the child's tiny cheeks.

And finally and suddenly she found her voice.

"Where is the queen, daddy", she asked.

"The Queen sits there in front of us, Pipsi", I whispered to her.

"This is not a queen, daddy, this is an ayah !", Pipsi cried out in a sobbing voice, putting her arms around my right leg, and pressing her face onto the cloth of my trousers.

I was stunned. I understood at once what Pipsi felt and why she had thus reacted. She had expected to see a radiating, beautiful woman,

splendidly dressed in silks and brocades with a diadem on her head and jewels all over. Instead she found herself facing an old woman dressed in a plain white cotton sari just like her Ayah.

No ! I had not expected the child's reaction. But still less that of the Maharani. I had expected to see her, if not enjoying the scene at least - while exploding in her raucous laughter - to "regally", if not diplomatically, get over the embarrassing moment. But instead I watched her flushed face getting distorted in a furious grimace. I saw her throw a small blue velvet-covered box - most likely a present regally to be handed to Pipsi in acknowledgement of her expected and appropriate show of respect - to the ground. I heard her order, threateningly waving her raised right arm:

"Take her away ! Take her from my sight ! I do not want to see her" and so on.

The Princess and her two daughters appeared to be the only ones who enjoyed the scene. Visibly, they greatly enjoyed Pipsi's performance. They rushed forward, took poor crying Pipsi in their arms and tried to console her the best they could.

At last we could leave.

I had the impression that within a week Pipsi had overcome whatever trauma this experience might have caused her at first; and I do not think it has left her with any residual effect. But she never again sang, or wanted to hear, of the Pussycat going to meet the Queen....

I did not attend professionally to the Maharani on that day. Nor did I ever see her again. Not even the summer we returned to Kashmir after the war had ended.

To paraphrase Albert Einstein:

"The most incomprehensible thing about human beings is that they so often react in a comprehensible way....."

THE BEGGARS' TRADE.

"Where are you from?" This a question I am often asked when I find myself in the presence of foreigners, especially if they are Americans from various parts of the States on a visit to Israel, who expect me also to be like them a pilgrim to the Holy Land.

"I am an old resident", is my usual reply. "I live here in Jerusalem".

This information mostly terminates the interest of the questioner and therewith also the conversation.

Or the questioning may continue, even intensify.

"I mean, where are you originally from", the sustained curiosity of my interlocutor is verbalized. "Whence do you really come?"

When I believe to have satisfied the questioner's curiosity with a ten-second sweep through Europe and and South-East Asia, the visitor may be satisfied in the belief that he has got all the information he wants; or he may not consider me interesting enough to waste more of his time, and he will turn away to converse with somebody else; or - this is mostly the case - it may be I who will not feel inclined to continue and will find a way to terminate the conversation.

Or, as it happens now and then, I may find the person who has approached me - it may a woman as well as a man, often it is a couple - interesting or otherwise attractive enough to make me feel inclined to continue the conversation. Or for some reason or other I find myself in a chattering mood and will in turn put forth some questions.

This latter situation arose on a recent Shabath morning after the service in the Synagogue of the Hebrew Union College had ended and I, an unimportant and peripheral component of the community, had joined the - due to an influx of a large contingent of american visitors greatly increased Congregation assembled in one of the inner courtyards - was

waiting, a small glass of wine in my hand, for the Rabbi to intone the Kiddush.

This time I was approached by a middle aged, slightly corpulent, couple clearly definable as prototypes of tourists, in particular american tourists, by their sloppy hats, their coloured shirts, their baggy khaki trousers, their bare feet in open sandals, and a large zippered bag attached to a girdle circling their abdomens.

After the stereotyped introductory questions and answers; and after I had duly taken note that the couple, both attorneys, were tourists from Denver-Colorado, I made the conscious effort to overcome my recently acquired, and often harshly criticized, misanthropic aversion to become involved with strangers. And so I took over the conversation.

"What is your impression of Israel?", I asked them.

"We have visited many a country, but I find Israel more fascinating than most", the wife enthused.

"This is indeed so, but I do not like the way the Arabs are treated here", the husband took over.

"Please, let us not talk about politics", I interrupted him before he could continue. "Visitors are hardly ever in possession of all the facts; and we shall never convince each other of our personal opinions. Tell me, instead, what has most impressed you here in Jerusalem".

At once and graciously so - the husband, in what I interpreted as an apologizing gesture, gripping my shoulder with his right hand - they accepted my invitation to avoid political arguments.

"Everything we have seen here is most impressive" the woman took up the conversation while the husband looked at her with the loving expression of a couple grown tolerant of each other. "I may say everything here is most moving, most deeply furrowing, even with what I see as the negative aspects in the background".

"It would interest me to learn what these negative, non-political aspects are", I wanted to know.

"We were greatly disturbed by the many beggars we see most everywhere, on nearly every corner, and not only in the neighbourhood of every hotel or tourist attraction. We were more than usually disturbed - I will even say disgusted - by the swarm of beggars at the Western Wall. We could not concentrate, we could not follow our thoughts, as every minute we were accosted, aggressively accosted, by a beggar".

"These beggars did not beg in the way I have known beggars, in all

the countries we have so far visited, to ask for alms", the husband took over. "These beggars at the Kotel and at Yad Vashem in particular demanded to be given their obolus as if it is their right; and when we offered them a shekel coin they refused to accept it as if such a small coin - about a quarter dollar in value - was inconsistent with their rights and dignity. These people appeared to me physically fit men who could do an honest day's work. They do not appear underprivileged as they are all well fed and well dressed, are smoking imported cigarettes and holding cans of soft drinks. We have plenty of beggars also in the States. We have seen lots of beggars in Europe. We have faced beggars everywhere on our recent tour through India, but nowhere are the beggars as aggressively insistent as your beggars here".

"I can only agree with you, especially with regard to the Jerusalem brand of beggars", I concurred. "They are not beggars in the usual sense of the word. They are not holding out their hands because they are hungry or have to feed their families; nor do they ask for alms because they need money to satisfy their craving for drugs. Their view is that they do you a favour by making you give them alms, by offering you the opportunity to do *Zedaka*, as it is one of the prerequisites of a good Jew to give *Zedaka*; and in their philosophy they merit, by accepting a gift from you, your thanks for having you gain a *Mitzvah*, a merit. In other words: by your giving them a substantial alm they are offering you the ticket to enter heaven. They will strongly object to being categorized as beggars of the common-garden variety. And those others, who do not work the racket I have just described, will, by their offering you prayer books, mezuzoths or amulets blessed the kabbalistic rabbis, help you - and themselves too - gain similar merits, the size of which is relative to size of your donation. I agree with you, I have watched these beggars and they cash in well on the basic jewish need of catching a few mitzvoths now and then.

"But let us not too much bash our Jews. In principle this attitude to alms and alms-givers applies no less also to the way Christians, Hindus, Buddhists fulfill the demands of their religion. I cannot say much else about Moslems in this regard. But what other meaning do you see in the charity boxes in the churches and in the mosques? Or in the well-endowed big foundations which rich people and families have established in America in such a great number?

"Charity, giving alms, supporting the poor, attending the sick, looking after widows and orphans, and protecting strangers is the main

principle of every religion. It was thus defined already in the ancient greek philosophies. It is the ethical basis from which every religion originates. It is the ethical principle which has been elaborated in the formulation of the religions' dogmas. It is the root out of which religious metaphors have grown". It is the road sign to heaven....."

I was surprised that, contrary to my habit, I had "let myself go" to such a degree; and - possibly a bit too abruptly - I looked for a way to conclude the conversation which had turned into a monologue.

"I am sorry to have made you listen to my sermon - it is inappropriate for me to have done so in the wake of the great sermon we have a short while ago heard from the Rabbi's lips - and in any case you two attorneys would know better to formulate arguments of such a kind. I hope you do not mind having had you to listen to me. Please do not mind either my going home now. Let me wish you a nice stay in Israel. Shabbat Shalom".

All day long, and through most of the night, I could not - try as I might - free my mind of this conversation. By long experience I have come to consider, whenever my mind hovers about an event, an experience, a conversation a disadvantage, an unpleasant load, all of which leave me no rest until and unless I have for myself and in myself analysed whatever may be the anxiety-causing factor - i.e. until I have satisfactorily solved or exhausted or answered a problem, an issue, a question.

In this case my inner tension could not have been due to my own observations, nor to my regret of having posed as an expert in my talk with the american couple. I knew there had to be more to my mental restlessness, to my tensing dissatisfaction. And finally I could find an answer, which, though I am not at all sure it was the right answer, finally brought me the relaxation I craved: I remembered that in my youth - in the wake of the disastrous First World War - I had a numbing dread that we children might be forced onto the streets to beg, like we saw so many children beg then for alms with which to help sustain the needs of their families. This had been a time in my life when our family was really poor; when we were as poor as those of the most needy beggars. But we knew well that such a solution - any of us begging for alms in the streets or us knocking at doors - would for my parents, and no less for us children, be totally unacceptable, absolutely intolerable. This would have been worse than death. Instead, Father went as a salesman, as a peddler, from house to

house in the suburbs, offering whatever were the requirements without which even the poor working class could not live, until his financial status had again been restored. And my mind came to rest on the years, when I had to finance my university studies on my own, and when I too was for many months a peddler. This kind of an activity may have made me feel degraded, possibly also heroic, but certainly never degraded.

But all this belongs to a different story.

In any case, having reached this stage in my recall, I felt my tension and anxiety ceasing. I realized only now how much that fear, that dread left from my childhood had been waiting for the chance to become conscious within me and thereby to be released for ever.

However, the above associative process that illuminated the problem, not only did relax my inner tension. It made me free. It invited me even to also recall the experiences I had over the years with beggars, with organized charities, with all, therewith connected, I had learned during my life. And I decided - as a further strengthening of that catharsis - not to let my knowledge of, and my experiences with, the vast subject of charity, alms, beggars and philanthropies that had emerged from the deep archives of my memory, submerge again into the vast, but now less closely guarded memory. Instead, I decided to let my thoughts - continued to be nourished by unfettered free associations - readily flow into my Wordprocessor.

I recalled how Father again and again made us boys read the passage at the beginning of the Bible which cites God's statement that he has "...singled out Abraham to command his sons and his household after him to maintain the way of God by just and upright living....." We were also taught that "Zedakah" - the giving of alms - and "Gemilath Chessed" - the performing of good deeds - were the basis on which Judaism rests; that "Love your neighbour as yourself" is the leitmotiv of the Jewish ethos.

I remember well the 3-4 boxes - for the Reconstruction of Erez Israel, for the Orphanage in a nearby town, for a Widows' Fund and so on - arraigned on the window sill of our kitchen, into each of which Mother dropped a donation every Friday noon or on the eve of a holiday or when she wished to reinforce a prayer or when she wanted to express her thanks to heaven for a favour received.

I am certain that a similar system of alms-giving was established in every household of the small jewish community of Oberhausen.

In addition very frequently some renowned traveling rabbi, or a messenger on his behalf, would appear in our house. They never left without a contribution for whatever charity they claimed to be the representatives.

Many a time Mother herself visited all the jewish households in Oberhausen, as well as those in the neighbouring towns, whenever she felt it imposed on her to collect money for the dowry of a poor jewish girl, or for the support of a suddenly widowed woman and so on. Likewise Father - like all the other Jews - would vow a certain sum of money for charity on every occasion he was given an honour in the synagogue.

I have no doubt that all this took place - and continues to this day to be the established custom - all over the world wherever Jews live.

Most likely this is also the case in Israel though I have no direct experience anymore in this respect. But I have no doubt that every orthodox Jew anywhere in Israel continues to feel obliged, by the force of his religious duties, to make his regular contributions to whatever charity he cherishes. And I know that the non-orthodox Jews - whether traditional, conservative, reformed or secular - are no less engaged in fulfilling their charitable duties of which they have a long list available.

And why do I underline the charitable-mindedness of the Jews ? Does this not apply also to the adherents of all religions, to all civilized nations and people ?

And I have no doubt either, that you need a very thick skin - or wear deeply tinted spectacles - to approach passers-by or to knock at husedoors for alms, unless you have succeeded in deeply convincing yourself that your begging helps the alms-giver obtain precious merits in the coming world.

And what about myself, I ask myself. How do I fulfill my duty in this respect ?

These questions quite naturally arise at this junction. There is none of the usual alms boxes in our house. I cannot remember when last a beggar knocked at our door. But I contribute directly, or by a monthly Banker's Orders, to institutions for the blind, for crippled children or other handicapped individuals, or whenever any the many such organizations arranges its yearly collections with the help of school children knocking

at every door. But I come to realize now that I have not seen in the streets of Israel the kind of beggars I have encountered more or less wherever I have been in the world.

Many a time, while walking along the streets of Jerusalem, I am convinced by a woman that I have the duty to help her feed her starving children; or by some dilapidated individual that he needs the bus fare to go home, knowing well that most of whatever I press into their hands is ultimately spent on drugs or alcohol.

But I never give to the beggars who are stretched out on the pavement or are roaming the plazas in front of the Kotel or of the entrance gate to the cemetery who, incessantly smoking cigarettes and rattling the few coins in their tins, very jealously guard their "business premises" - and any of their colleagues daring enough to invade their hunting grounds will soon have reason to regret his foolheartedness. Not long ago the press convincingly reported that all these beggar types have a considerable, of course tax-free, income. Of one instance - of the man seated at Kikar Zion in the centre of the town, it is said that he had promised his place as dowry to his son-in-law.

Having now set down to register my experiences, my memories and my thoughts, I am beginning to feel myself deeply involved. This will make me write down whatever comes to my mind, whatever emerges from my memory trove. However, I want to make it absolutely clear that all that follows is a narrative primarily, hardly a philosophical exploration, and certainly not a theoretical or historical study. In other words: I am telling all this to myself.

Charity for the next person, agape the loving care for whatever lives and is, must have since ever been the directives according to which mankind developed, overcame all perils, and continues to exist. It has to be an inborn gene. Were it not so, mankind would never have learned the duty of the parents to provide for their young children, and of the children to support their ageing parents.

I recently learned of the evidence archeologists and paleontologists have produced: that our Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon ancestors cared for the crippled and old in their communities until these died of old age.

I have also learned that in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia charity

had been a well defined religious principle. The inviolable ruling was that everybody had to give charity; that one had to help destitutes to rehabilitate themselves; that everybody has to share in others' burdens and misfortunes; that one was to judge others favourably; and that God will remunerate whoever follows all these injunctions. Charitable works, defined as a religious obligation, were turned into a moral duty and formulated into a divine law.

In ancient Greece Socrates, Plato and the Stoics taught it is man's duty to "help all weak and destitute humanity wherever found". In the aristotelian view neither gods nor men can be really good unless their goodness is also communicated and applied to others.

And what do I know about christian charity ? Original Christianity taught charity as associated with agape = love. It was made to represent for the believer a the test of righteousness, a duty towards Christ who out of love for mankind had suffered death. Whoever assiduously fulfills his charitable duties can count on gaining appropriate rewards after death. Otherwise - though I do not know much from personal experience - it is evident that all that relates to charity, to man's duty towards others has, more or less without a change, been taken over from jewish teaching. In other words: it is not difficult to realize to what a degree the christian charity principle is identifiable with that of Judaism; that it has grown up from, and is found inherent in, the ethical rules and commands Christianity has taken over from Judaism, viz:- that it is the duty of every man and woman to help his or her neighbour, to take part in charitable work and to support the Church in meeting its administrative, its missionary, and also its charitable programs. Christianity has, in addition, introduced the monastic system that still more underlines this principle, as the monk and nun orders depend upon alms for their program and its functioning.

It is not possible for me, from the little personal knowledge I have, in how far the Church is meeting its charitable duties; but the tendency of certain outside religious and liberal movements to criticize this activity; to attack the association of charity with some form of missionary program; to point to mismanagement by one or the other institution, or to ridicule the misbehaviour of a priest here or there, has to be condemned.

And certainly can neither the christian religion nor its leaders

be blamed for the large number of fervent Christians' - and occasionally of some high-ranking functionaries' - "unchristian" abuse of man's readiness to give alms. It is only human - or let me say a test of a human's values and the inter-action of their karmans - that one will always and easily find individuals who abuse man's awareness of his duty to his fellowman.

This reminds me of the Mexican gang - certainly regular visitors to their parish church and fervent, knee-riding venerators of their preferred saints - which smuggled into the USA, and forced into virtual slavery, more than fifty, mostly in one way or the other handicapped, young Mexicans for the purpose of having them, by peddling trinkets, tap the Americans' often uncritical charity-mindedness.

I remember the occasion when I personally witnessed what I consider a shockingly dishonest example of "misused ecclesiastic charity":

Whenever Kate and I were in Italy and came to or near Florence, we never missed visiting the Church of St. Francis in Assisi. We had much admiration for this man and great respect for his work. To us he was the very quintessence of a good human being and a humanitarian spirit.

On one such occasion - while walking up and down one of the inner courtyards immersed in meditating on how little impact the selflessness of this holy man has left on our modern world - I heard a voice whisper "Come here, Sir ! Come here, please !"

I looked up and saw, behind the iron railing separating the courtyard from the adjoining St. Claire Monastery, a white-clad person signal me with her left hand to come nearer. When I had approached the fence, I saw it was a woman of some 60 years or so, clad in the garment of a St. Clare nun; and I saw, standing behind her, a similarly dressed but far younger nun.

No sooner was I standing in front of the older nun, when her right hand pulled from underneath her habit a white skull, while her left hand, extended through the fence, was agitatedly rubbing its thumb against the index finger, thereby symbolically indicating, in the internationally understood sign language, that she wanted some money from me. She made this meaning still more understandable by whispering "Caritas, per favore, Signore. Caritas, per favore".

"What is this ?", I asked her in Italian, pointing to the skull.

"It is the holy skull of the Sainted Clara, the sister of the Holy Francisco", giving her whispered reply an awe-inspiring undertone.

I was truly surprised. Nay, I was saddened, even shocked. For the over-life-sized skull was made of glaring-white plastic material.

For a long moment I looked at the nun; then I slowly shook my head and ended in reproaching her:

"Are you not ashamed, Mother, to degrade in such a manner the memory of both these saints ? Are you not ashamed to use such low, such cheating means to ask me for a donation ?"

The nun looked with surprise and then with a painful expression at me. She bowed her head, put the skull back into its hiding place within her habit. Before she could slink away I offered her a coin - and she took it without a word while bending down in acknowledgement. I saw the younger nun placing her wide-sleeved arm over her face as if ashamed of what she had witnessed.

I have never been able to forget this episode.

On the other hand I have still before my eyes the devoted monks whom I observed, on my first journey through India, selflessly and devotedly care for a camp of leprotic patients they had established near Allahabad.

And who can ever forget the work of Mother Theresa ?

In general it can be said that also Islam has a well-organized system of charitable works, expressed and defined by Prophet Muhammad in words and metaphors his original followers, primitive desert people, could well understand and execute. Its' main principle is that man has to serve and to propitiate Allah by doing good deeds, by giving alms and by paying **Zakat**, a regular tax-like contribution, which - based on sanctified tradition, i.e. the Hadith - makes it incumbent on every Moslem to pay a charity-tax of 2% from his income and his possessions.

Says Sura 17 of the Qu'ran: "Allah has decreed...kindness to parents; give the kinsman, the needy and the wayfarer their due; do not count what belongs to the orphan".

But it is a common, sad and undeniable fact that nowadays a Moslem's fulfillment of this Islam-imposed duty is dependant on the degree of his religiosity. And its is thus a fact that today's islamic world is mostly made up of the non-religious Haves who do not want to know of Zakat, and the very-religious Have-nots who have not much from which to tax Zadak.

In mainly moslem Pakistan and Kashmir we saw truly destitute beggars, men and women, who depended for their sustenance on the charity of others. We saw these beggars mostly only on the streets as our servants prevented any of them from entering our compound. On islamic holy days, and also when they massed outside the gates of a property inside which a wedding was going on, the beggars were assured of a good harvest. But, otherwsie, we could only on rare occasions observe a well-to-do Moslem hand out some coins to the beggars crowding around him when he alighted from his house or his car.

Not one of the pakistani governments we had experienced ever engaged in organized social work. They left it to the beggars to "somehow earn their living". But in the main - and sanctioned by an old-standing custom - whatever charitable work was left to the christian establishments, among whom the Salvation Army did excell.

I may possibly exaggerate in my saying that there is - or at least

was in my time - no proper sense of social responsibility among the pakistani Moslems. Many are the instances I could cite, but I will only mention the policemen who demanded a "cut" from the beggars they permitted to approach a foreigner or a well-to-do Pakistani for alms. And I remember the years when I had the Rotary Club organize the feeding of the poor on Id-Day; the european members were all present and personally laddled the rice and curry onto the plates of the long lines of men and women, while the moslem members looked on. This arrangement went on for another year, but after that the moslem Rotarians did not appear anymore to at least watch; they sent their servants "to help out". And due to lack of interest my successor in office had to terminate this program.

I have even less experience with the status of the beggar among the Moslems of Israel. This is entirely due to my of contact with the local Moslems, though I live in Jerusalem of whose population a large part is moslem. In recent years I have not spent many visits to East Jerusalem, the mainly moslem part of the Holy City. But I have no doubt that all I have written about the subject I am dealing with in this essay with regard to Islam in general and the Moslems of Pakistan, applies in full also to the moslem Arabs in Israel. However, I have frequently read in the papers that in the part of the country under the rule of Arafat the welfare system is poorly financed, and even more poorly organized.

At this moment a recent episode comes to mind:

For some reason I made a few weeks ago a visit to the Old City of Jerusalem. On my way along the rampart leading to the Jaffa Gate I saw a young woman squatting on the ground, with her head against leaning against the stone wall. She was poorly but cleanly dressed. On passing her I must have subconsciously registered the expression of deep sadness, of total hopelessness that marked her face and posture, for, after having gone some twenty meter past her, I stopped and returned. On looking more consciously at her, some of her pain and sadness gripped me, made me take part in her total resignation, filled me with her deep sorrow. I thought it wiser not to address her - I would in any case not have been able to do so in arabic - as I feared this might have made her uncomfortable in addition. I tried to absolve myself by emptying my purse into her lap. I interpreted the look she gave me as an appropriate expression of thanks.

After I had proceeded some steps towards the Jaffa Gate, I was accosted by a well-dressed Arab who addressed me in the good english of an educated man.

"Excuse me, Sir. Please do not mind my addressing you". He introduced himself but I have forgotten his name. "I am a sociologist. I live in the house from where you must have seen me emerge. I have made the reaction of the local people to a woman, so evidently in great distress as the one you have just passed, my actual study. I have been saddened by the lack of interest the many passers-by are showing. I saw, and greatly appreciate, your generous gesture towards that poor woman. She was an orphan, the inmate of the local orphanage, when she was selected as one of the brides for a young man of a rich business family. She was recently widowed and the family into which she was married does not care for her, does not want to know her anymore, because for some reason or other she is counted responsible for her husband's death. There is no local welfare system of our own to take care of her.

As a woman she cannot count on receiving sufficient help from the Waqf, our mosque-based charity system. And on the other hand the very nationalistic-oriented family does not allow her to become the ward of Israel's social welfare system.

"Thus she is more lonely, more abandoned now than she was before her marriage, and cannot overcome the shame of having to sit there as a beggar".

I thanked the man for his information and told him how much I regret my inability to be of effective help to that woman.

But on my way back from the Old City I emptied also my wallet into her lap.

All these depictions and analyses I have cited so far pale with regard to the state and fate of the lowest social classes living - or better said having to vegetate - as I have been able to personally observe and register in the parts of South-East Asia I have known. Unless supplemented by alms in some form or other these people cannot satisfy their and their families' simplest daily needs. I do not deny that there are surely other parts of the world - like Africa, South America and so on - where things are equally sad and painful. But, as I want to point out again, I am not undertaking here a sociological survey nor any scientific research program; instead I intend only to recall and report of what I have personal experience.

It is difficult to paint the living conditions of the poorest population strata of India. This applies no less also to its adjoining countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Burma etc. These people are dressed in rags; they show many symptoms of malnourishment; and due to their large numbers they and their dependants can hardly subsist on whatever they earn from their work in addition to the "income from their begging business".

The large segment of these totally underprivileged that lives in the rural areas, totally depends on their rich landlords; and to a great degree the landlords depend on these classless workers - whose slave-like status is quasi legally sanctioned - for the planting, weeding and harvesting of their large and other tasks on their agricultural properties.

In many a respect I see the urban segment of this disadvantaged part of the population occupy a still lower rank on the social and economic scale. Though they can occasionally collect some, often considerable, alms from foreign tourists, from Christian welfare organizations or from guests at the, in their view not frequently enough occurring, weddings and other family festivals, they have not the advantage of the rural poor who mostly have small plots of their own on which they can grow part of their daily consumption of vegetables; nor are they provided with the protection and support the landlords - in their own interest and for their own advantage - extend to their coolie workers and their families.

However, I can state from what I know and have seen, read and heard, that nowhere is the alms-giving principle as systematically - though certainly not always and in every respect admirably or recommendably - organized as in countries with predominant hindu and buddhist cultures.

In Hinduism alms giving is a requisite of one's ethical behaviour. It is firmly anchored as the basic religious obligation of the individual within the concepts of Dharman and Karman. All one's deeds - and certainly much so one's charitable deeds - relate to one's karman, to the kind and form of one's future rebirths.

A Hindu's life is configured by the effect of his actions on his karman: his good deeds, hospitable behaviour, decent treatment of others, gentle speech and courteous comportment will have a beneficial such effect. The alms given and charities organized have to be commensurate with his financial and social status. Thus a rich man will build and endow hospitals and orphanages; but whereas this does not involve him directly, personally, intimately in a charitable approach to the poor these institutions are meant to serve, he must in addition also personally and actively do charitable work. It is, for instance, one of his main duties to support the Brahmins - the caste of teachers and priests - so that these are free of worries and can dedicate themselves to their duties. Whatever these gifts, they count as if they are given to the gods and the giver is the ultimately main beneficiary.

Alas, rarely have I seen Hindus extend such altruistic interest and care to the poor they encounter begging in the streets. A Hindu will not interfere with a cow feeding on the contents of a foodstall or of a garden, but will certainly beat up a beggar who might dare doing so. But a greater sense of duty is felt for - and charity accordingly extended to - the Sadhus, the wandering male and female mystics who have removed themselves from all worldly interest in order to avoid a future rebirth. They depend entirely on their begging, and their begging bowls is, as a rule, always filled by the women at whose doors they knock.

Another large segment of people who in the hindu world live from charity, are the lepers who demand charity as their right.

In Buddhism charity is of no less an importance. Charity is not given out of love for any God or gods, as the Buddhists do not acknowledge any such to exist. All Buddhists' human conduct is outlined in the "Four Noble Truths" which prescribe love and compassion towards fellow human beings; which declare

suffering to be a fact and reality of one's existence. Human suffering can be relieved by following the three principles loving-kindness, compassion and mercy. One's karman is still further improved by acknowledging other peoples' good deeds. This concept underlies Buddhists' creating social welfare organizations, hospitals, hospices etc.

The monks and nuns of the many buddhist monasteries have to wander through the land and live on charity. This kind of life, it is hoped, will help them to straight away achieve nirvana. Laity has the duty to support these holy people; and this, in turn, will profit the formers' karman.

I am not going to attempt a deeper analysis of Buddhism and its attitude to begging for alms; nor will I write of the differences that have evolved in this respect in the various forms into which Buddhism has crystallized, because the charity principle I have just now described is the basis of all these various forms of Buddhism.

Nor will I act differently with regard to the various deviations and developments of Hinduism. I would in any case not know of any specific aspects of alms giving and charitable work among Sikhs. I was, however, impressed by the readiness of the Jains I have known to give alms to whomever extends his hand. It was my impression, however, that these Jains, who have a complex concept of their karman, have acted mostly out of fear that their slightest deviation from the prescribed moral guidelines might expose them to terrible punishments after death.

And finally I want to mention the Parsis, the Zoroastrians, by whose readiness not to miss an opportunity to obey their religion's injunction to be charitable to other human beings, I was greatly impressed.

In Bombay - and later in Karachi - where most Parsis live, my curiosity about this numerically tiny community with its unusual ritualism was fully satisfied by friends I had made among them. This curiosity was first evoked by my having observed one morning - and my having for a few days thereafter having walked the streets to further study this phenomenon - that every Parsi who passed through the gate of his house or who descended from the bus in which he was travelling to take up his day's work, had in his pocket a large amount of coins ready for distribution into the silently outstretched hands of a group of beggars waiting for these alms as if they had a subscription right to them.

And, after I had made a study of the Parsi religion, I came to the conclusion that also in this instance their charitable deeds were mostly born

out of the deep fear of what a contravention might bring about after death.

I have come to the end of my deliberations (based, I want to repeat, purely on my personal experiences) regarding my knowledge of the fate and sufferings of the underprivileged individuals; or the behaviour of those who for reason of specific religious doctrine are driven to ask for alms with which to sustain their life. It has come to me that every religion of which I have some knowledge preaches the importance of mankind's showing charity to its less privileged brethren. In short: I have become convinced - or better said I have had it confirmed - that charity is the ethic ground rule of every religion. Or in other words: that charity is the ethical basis of what religion means; that these ethical demands are at the root of every religion; that the care for the next inspires every religious injunction or commandment or even ritual; that it is the alpha and omega of human society's social constitution; that it is possibly the energy source which provides mankind with the purpose of, and the essence for, its survival.

And the variety of the explanations for, and of the expressions given to, this duty confirms to me again my own basic belief, that all religions have the same basis and the same origin - and also the same content and the same purpose.

And again I find here evidence of the frequent paradigm shifts, i.e. of the ever again newly perceived and formulated basic ethical rules and commands; of how they were shifted, re-arranged and newly constituted in order to make them relate to any newly developing culture; of how they are always again made to fit the newly perceived spiritual values and the newly forming level of learning and creative impulses; of how they made understandable the variety of the expressions, of the teachings, of the rituals, of the legends, which figure in the adaptations of the great spiritual leaders - who over the centuries founded, and to this day continue to found, the various religions - to the mentality of the people, to the exigencies of their times, to the conditions of their world, and to the cultural status and the intellectual intake of their people.

And I have learned, that it is not given to me and most other people to find truth in rational calculating, in mystical dreaming or in intuitional pondering; that only the searching for truth is my task, represents my duty and will be my ultimate fulfilment.

HE WAS NOT SUTTEE...SFIED.

A short, but true story
for
Mikhal Shiff-Matter
told by
Hermann M. Selzer

For many reasons that summer is still vivid in my memory; not the least because of the sudden severe heat-wave that had hit the north-indian plains, but also because it was the first time I came face to face with, and became personally involved in, the **Suttee** issue.

That year the north-indian plains having turned intolerably hot already in March - and mankind not having yet been blessed with airconditioning - we decided to shift our summer practice to Kashmir a few weeks earlier than usual. We sent Rita, our Receptionist, and Shamas-ud-Din, our head-servant, ahead with a small busload of office and laboratory equipment, and followed ourselves two days later in our chevrolet. By taking two days to complete the 10-hour journey, we gave Rita ample time to set up the professional rooms in the bungalow we rented year by year from an old english lady.

As soon as we had entered the himalayan range we began to enjoy our carride; and the higher the winding roads took us, the more we looked forward to getting nearer to the always newly unforgettable moment when, on reaching the Baramullah Pass, we could see the blooms-filled Kashmir Valley spread before us. On this occasion our pleasure was enhanced by our having to pass, on top of the pass, through a nearly fifty meter long tunnel which had been chiseled through a solid mass of ice and snow. And down there, in the plains, was the beautiful Kashmir valley.

On arrival in Srinagar we found, as expected, the bungalow in Gupkar Road readied for us. And, as usual, we were surprised how quickly our expected arrival had become known, for Rita had already a considerable list of appointments to place on my desk.

Rita pointed to one of the names, as of a man who claimed to have been my patient in the previous year, and whom - as he had been very insistent, she had given the first appointment on the following morning. The name she pointed to was that of a Kumar Gopal Singh. I did not remember of having seen a kumar with this name before.

But I recalled him immediately when he turned up the following morning. I had no difficulty in recognizing him, though he had greatly increased in weight. He had come to see me for a gastro-intestinal ailment the year before. He had not called himself a "Kumar" then, a Prince. But otherwise he had tried to impress me on that visit by telling me that he had just that year completed his education at Cambridge; that his father was the hereditary Prime Minister of Kashmir; and that, being the oldest son, he expected too expected to be, in due course, appointed to the Prime-Ministership.

This time he came with his wife and a baby, the latter carried by an ayah, a nanny. He greeted me exuberantly as if I were an old friend of his; and I played along as I understood that he wanted to impress his wife with the "jolly ease" with which he conversed with a foreigner. (Of course, his pleasure would have been greater had I been an Englishman).

"How are you doctor ? How was the winter in the Punjab ? I hear it has suddenly turned jolly hot down there. I am jolly glad to see you here with us in Srinagar. And meet my wife and my first baby soon to be one year old".

"Nice to see you again, Kumar Sahib. And you too, Raniji. How are you all ? What can I do for you ?"

"We three have come to have a medical overhaul from you. And although we are all jolly healthy and fit, we want to have this authoritatively confirmed by you."

His wife too was grossly overweight, as was the six-months-old

baby, while the young girl, who carried the baby on her hip, was greatly below the expected weight for a girl of 8-9 years, the age I estimated her to be; and certainly the baby was too heavy for a pale and weak-looking girl as she appeared to me. After handing the baby to its mother, the girl squatted down near the entrance door, apparently glad to take the weight off her hip and feet.

By his fussiness and his attempts at joking - along with his pityful attempts to imitate an upper-class Englishman in his talking the fellow made the next 1½ hours very unpleasant and tiring. I was glad when I had completed the physical examinations of the Kumar, his wife and the baby, and had taken laboratory samples from all of them. With a hearty laugh he refused my request to "have a look" also at the girl.

"I have completed the physical examinations and have not found anything worrismatic in any of you", I then told them. "I shall be able to tell you more when I have the lab. results. Come back the day-after-tomorrow. I shall then be able to tell you definitely what I think of your three's state of health".

Two days later they turned up again. All four of them.

"I have completed all tests and can confirm what I tentatively told you two days ago. I have not discovered any physical abnormality in you, your wife and the baby. Also all the lab. tests have turned out within normal range. But I must warn you that you cannot expect such a favourable diagnosis also in the near future, if you do not cut down your weight. All three of you have to lose weight. You and your wife and the baby are very much overweight and this is a definite health hazard. Here is a list of foods you have strictly to avoid; and here one of the foods you may eat. And here is a prescription for vitamins. This is all you need. Follow strictly my advice and there is no reason you should not live to a hundred years".

I gave him a short medical report, the lab. results and the prescription. Then I added:

"The one who certainly needs medical help is your Ayah, this

girl who carries your baby on her hip. She looks very pale, underweight and weak. You take the baby home yourself, and I shall have the girl undergo a thorough examination. It will not cost you a penny, either for the examination nor for the medicaments which I shall provide....."

Gopal's face had turned red, and I expected him to explode in protest against my proposal, but his wife quietened him down with some whispered words - in Kashmiri which I did not understand - and he did quieten down.

"O.k., do what you think you have to do", he finally, rather ungracefully, agreed. He took the papers I had placed before him, his wife sat the baby on her own hip, and he ordered the girl to stay behind to be examined by Kate and me. And before they left, I told him:

"Come back in two days' time, at this hour, and I shall tell you what we have found, and what we think has to be done for this girl".

It was not easy for Kate and I to examine the girl. She was terrified when I tried to touch her. We could not communicate with her as she spoke only Kashmiri and not Urdu; and because she closed up when we asked one of the kasmiri servants to interpret for us. But after after some time she quietened down, became more amenable and allowed Kate to examine her.

Gopal Singh did not return on the appointed day. He returned a week later. This time his broad face was not decorated by the usual insecure and ingratiating smile. Instead it was covered by a scowl.

He came in without greeting me. He did not reply when I wished him a good day. I did not react to his rudeness which I interpreted as play-acting, though I wondered what his comportment was going to mean: whether he wanted to impress me of his importance or whether to make me feel intimidated.

"Sit down, Kumar Sahib", I invited him, but he kept standing.

"Accomodate yourself", I continued, unfazed by his hostility. "Here are the results of the tests we ran on your Ayah. They are very worrisky. Not only is one of her lungs affected by tuberculosis,

but she is also very anemic, and she has some intestinal infestations. First of all she should not anymore look after the baby; she should not even come near him. I have written down what treatments she should take, and what food she should consume. Here are the medicines for the first month." I pointed to a number of packages and bottles I had taken from a drawer and placed on my desk. "She will have to come to see us every month as long as we are here; and each time I shall provide her with the medicaments and advice as her, hopefully improved, state of health will indicate. As I told you already, it will not involve in any expense whatsoever".

Gopal Singh did not reply. He did not react for about a minute. He did not even look at the medicaments and the papers I had spread before him. He kept glaring at me.

Suddenly he lifted his right arm and with one swoop swept the medicaments and papers from the desk. Placing both hands on the desk, he leaned forward, his eyes staring angrily into mine.

"Now you are happy, Doctor Sahib, are you not ?" With spittle accumulating in the corners of his mouth, he addressed me in a furious but constrained voice. "I thought you were better, more understanding than the British; but I see you are not better. All the white people are cut from the same cloth. This girl is not a child anymore; she is already 12 years old. And do you know who she is ? You do not, I suppose. She is - or better was - the fiancée of my younger brother. He died about a year ago. According to our tradition she should not have been here, should not have been alive anymore. She should have committed suttee, that is should have ascended the funeral pile and been burned up along with the body of her fiancé. But you white people have interfered with our religious practices, and have forced us to abolish the suttee sacrifice of the widows. But that does not mean that this girl's life has been saved. For us, as for all Hindus, she is dead. She does not exist anymore. But as I have been affected by your western "culture and civilization", we have spared her. We have made her the nanny of our baby. But for us she is dead; she is not allowed into the house. Also our other servants do not want her to live alongside them, though they do not mind abusing her. She sleeps on the veranda outside the baby's room and gets the left-overs from our kitchen." He straightened up; paused for a short while to

catch his breath. Then he leaned forward again and, breathing hard, he continued. "You do not know how much you have damaged this person. How much you have interfered with her karman. By her suffering in this life she might have cleansed away many of the grave faults and sins she had acquired in her previous existences; but now, by your clumsy interference, you have worstened her fate, blackened her karman still more. She will most likely not be reborn a human being but as a low kind of animal. And whatever will happen to her now, while she still quasi alive, will be debited to your own karman".

He straightened up, glanced for a moment at the medicaments on the floor, looked at me with disdain, turned and left the room.

Rita came in to announce the next patient.

"Cancel all the appointments of this afternoon. I cannot see any more patients now. Realign them for any other time".

For a long time I sat at my desk, my forehead leaning against my folded hands. I relived the scene, and imagined the girls fate and sufferings in all their details. And I felt sad, very sad.

Next morning I sent a servant to the Prime Minister's bungalow to enquire about the girl. He returned after one hour. He had not been able to contact the girl. He was told she had been sent to some distant village in the mountains where her parents lived.

The next morning I sent the servant with our driver in our car to the village of her parents. They returned two days later. They had found the village and her parents' family, but these and all the villagers denied having recently seen the girl or heard of her.

To this day I wonder whether Kate and I had harmed the girl; whether we had indeed clumsily interfered in her fate; whether Kate and I had been in the wrong.

And we could not anymore persue our enquiries, as we did no return to Kashmir: the world war, the sub-continent's partition and, thereafter, India's invasion of Kashmir, made it impossible for us to continue our summer practice there.

My dear Patti: Every time I come on a visit to Clintonistan - alas this happened so far only every six months or so, and I do not know if and for how long these visits will continue - Jackie appears to be more bewildered than impressed by my beard. Should I console myself that he is fascinated by that thing on my chin? I do not think so. One has not to be an expert or a great diagnostician to see that the child has until now spent his young life in an exclusively beardless society. And whereas I would not wish whatever Jackie's memory may have of me; whatever association with me he may recall in future, to be coloured - and if not obscured or at least shadowed - by the whitish brush I expose on my chin, I am setting out to explain to him what this, in his eyes apparently unusual, appendix means and how it came into being. Sure, it will be some time before he can himself "absorb" the coming pages, but by your imbibing them first, you will surely be able to osmotically transmit the story, to convey to him the reason, why I am running through life in the company of my beard.

This then is

THE STORY OF A BEARD,

This is going to be depiction of a beard's birth process and its repeated reincarnation. Or should I have better said "of why I have for so many years of my life been carrying my beard along" ? Because, except for seeing them all over the place paraded about in various shapes, colours and states of maintenance - and never more so than in recent years - I am not aware of a beard worn now, or at any time in the past, by any of my acquaintances or relatives. Except, that is, for Father, who in 1890s settled in Oberhausen, endeavoured to commercially conquer the town, and followed the then prevailing fashion of sprouting a short pointed beard, which - more for his wanting to be perceived as a man adapting to the times and wanting to be different from the other Jews of Oberhausen (and hardly because he was in love with his beard) - he never again was without. I cannot remember, from the time I can remember anything until I left Oberhausen in 1933, to have seen any other bearded man in our community of some 500 souls.

The justified question arises why I do carry such a hairy outgrowth on my chin ? Today this would be an inappropriate question because it is one of the most common components of men's malehood insignia at all ages - especially so of today's hirsute youth culture - and something which does not merit a second look, or any look at all, and certainly not a remark of any kind in my actual abode in Israel.

But this was not always so, That means, in years past I did stick out, wherever I lived, as a beard-bearer among all the other non-beard-bearers. Some forty years ago, when my actual beard became "a permanent fixture of my countenance", I was in Pakistan - or at least in Lahore - the only man thus decorated among all the males of the so-called European

community there (while it was, of course, a part of the vestments the orthodox moslem, especially the moslem clergy, was carrying through life.)

Whereas I am not particularly enamoured with my beard; and whereas I am today in no way not proud of my beard; and whereas I am not at all a beard-fetishist; and whereas I am not exhibiting my beard as a sign of religious endeavour, there must be, of course, a reason why I have not yet removed that hirsute fixture from my chin. In truth, there is really no reason. And whereas those who know me and for whom I care, are well aware that I do not belong to the brigade of religiously-whiskered men of Jerusalem; and whereas I simply cannot be bothered about changing my mug shot; and whereas I do not want to face curious looks or not always shy enquiries of the "why have you taken off your beard" kind; and whereas most of all I do not want to extend the area where I shall have to navigate my razor, I have not, and in future shall not, contemplate running around with a naked face. Otherwise, there is really no reason or cause for my crinite face.

I want to make here the point, that I have not set out to give any explanation, or to offer any reason, or to proffer any excuse why I am among the "barbucci", the bearded ones; nor do I want to write a footnote to man's and nature's beard-history, if any such has ever been compiled. Or is one such already in existence? And if so, would that historian kindly explain, why all the pictures reconstructed of original man's faces - the hominids who had descended from the trees - never show any of them decorated with a beard? For undoubtedly they all had hair sprouting all over their faces; and they went around with that untamed hairy mass not only because they could hardly have dared using one of their stone knives as a razor, and possibly also because they cherished their beards as a decoration, may be even as a garment.

Let me make it here and now quite clear that, except for my own personal and private beard I do not have any interest in, any fascination for, any care about the hair nowadays sprouting all over the faces, or only on the chins, of such a large part of humankind's male sector. And to tell you the truth - the absolute truth - neither do I have today any special involvement nor pride in the hairbundle over my own lower face.

The last sentence may evoke many a reader's eyebrow to be raised,

as I do keep that hairbundle - generically called a beard - in shape, form and bounds. But, I may hear at least insinuated, if this does not indicate a degree of pride, it shows my having at least a certain interest in its giving a configuration to my face. And after all, notwithstanding what is said and written about Israel, I am totally free to remove that beard whenever I want, fully assured that no law, no party rule, no social convention will prevent me from doing so this very moment; and fully certain that there will hardly be anybody in my near or distant circle of friends, acquaintances and neighbours who will do more than shake his or her head in approval or at the most make a witty-meant remark.

No ! All these observations have not made me sit down to talk about my beard, Nor do I feel the slightest cause or reason to submit in these pages anything which sounds like an apology. But I have all through the various years of my beard-exhibiting life never been asked the "why" I have mentioned; and though here in Israel this has never happened, I sense that many an observing correlative does wonder within himself why I, a confessed and practicing member of the liberal stream of Judaism, do carry about the trademark of an Orthodox Jew. (Mind you: I did not say "a religious Jew", for a Liberal Jew, a Progressive Jew, a Reform Jew or a Conservative Jew can be as much a religious Jew as the Orthodox Jew, or often even a better one such as he has mostly come by reasoning and deep conviction to his mostly religious-philosophical concept of Judaism.)

I feel somehow the urge to explain to the hopefully unending chain of "descendants from my loins" why I am a beard-bearer. Why, although many among my latest predecessors on the genealogical tree - except for my father as I have already mentioned - I am the only one of my generation to have joined what is now for many a non-religious fashion. Into this latter category I would register my son Michael, the only man among the large number of the generation following mine, (and I would think that in his case laziness, the abhorrence of having to shave every day, was at least one predominant motivation.)

And after this long preamble - which, should you find it superfluous, you have my permission to cut out - I am at last going into medias res: into the explanation how I came to wear a beard. I repeat: I do not want the history I am writing of my beard to be considered an apology for my beard.

This history develops in three stages. In each of these the eruption of my chin's hairy crop is associated with my having been deprived of my freedom, of my movements, of my right to independently decide, of my right to follow my own wishes.

The first time I grew a beard was in Germany, in 1933, at the time I was a prisoner of the Nazis.

The second time I started a beard was during the last war, when my family and I were imprisoned by the British in an internment camp.

The third time I was more or less forced to stop shaving the chin region of my face was in 1956 when we lived in Lahore-Pakistan.

All this may sound intriguing to you, but it will not anymore sound thus after you have read the details of the various episodes.

On April 4, 1933 I was working in the Dermatological Clinic of the Medical College of Düsseldorf - to fill up a lacuna in my knowledge of this discipline in anticipation of the forthcoming final examinations - when two Gestapo men confronted me with revolvers drawn and declared me under arrest. I was marched to a nearby police station, and pushed there into a cell already overloaded with 13 other men, like me victims of the Nazis' special interest. There I "lived" for a week. Mornings we were allowed a five minutes' visit to the washroom; and in the absence of the appropriate tools I had no possibility to shave. I think, even if a razor had been available to me, I would, in that environment, not even have felt inclined to inflict on myself such a procedure. In any case, the Nazis must have felt gratified to see the unshaven mugs of their prisoners confirm to them that we were a quite unsavory and degenerate lot.

After a week I was transferred to the Düsseldorf Central Jail, where I became one of the 300 prisoners "accommodated" on two upper floors of one of the four wings. I had in the meantime been able to contact my family and to have Father fulfill my wish to receive next to a change of linen also the stuff to have myself properly washed and trimmed. This was not such a problem anymore, as the cell I shared with two other men, was provided with running water and a mirror.

However, the razor I received was rather blunt. And whereas I am

sure that my family would have seen to it that the razor was in a working state, I can only suspect that the small suitcase Father delivered at the prison gate had been somewhat too thoroughly checked. In any case, my first shave proved quite painful, and this made me decide to shave off only a minimal part of my already abundant facial hair, and to leave untouched the more sensitive portions of my upper lip and around my chin. Thus it came about that I became a bearded man; and when I was released after four weeks, the beard had taken on a respectable size and shape.

Though the frequent check of our cells and the search of our bodies were meant as an harassment, the company of my two cellmates made my life appear now relatively luxurious. But all was not pure joy. There was also a painful component. The "political prisoners" of our wing were alternately guarded by the SS, the SA and the Stahlhelm. Whenever, every third day, the SS was on duty, I was sure to receive a series of quite painful kicks from the booted SS man who stood at my celldoor when we were made to march down to the courtyard, and also when we returned to our cells one hour later. As far as I could observe I was the only one to be given this kind of attention. And be it said to justify the SS-man's special effort, that each time he delt me the 3-4 kicks he had a proper explanation: he did not like my having grown a beard "in honour of Lenin's birthday".

The kicks stoped only after 4 weeks because I was released from jail. Luckily the Stahlhelm, the more decent band of that lot - was on duty that day; for had "my SS-man" taken me from the cell to the Warden's office, he would certainly not have hesitated to give my what he would have seen as a proper farewell.

When I arrived home, I at once - to the satisfaction of my mother, to the amusement of my father, to the objection of my siblings and to my own regret - shaved off my beard. Though I had become quite fond of my beard - may I confess even quite proud ? - I considered it necessary to do so, for on my way from the jail to the railway station, the policeman who accompanied me to make sure that I took the train for Oberhausen, warned me in a whisper that "next day they will come again to fetch you". I learned from Father that I had been released because according to the then valid - and still respected - laws I could only have been arrested in my hometown. That oversight the Gestapo was determined to correct by re-arresting me in Oberhausen. And whereas I feared that a warrant

issued might mention my beard, I shaved it off that same evening.

And during the night I was transported to a neighbouring town where I boarded a train for Berlin. In Berlin I stayed with my Uncle Leon until I could organize my escape to Italy.

I was without beard for the following seven years more or less, until on December 5, 1940 - about a year after the start of the Second World War, and rather inappropriately on my birthday - I was arrested by order of the British-Indian Government, along with Kate, Pipsi and Michael. I was not too surprised, as I had suspected, during the preceding months in the attention paid to me and to my movements by a group of poorly trained and not very clever "undercover agents" an indication of the government's intelligence services' interest in me, or better said a sign of their suspicion of me. At dawn of that day a posse made up of a sergeant and six soldiers armed with big guns and carrying four sets of hand- and footchains, took us four to the Purandhar Internment Camp near Poona in the Province of Bombay. There we joined some 300 other guests of the Viceroy, the King of England's representative in India.

I had, of course, brought my shaving kit with me, and I could not complain about the sharpness of the razor blades I had packed, but somehow there was the recall of my previous prisonership and therewith associated my having grown a beard. And no sooner had we settled down in the Camp, that I made my Gillette observe the part of my face extending from my nostrils, over my upper lip and in an arch around my chin a reserved, a no-poaching zone. Among the other inmates there was no other beard-wearers, so that this changed aspect of my appearance could not fail to arouse a certain of curiosity, comments and enquiries. And I remember having grandiloquently explained my beard as a habit I had formed whenever I am jailed, or whenever I am a prisoner or something of the kind.

For 5½ years we were imprisoned in the Internment Camps of Purandhar and later in that of Satara. We were among the last to be let go as during my tenure as Camp Medical Officer I had imprudently uncovered the financial dishonesty of the Camp Commandant.

But finally, in June 1946 - about a year after the war had ended and after the vast majority of the internees had since long been released - also we were allowed to leave. And Kate and I decided not to go to

the States as we had wishfully dreamed of for many years, but to accept the urging requests of friends and patients to return to Lahore.

And while we were waiting for the transport to take us to Bombay and into liberty, a group of the good friends we had made in the Camp decided that my excuse for carrying a blond batch of hair on my chin did not anymore exist; and that, in particular, freedom and a beard did not well go together. They grabbed me, pinned down my arms, and cut off my beard. I had already then the suspicion that this brutal, inefficient barber job was done with the convivance if not on the instigation of Kate who over the years had benevolently watched me lovingly nurse my beard, but could probably not face its intrusion also into our future life.

And thus was the hairy landmark on my facial landscape removed.

But Pipsi - and to a lesser extent Michael - did not comprehend what was going on, why I appeared to them now so badly disfigured. I remember Pipsi crying out in protest and shedding some tears over my beard's demise. You must realize that consciously - Pipsi was nearly two years old and Michael three months when we were arrested - they had never known me without the beard. To them the beard was a congruous part of their parent.

I did not mind to get about without a beard, but was not allowed to forget it, as Pipsi over the following years never ceased to beg me to let my beard grow back again. And the only excuse I could find for not giving in to her wish was that, though I would not have minded being the only beard among the in the thousands counting foreign colony in the Punjab, the stubbles on my chin during the weeks before the chin's hairy excrecence had taken a decent shape, would look rather unpleasant, and I myself would be seen as neglectful of my personal hygiene. Whether the children accepted this explanation and excuse or not, they did not insist anymore after a year or so, and I thought that the issue had been burried; that they had got used to my hairless face.

But in due course I had to learn that I had been mistaken. I started again to grow a beard, and this time I felt that the initiative was taken off my hand; that this time I was more or less a prisoner of my children.

It happened in summer 1956, the year Kate and I took our regular 3-yearly vacation. Pipsi and Michael were boarders in Bedales School, and we timed our departure to coincide with their summer vacation. We had bought a car - afterwards to be taken with us back to Pakistan - and had planned to make a sweeping tour through Europe. We met the children in Calais on their arrival from England; and from there we traveled to Salzburg and Vienna and back to London via München and Köln.

I was faced, no sooner had our journey started, by an apparently well-rehearsed ultimatum, determinately presented by Pipsi and vigorously supported by Michael: that the time had come for me to keep my promise repeatedly given over the last ten years; that I had to start on having my beard grow back; that my usual excuses were no more valid, as socially and professionally it did not matter whether in the coming weeks I ran around unshaven and with stubbles on my chin.

Alas, I had no excuse, nor any way out, as we had always made our children keep whatever promise they had made in the same way as we have always endeavoured to do.

And this started the third beard stage which continues to this day. Among my patients, friends and acquaintances - most of the latter clean-shaven british or american expatriates - my bearded appearance may have caused some commentaries behind my back but never in my presence. The same applies to our good pakistani friends. On our next visit to Israel also my parents did not directly comment, but from their smile I concluded that they approved.

I can today recall only two occasions when I could observe a reaction to my newly blond-bearded chin.

The first was on that same occasion my parents smilingly but silently consented to my having joined the bearded society: on one of our walks through the streets of Jerusalem we met an acquaintance in Ramban Street; and while Kate and that girl exchanged whatever they thought worth communicating, I entered a nearby mini-market to buy something or other. No sooner had the saleslady - a plump, pimply girl of about seventeen - looked up from the crossword puzzle in the newspaper stretched out in front of her, than she emitted a shriek - which she unsuccessfully tried to subdue by clasping her hands over her mouth - and called out to her colleague at the other end of the shop: "Mirjam come here, quick !" Mirjam

came running, expecting to be faced with God knows what emergency or calamity. She looked at me and at the other girl, when the latter asked her in a voice of awe: "Mirjam, does this gentleman not look exactly like Lenin?" I could not help certain memories from flooding in, and also to be grateful that this time my leninesque face did not earn me another set of painful kicks.

The other occasion was on my regular monthly professional visit to Rabwa, the newly established headquarters of the Qadiani sect (thus called because before partition their seat had been in Qadian in India) or also Ahmediyas (because every member of the sect adds Ahmed to his name), where I was to examine, advise and - when indicated - console the Head of the sect. When I entered the room where His Holiness (I had been instructed to address him thus) was comfortably resting on his bed, a smile passed over his face when he saw my newly minted beard. Hopefully he looked at his son standing at my side, but his smile disappeared when the young man shook his head to say that my beard did not indicate that I had joined their sect. For every Qadiani grows some kind of beard, be it even only a few centimeters on the end of the chin or one just like I was exhibiting.

And so I have during the last odd thirty years my life been wearing a small beard. It has not evoked any commentaries, especially not in Jerusalem, where I am still a rare beard-specimen among my social circle, although I am certain that by some I am thereby labeled an orthodox Jew.

This, Patti, is the history of my beard. Jackie is still too small to understand what this excrescence represents and why it is affixed on my face. But whereas I wish - should I have still one more occasion to see him - that he looks less enquiringly, or even askance, into my face, I want you to take him on your lap, to cuddle him very warmly, to meditate for a few moments on what you have just now read, and surely the history, the essence, the sense of my beard will penetrate quasi by osmosis into Jackie's mind.

God bless you all !

B L O O D R E V E N G E

Hermann M. Selzer

Recently the eternally ongoing political squabbles in our newsmedia had been temporarily replaced by pictures of unrest among the Bedouins of the Negev, the desert in the south of Israel. In the fashion of today's protest actions they were shown burning tires, waving placards, shaking their fists and shouting bloodthirsty slogans. It was quite evident that non-Bedouin Israeli Arabs, among them even a member of the Knesseth, Israel's Parliament, were instructing the Bedouins how to posture and what to shout.

The cause of the unrest was the recent death of a member of the Bedouin tribe who had been shot and killed by the Warden of the Nature Authority and Parks Department - who was guarding a nearby reserved area into which cars are not allowed - when he refused to stop his car, and even speeded away when challenged by the Israeli official.

"The Bedouins, and in principle all of us Arabs, are honour-bound to revenge the murder of one of our brethren. For this killing was murder pure and simple", explained the Parliamentarian. "The blood of our murdered brother can only be washed away with the blood of the murderer; the death of our brother can only be revenged by the death of the murderer. We demand, therefore, from the Government of Israel that the murderer be handed over to us".

I was surprised. This was the first time the curse of blood revenge has been presented here in such an outspoken fashion. I had not expected to see it surface within Israel too. I was deeply affected by the words of that Israeli Arab, and by the posturing of the Bedouins around him. For the Bedouins of Israel had always been in good, even cordial relations with the people of Israel. They had been serving in the Israel Army and the bravery they often showed had been recognized and much appreciated.

I came to ponder why I was surprised; and this led me to ask myself what I knew about the background of this sorrow-causing phenomenon. The chain of thoughts made me feel the urge to recall and to revive my own experiences with the ancient institution of blood feud.

The LEX TALIONIS - the Law of Retaliation - demanding an eye for an eye, a limb for a limb, a life for a life is one of oldest laws known. The archaic custom of blood revenge was in the past practiced in many cultures, and is continued to this day in many parts of the world. It means the blood of a murdered person has to be exchanged for, revenged by, the blood of the murderer or that of a member of his family or clan. It is a quasi religious principle that the soul of the murdered individual has to be in this way satisfied and freed to join his ancestors. The Furies or Erinyes functioned in this sense, i.e. in the administering of the retaliatory justice, in ancient Greece.

Also Judaism knew of this principle. We read in Genesis that Abel's blood cried to Heaven for revenge; but, interestingly, Cain, though severely punished, had not to pay with his life (Gen.4:10). Later on, however, the Bible demands in case of murder "... you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, wound for wound.... (Exod.21:23).

In a certain sense also modern society follows the Lex Talionis: justice demands compensation for hurt, lesions, bodily damages of any kind - and condemns a murderer to death when indicated.

It is interesting to note that also the Bedouin know a compensatory settlement of a blood feud: a daughter of the murderer's family or clan is given in compensation to a member of the murdered man's family or clan.

As I have mentioned at the beginning, I myself had some personal experience with regard to blood feud, and I am going now to describe these.

It was sometime in the late 'fifties. Two bearded Pathans were ushered into my consultingroom in Lahore. They were dressed in typical Pathan garb: a long grey woollen shirt reached the middle of their calves, and below the embroidered borders of their shirts bulky grey trousers emerged. Their naked feet were stuck in open sandals, their heads were covered with big bluish cotton turbans and from their necks a silver amulet was suspended from a cord. Though it is often difficult to estimate a bearded Pathan's age, I thought they were about 40 years old (and this was later confirmed).

One of the men acted as the spokesman, apparently because he spoke a good Urdu. He requested me to give his companion, Haji Abdus Sattar, a thorough examination.

"We want you to give him a complete physical examination which should

include blood tests, a chest x-ray and an electrocardiogram. And we want you to give us your usual medical report in writing".

"Has the Haji Sahib any special complaints? Is there a reason why he wants such a complete examination?", I asked.

"Not at all", was the reply, "he is perfectly healthy as far as we know; but we want to have this confirmed. And in addition we want you to clearly put on the various reports the exact date on which the tests were performed".

This was a rather unusual request, but I did not ask the reason for it. There must have been some special reason like legal or family matters for such a demand, I reasoned; but I thought it wise and appropriate not to ask for an explanation.

I examined Haji Abdus Sattar, made a chest x-ray, wrote an ECG, and told the couple to return after three days for the results.

Three days later the two Pathans turned up again. I had their report ready. I told them that the physical and laboratory examinations had not revealed anything of pathological significance and that the patient did not require any treatment.

The two men did not appear to be interested in what I told them. They did not look at the various lab. tests and the specific marks I pointed out to them on the chest film and the ECG. They searched for - and seemed satisfied when they found it - the date on the various reports. I rose from my desk, accompanied them to the door, shook their hands and told them that the Receptionist was going to present them with the bill. (The Receptionist told me later that they paid the bill without demurring, and that they appeared mainly interested in the date on the receipt for the payment.)

I did not attribute much importance to the two Pathans' behaviour. We had become used to some of our patients' often bizarre comportment.

But some six months later I was to see the visit of the Pathans, and their conduct, under a different light: I received a summons from the Sessions Court in Peshawar to appear on a certain date at 10 a.m. as a witness in the case of the "Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan against Haji Abdus Sattar".

On the appointed date I flew to Peshawar. When I entered the Sessions Court the case had been going on for some time. I was surprised

to recognize the Judge who was seated with his two clerks on an elevated platform; about a year ago he had accompanied his wife when the latter had come to see me for a medical examination. At that time he was still a Magistrate in Multan.

The court room was packed with people, most all of them Pathans. I could not follow the proceedings as these were conducted in Pushtu, the Pathan idiom. The proceedings went on for more than one hour before I was called up. Luckily the Judge spoke to me in English, and I did not require an interpreter.

"Doctor, will you, please, come forward! You have to take an oath that you will tell only the truth and nothing but the truth....."

I raised my right hand and stated, as requested, that I would only tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

"Will you now come up here, doctor", the Judge demanded.

I did as he had demanded. When I stood at his side, the Judge pointed to my medical report, to the laboratory results and the receipt a clerk had spread in front of him.

"Are the signatures on the various papers yours, doctor? And did this receipt emanate from your office?"

I indicated that this was indeed so.

"And will you also confirm or deny that the dates on the various documents are correct?"

I compared these dates with those in the file I had brought with me.

"They are indeed correct, Your Honour", I acknowledged.

"Will you now, please, turn around, doctor, and tell us whether you recognize in the two men, standing up now in the dock, the two men who had come to your office at the dates indicated?"

I turned around and saw two Pathans standing in the dock. They were dressed in the way the two Pathans who had come to my office had been dressed. In fact they wore the same traditional Pathans clothes as all the other Pathans present in the room.

I looked long at the two men. I thought I recognized one of them but not the other. I was not sure. I did not like to take upon myself the responsibility inherent in my giving a firm opinion.

"I am sorry, Your Honour, I cannot, one way or the other, give a definite answer to your question. I am very unhappy I have to say so. But I could give you a definite answer one way or the other if you order

the Peshawar General Hospital to send a technician with one of their electrocardiographs. It would take only a few minutes to write an ECG of each of these two men; for the one I made of the patient who consulted me showed a rare though harmless abnormality....."

"Thank you, doctor, but this is not necessary", the Judge laughed. "The Manager of the hotel they stayed in during their visit to Lahore, stated categorically that the accused Abdus Sattar had not been the one you examined. And by the way: he too was surprised that the two men demanded an exact date on their receipt. This Court is now fully certain that the murderer Abdus Sattar had sent a friend to Lahore to establish an alibi while he stayed on a murdered a certain Muhammad Abbas. Thank you for coming. You are dismissed".

Later on I learned from the newspapers that the murder was committed in fulfillment of a blood feud that had been going on for a few generations and would, certainly, be going on for a few more. For the sons of the condemned man - he was in due course "hanged by his neck until he was dead" - was honour-bound to kill somebody of the other family.....

Also the following, the second episode, has remained deeply engraved in my memory bank.

It was in the beginning of the 'sixties. Kate had gone to England to be with the children during their school holidays, and I decided to take a week's vacation. I had since long been contemplating a visit to Swat, the princely state in the Himalayas, as I had read about Sir Harold Stein's exploration of its buddhist past; and also because some of our Buddha sculptures originated there.

The car-ride to Swat was a pleasant introduction to my long wished for visit to the domain of the Wali, as Swat's ruler is called.

I lodged in the simple but clean hotel and - as advised by the cognoscenti I had consulted in Lahore - called that afternoon on the Senior Wali, the father of the actual ruler who had resigned the ghadi, the throne, in favour of his son.

The old man - whom I found dressed in a black and white striped shirt and wide grey trousers and was sitting on a large upholstered chair with his naked feet folded underneath him - was by no means an interesting person; nor was the time I spent seated opposite him an elevating half

hour.

The following morning I paid an official call on the ruling Wali. I was taken to his Military Secretary's office and made to sign the visitors' book. Just then the Wali himself passed through on his way out. Unlike his father he was an impressive man. He was above average height, of a severely erect military posture, with strong features. He radiated authority. He looked at me, acknowledged my greeting, looked at the visitors' book, asked me some details about my person, and then, turning to the Military Secretary, he ordered him to have me come the following morning at 10 to witness some event the import of which I did not gather then.

The following morning I presented myself in the Military Secretary's office. He had been waiting for me, it appears; because, after issuing a short order to his Adjutant, he hurried outside. The Adjutant opened the door, invited me to precede him and then to follow him.

"You will be witnessing a very interesting event", the young officer told me in only slightly accentuated english. "I shall take you to a place where you can best see what is going on; and I shall stay with you and explain to you what happens".

He took me up a series of steps leading to a kind of veranda from where, leaning on an iron balustrade, I could look onto a small, empty courtyard. The slanting sun illuminated only half the courtyard, but this did not prevent me from overlooking also the shaded part.

Suddenly a gate in one of the courtyard's walls was thrown open and an officer appeared. He stepped aside, barked a short order, and about a dozen armed, belted, green-uniformed men jumped out with their guns at the ready. They posted themselves along the walls of the courtyard, knelt on their left knee with their guns pointing into all directions.

A short minute later the Wali appeared, followed by his Military Secretary. The officer shouted an order, the twelve soldiers rose to their feet, shouted a greeting, saluted the Wali and then returned to their former positions.

The Wali, standing now in the centre of the courtyard, made a short gesture with his right hand. The Military Secretary issued an order, the door in the wall was opened and a young bar-headed man, dressed in pathan clothes, his hands and feet in chains, his face expressionless, was brought in and led into the presence of the Wali. The Wali gave the man a long, contemplative look. Then he raised his hand slightly and a

young boy of about 8-10 years came forward. He was a miniature edition of a Pathan. I had not seen him before as he had been standing directly underneath the balustrade.

The boy was taken into the presence of the Wali, who put his hand on the child's shoulder, looking at him with a rather severe mien.

The Adjutant at my side translated to me the conversation which now took place.

"Was Khan Ghulam Abbas your father?"

"Yes, Wali Sahib, Khan Ghulam Abbas was my father".

"Has your father been recently killed?"

"Yes, Wali Sahib, my father has been recently killed".

"Is this the man who killed your father?", the Wali asked.

"This is the man", the boy replied.

The Wali turned to the man in fetters. "Do you confess to have killed Khan Ghulam Abbas, this boy's father?"

"Yes, I have killed Ghulam Abbas", the man said with a firm voice.

"Why did you kill that man?", the Wali asked.

"Because he killed my father, and my father's blood cried out for this man's blood. Now my father's honour and that of our family are restored and my father's soul can rest in paradise".

"Are you ready to accept blood money in place of this man's blood?", the Wali turned to the young boy.

"No, Wali Sahib, I am not willing to accept any sum whatever in expiation of the damage this man has inflicted on my family's honour".

The Wali stretched out his right arm; one of the two soldiers who had posted themselves behind him, placed his rifle into the Wali's hand. The Wali handed the gun to the boy.

The condemned man's expression did not change. He looked as if he was not involved.

The boy cocked the gun, placed its muzzle again the left chest of the condemned man and fired.

The man collapsed at the Wali's feet.

The soldier took back his gun. The Wali turned on his heels and marched out.

One more experience in my experiences-rich life.

HE WAS NOT SATISFIED
BECAUSE SHE HAD NOT BEEN SUTTEEFIED.

A short, but true story

told by
Hermann M. Selzer.

I was reminded of the episode to which the title of this story refers when I read in a news magazine that in some village in South India "a widow had jumped on the funeral pyre of her husband and was burned to death along with his body".

A certain summer is still vivid in my memory, not only because the sudden severe heatwave that had hit the Punjab - India's northern province stretching southwards from the foot of the Himalayas - had made us open our summer practice in Kashmir earlier than usual, but also because I had for the first time come face to face with, and had in addition been personally involved in, the **Suttee** issue.

Suttee or Sati is a sanskrit word and means "virtuous woman". This concept originated in the myth of Sati, one of Shiva's wives, who had married the god against her father's wishes; and who threw herself into a fire when the latter was humiliated by Shiva.

Suttee designs the ancient indian custom - first mentioned in the Mabharata - of a widow having herself burned to death either on her husband's pyre or soon thereafter. It happened also that a wife was thus sacrificed in anticipation of her warrior-husband not being expected to return alive from a military expedition. Greek literature of the 4th

century BCE mentions Suttee as a custom common in the Punjab Province of India. Later, during the moslem conquest of India, the Rajputs burned their widows out of fear they might be violated by the invaders.

In the 18th century, under the rule of the Moghuls Humayum and Akbar, suttee was for the first time declared illegal. Later - against the wish of the Hindus and also that of the Europeans who objected because they saw it as a violation of the Hindus' religious rights - this law was extended over all India by William Bentink when, from 1828 to 1836, he was the Governor-General of India.

The north-indian plains having that year turned intolerably hot already in March - and we had not yet been blessed with airconditioning - we decided to shift our summer practice to Kashmir a few weeks earlier than usual. We sent Rita, our Laboratory Assistant, who functioned also as our Receptionist, along with Shamas-ud-Din, our senior servant, ahead to Srinagar with a small trailer-load of office and laboratory equipment, and followed ourselves two days later in our chevrolet. By taking two days to complete the 10-hour journey, we gave Rita ample time to set up the professional rooms in the bungalow in Gupkar Road we rented year by year from an Englishwoman, the widow of a retired British-Indian Government official, who had decided to live the rest of her life in Kashmir; and who preferred to spend the summer months in Gulmarg, a resort about 3000 feet above Srinagar.

As soon as we had entered the himalayan range we began to enjoy our car ride; and the higher the winding roads took us, the more we looked forward to getting nearer to the always newly overwhelming moment when, on reaching the Baramullah Pass, we could see the blooms-filled Kashmir Valley spread before us. On this occasion our pleasure was enhanced by our having to transit, on top of the pass, through a nearly fifty feet long tunnel which had been chiseled through a solid mass of ice and snow.

And down there, in the plains, was the beautiful Kashmir valley.

On arrival in Srinagar we found, as expected, the bungalow readied for us. And, as usual, we were surprised how quickly our expected arrival had become known, for Rita had already a considerable list of appointments to place on my desk.

Rita pointed to one of the names, as of a man who claimed to have been my patient in the previous year, and whom - as he had been very insistant - she had given the first appointment on the following morning. The name she pointed to was that of a Kumar Gopal Singh. I did not

remember having seen a kumar with this name before.

But I recalled him immediately when he turned up the following morning. I had no difficulty to recognize him, though he had greatly increased in weight. The year before he had come to see me for a minor gastro-intestinal ailment. He had not called himself a "Kumar", a Prince, then. But otherwise he had tried to impress me on that visit by telling me that he had just that year completed his education at Cambridge; that his father was the hereditary Chamberlain of the Maharaja of Kashmir; and that, being the oldest son, he too expected to be, in due course, appointed to that high ranking government office.

This time he came with his wife and a baby, the latter carried by an ayah, a nanny. He greeted me exuberantly as if I were an old friend of his. I played along as I understood that he wanted to impress his wife with the "jolly ease" with which he conversed with a foreigner. (Of course, his pleasure would have been greater had I been an Englishman).

"How are you, doctor? How was the winter in the Punjab? I hear it has suddenly turned jolly hot down there. I am jolly glad to see you here with us in Srinagar. And meet my wife and my first baby soon to be one year old".

"Nice to see you again, Kumar Sahib", I replied. "And you too, Raniji". (I gave her an even higher rank, that of a queen, to have her outrank her husband.) "How are you all? What can I do for you?"

"We three have come to have a jolly medical overhaul from you. And although we are all jolly healthy and fit, we want to have this authoritatively confirmed by you."

His wife too was grossly overweight, as was the six-months-old baby, while the young girl, who carried the baby on her hip, was greatly below the expected weight for a girl of 8-9 years, the age I estimated her to be; and certainly the baby was too heavy for a pale and weak-looking girl as she appeared to me. After handing the baby to its mother, the girl squatted down near the entrance door, apparently glad to have the weight taken off her hip and feet.

By his fussiness and his attempts at joking - along with his pityful attempts to imitate, in his way of talking, an upper-class Englishman

- the fellow made the next nearly 1½ hours very unpleasant and tiring. I was glad when I had completed the physical examinations of the Kumar, his wife and the baby, and we had taken laboratory samples from all three of them.

With a hearty laugh he refused my request to "have a look" also at the girl.

I did not feel like arguing. I wanted the long session to come to an end.

"I have completed the physical examinations and have not found anything worrisonome in any of you", I told them. "I shall be able to tell you more when I have the lab.results. Come back the day- after-tomorrow at nine. By that time I shall be able to tell you definitely what I think of your three's state of health".

Two days later they turned up again. All four of them.

"I have completed all tests and can confirm what I tentatively told you two days ago", I addressed the pater familias. "As I have already mentioned I have not discovered any organic abnormality in you, your wife and the baby. Also all the lab.tests have turned out to be within normal range. But I must warn you that you cannot expect such a favourable diagnosis also in the near future, if you do not cut down your weight. All three of you have to lose weight. You and your wife and the baby are very much overweight. You are facing a definite health hazard. Here is a list of foods you have strictly to avoid; and here one of the foods you may eat. And here is a prescription for vitamins. This is all you need. Follow strictly my advice and there is no reason you should not live to a hundred years".

I gave him a written medical report, the lab. results, the x-ray films and the prescription. Then I added:

"However, the one who certainly needs medical help is your Ayah, this girl who carries your baby on her hip. She looks very pale, is underweight and appears very weak. You take the baby home yourselves, and I shall have the girl undergo a thorough examination. It will not cost you a penny, either for the examination nor for the medicaments which I shall provide. And I shall have my driver take her home."

Gopal's face had turned red, and I expected him to explode in protest against my proposal, but his wife quietened him down with some whispered

words - in Kashmiri which I did not understand - and he did quieten down.

"O.k., do what you think you have to do", he finally, rather gracelessly, agreed. He took the papers I had placed before him, his wife sat the baby on her own hip, and he ordered the girl to stay behind to be examined by Kate and me.

"Come back again in two days' time, at this hour", I told him before they left, "and I shall tell you what we have found, and what we think has to be done for this girl".

It was not easy for Kate and I to examine the girl. She was terrified when I tried to touch her. We could not communicate with her as she spoke only Kashmiri and not Urdu; and because she closed up when we asked one of our kashmiri servants to interpret for us. Fortunately, after some time she did quieten down, became more amenable and allowed Kate to examine her. After we had completed the examinations I made our driver bring the girl home

Gopal Singh did not return on the appointed day. He returned a week later. This time his broad face was not decorated by the usual insecure and ingratiating smile. Instead it was covered by a scowl.

He came in without greeting me. He did not reply when I wished him a good day. I did not react to his rudeness which I interpreted as play-acting, though I wondered what his comportment intended to mean: whether he wanted to impress me of his importance or whether he tried to make me feel intimidated.

"Sit down, Kumar Sahib", I invited him, but he kept standing.

"Accommodate yourself", I continued, unfazed by his hostility. "Here are the results of the tests we ran on your Ayah. They are very worrisonome. Not only is one of her lungs affected with tuberculosis, but she is also very anemic; and she has some intestinal infestations. First of all she should not anymore look after the baby; she should not even come near him. I have written down what treatment she should take, and what food she should consume. Here are the medicines for the first month." I pointed to a number of packages and bottles I had taken from a drawer and placed on my desk. "She will have to come to see us every month as long as we are here; and each time I shall provide her with the medicaments

and advice as her, hopefully improved, state of health will indicate. As I told you already, it will not involve you in any expense whatsoever".

Gopal Singh did not reply. For about a minute he did not react. He did not even look at the medicaments and the papers I had spread before him. He kept glaring at me.

Suddenly he raised his right arm, and with the back of his hand, in one swoop, he swept the medicaments and papers from the desk. Then, placing both his hands on my desk, he leaned forward, his eyes staring angrily into mine.

"Now you are happy, Doctor Sahib, are you not?" With spittle accumulating in the corners of his mouth, he addressed me in a furious but constrained voice. "I thought you were better, more understanding than the British; but I see you are not better. All the white people are cut from the same cloth. This girl is not a child anymore; she is already 12 years old. And do you know who she is? She did not tell you, I suppose. She is - or better was - the fiancée of my younger brother who died about a year ago. According to our tradition she should not have been here, should not have been alive anymore. She should have committed suttee, that is, she should have mounted on the funeral pyre and been burned up along with the body of her fiancé. But you white people have interfered with our religious practices, and have forced us to abolish the suttee, the self-sacrifice of the widows. This does not mean, however, that the girl's life has been saved. For us, as for all Hindus, she is dead. She does not exist anymore. But, as I have been affected by your western so-called "culture and civilization", we have spared her. We have made her the nanny of our baby. But for us she is dead. She is not allowed into the house. Also our other servants do not want her to live alongside them, though they do not mind abusing her. She sleeps on the veranda outside the baby's room and gets the left-overs from our kitchen."

He straightened up; paused for a short while to catch his breath. Then he leaned forward again and, breathing hard, he continued.

"You do not know how much you have damaged this person. How much you have interfered with her karman. By her suffering in this life she might have cleansed away many of the grave faults and sins she had acquired in her previous existences; but now, by your clumsy interference, you have worsened her fate, blackened her karman still more. She will most likely not be reborn a human being but as a low species of animal. And

whatever will happen to her now, while she is still quasi alive, will be debited to your own karma".

He straightened up, glanced for a moment at the medicaments on the floor, looked at me with disdain, turned and left the room.

Rita came in to announce the next patient.

"Cancel all the appointments of this afternoon. I cannot see any more patients now. Realign them for any other time".

For a long time I sat at my desk, my forehead leaning against my folded hands. I relived the scene, and imagined the girl's fate and suffering in all their details. And I felt sad, very sad.

Next morning I sent a servant to the Chamberlain's bungalow to enquire about the girl. He returned after one hour. He had not been able to contact the girl. He was told she had been sent to her parents who live in some distant village in the mountains.

The following morning I sent the servant with our driver in our car to the village of her parents. They returned two days later. They had found the village and her parents' family, but these and all the villagers denied having recently seen the girl or heard of her.

To this day I wonder whether Kate and I had harmed the girl; whether we had indeed clumsily interfered with her fate; whether Kate and I had been in the wrong.

Alas, we could not anymore pursue our enquiries, as we did not return to Kashmir: the world war, the sub-continent's partition and, thereafter, India's invasion of Kashmir, made it impossible for us to continue our summer practice there.

ED

DIE
SEKTE
DER
ESSENER .

In der Regel wird dem Beispiel des Josephus Folge geleistet und die Bevoelkerung Palaestina's, die in dem der Genurt Jesu vorausgehenden Jahrhundert gelebt hat, in drei Gruppen geteilt: die Saduzaeer, die Pharisaeer und die Essener. Es ist aber jetzt als festgestellt anzunehmen, dass diese drei "Parteien", so einflussreich sie auch gewesen sein moegen und wichtig in der Fuehrerschaft des Landes, in Wirklichkeit doch einen kleinen Teil der Bevoelkerung ausgemacht haben. Der Grossteil, die Masse der Palaestiner, folgte weder den Saduzaeern noch den Pharisaeern; sie gehoerten zu keiner Partei. Sie machten eine amorphe Volksmasse aus, um die eine sich scharf bekaempfende politische Fuehrerschaft eifrig warb.

Es ist sicher, dass diese Palaestiner in irgendwelchen nennbaren Zahlen zu den Essenern gehoerten. Es handelte sich bei den letzteren um eine geschlossene Sekte, die niemals mehr als 4000 Mitglieder zur gleichen Zeit gehabt haben konnte. Es mag wohl sein, dass die Essener von Zeit zu Zeit sich politisch engagiert hatte; so hoeren wir z.B. dass zu Beginn der Makkabaer Revolte (166/167 v.Chr.) von einer "Versammlung der Frommen", der Hassidim, gesprochen wurde, die eine klar umschriebene politische Partei darstellten. Es wird vermutet, dass die Hassidim das Grundmaterial fuer die Essener Sekte bildeten, dass die ersteren schon lange bestanden hatten, irgendwann seit dem 3. Jahrhundert v.Chr., und moeglicherweise auch schon zur Zeit der Persischen Herrschaft.

Was immer auch gewesen sein mag, diese Sekte hatte keinerlei bedeutenden Einfluss auf die zeitlichen Entwicklungen gehabt; sie nehmen in der Geschichte nur den Platz eines kleinen Moenchordens ein. Josephus nennt sie die "Essaioi", waehrend Plinius ihnen den Namen "Esseni" gibt. Es ist nicht klar, was diese Worte bedeuten. Eine Zeitlang glaubte man, dass sie von "Haseh" oder "Hasid" abstammen; aber seit der Entdeckung der Qumran Schriften, glaubt man, dass das Wort "Heiler" besagt, was sehr gut mit der Josephus' Beschreibung uebereinstimmen wurde, dass sie "in medizinischen Dingen interessiert" sind. Eine solche Auslegung koennte sie mit den "Therapeutae" identifizieren, einer Sekte, die Philo Judaeus "Heiler des Koerpers und der Seele" nannte.

Auch die Urgeschichte der Essener ist unbekannt. Josephus spricht von ihnen zuerst in seiner Beschreibung der Periode des Jonathan Maccabaeus (d.h. um 150 v.Chr.), und er erwaeht im Besonderen (An.13:5,9) einen Essener namens Judas der zur Zeit des Aristobolus lebte (105 v.Chr.). Es ist nicht ganz sicher, ob wir es hier mit einer ausschliesslich judi-

schen Sekte zu tun haben, oder ob hier fremder Einfluss mitgewirkt hat. Es ist aber zweifellos, dass die Sekte der Essener, die Josephus und andere beschrieben haben, mit der Sekte identisch ist, die in Qumran in der Naeh des Toten Meeres gelebt hat.

Durch Josephus, Philo und Plinius haben wir Einiges über die Organization der Essener erfahren können. Wir wissen, dass es niemals mehr als 4000 Mitglieder auf einmal gab, dass sie nur in Palaestina existierten (falls sie nicht wirklich mit den Therapeutae identisch sind, die ihren Sitz in Aegypten hatten), dass sie hauptsächlich in Dörfern lebten und Städte vermeideten, weil sie fanden, dass das Leben der Stadtbewohner von der sie umgebenden Laster bedroht ist. Philo, dagegen, bemerkt, dass es Essener auch in jeder einzelnen Stadt in Palaestina gab. Es ist sicher, dass solche auch in Jerusalem lebten. Plinius schreibt, dass eine Grossteil von ihnen in der Naeh von En Gedi gewohnt haben, aber bisher haben Ausgrabungen keinen Beweis für diese Behauptung liefern können. Es gibt aber eine Anzahl von Verfassern, wie Dio Chrysostomos, die berichten, dass sich die Hauptniederlassung dieser Sekte in der Naeh des Toten meeres befand.

Die Essener lebten in einer geschlossenen Gemeinschaft, wo sie in Gemeindehäusern hausten. Die Commune funktionierte nach strengen und sehr genau eingehaltenen Regeln. An der Spitze der Gemeinde standen die Aufseher, denen unbedingter Gehorsam geleistet wurde. Diese Aufseher wurden gewählt, und " und ein jeder von ihnen wird, ohne Ausnahme, für alle bereit stehen. Sie erwählten ausgezeichnete Männer, die die Gelder einsammelten sowie die landwirtschaftlichen Erzeugnisse; und sie hatten ihre Priester, die das Brot und das Essen zubereiteten", schreibt Josephus.

Der Novize, der der Gesellschaft von Qumran beitrug, wurde mit dem folgenden Segensspruch aufgenommen:

" Moege Er Dich mit allen möglichen guten Gedanken segnen und Dich von allem Bösen freihalten. Moege Er Dein Herz mit einem Verstehen des Lebens erleuchten und Dir ewige Weisheit uebermitteln . "

Der Neu-Aufgenommene wurde mit dem Erhalt von drei Dingen in den Orden aufgenommen: eine kleine Schaufel, einen Schurz und einem weissen Gewand.. Das letztere mag bezeugen, dass sich diese Sekte auf einen priesterlichen Hintergrund bezog. Ein Suchender wurde nur nach einer Probezeit zu einer beschränkten Mitgliedschaft zugelassen. Eine solche Probezeit dauerte im Durchschnitt ein ganzes Jahr. Nach Ablauf dieses Jahres konnte er an den regelmässigen rituellen Washungen teilnehmen. Dem ersten Probejahr folgte eine weitere Probezeit von zwei Jahren (Josephus spricht sogar von drei Jahren), and nach Ablauf dieser Zeitspanne, - und nachdem er einen sehr starken Eid der Geheimhaltung und des Gehorsams geleistet hatte - wurde er zum Vollmitglied ernannt und erlaubt, an der gemeinsamen Speisetafel zu sitzen. Dervon ihm abverlangte Eid besagte, dass er seinen Brüdern gegenüber völlige Offenheit zeigen würde, dass er die Lehren des Ordens geheim halten werde und niemals nicht-Mitgliedern preisgeben würde. Nur Erwachsene

konnten Mitglieder werden, aber Kinder wurden auch aufgenommen, so dass sie bereits in jungem Alter die Grundsätze des Ordens erlernen konnten.

Von Josephus wissen wir, dass es vier Grade in diesem Orden gab, nämlich, nämlich die drei Jahre des Noviziats und sodann die endgültige volle Mitgliedschaft. Die Qumran Schriften erwähnen jedoch nicht die Probezeit und erwähnen nur auf eine Vorbereitungsperiode von zwei Jahren und einem dritten Jahr, das zur endgültigen Zulassung führt.

Es gab einen ständigen Gerichtshof aus mindestens 100 Mitgliedern zusammengesetzt, die über jedes Vergehen zu Gericht saßen. Für schwere Vergehen war die Bestrafung Ausstossung aus der Gemeinschaft.

In der Regel bestand gemeinsamer Besitz aller Güter. In dieser Beziehung waren alle gleich. Beim Beitreten zur Sekte musste ein Jeder seinen ganzen Besitz der Gemeinschaft übergeben. Keinerlei Geschäftsbeziehungen durften zwischen einzelnen Mitgliedern stattfinden. Nicht das Geringste durfte ein Bruder dem anderen verkaufen. Ein Jeder gab das, was er im Überschuss besass oder nicht dringend selbst brauchte, dem Nächsten der es mehr benötigte; gewöhnlich erhielt er dafür etwas im Austausch, was er gebrauchen konnte. Das soll aber nicht besagen, dass solche "Geschäftshandlungen" in Wirklichkeit Tauschgeschäfte waren, denn wenn immer jemand etwas benötigte oder gerne hätte, so nahm er es von einem der Brüder, ohne zu einer Gegengabe verpflichtet gewesen zu sein. Philo besagt das in den folgenden Worten: "Niemand durfte etwas persönlich besitzen, weder Haus noch Sklaven, weder Felder noch Herden..alles wurde zusammengelegt und jeder genoss die gleichen Vorteile solchen Eigentums". Auch die Einkommen, die die Mitglieder von ihren verschiedenen Beschäftigungen oder Geschäften, wurde den erwählten Verwaltern übergeben, die ihrerseits all das besorgten was man brauchte, nicht nur an Essen sondern auch an Kleidung, die auch gemeinsames Besitztum darstellte. Geeignete Kleidung wurde für den Sommer und den Winter bereitgestellt, und ein jeder nahm, was immer er brauchte, aus einer gemeinsamen Kleiderkammer, in der gleichen Weise, wie ein jeder seinen Bedarf an Essen aus einer gemeinsamen Speisekammer sich holen konnte. Kranke, die nicht arbeiten konnten, und die sonstig Behinderten erhielten, was immer sie brauchten, in gleicher Weise und Menge wie alle anderen. Die Kranken wurden auf Gemeinschaftskosten gepflegt. Ein jedes Mitglied hatte das Recht, arme Leute - ob Verwandte oder nicht - auf Gemeinschaftskosten zu unterstützen; man verließ sich auf das Urteil und die Aufrichtigkeit der Geber. Aber wenn es sich um Verwandte handelte, musste man die vorherige Erlaubnis der Aufseher einholen.

Brüder der Sekte auf Reisen konnten damit rechnen, überall gastfreundliche Aufnahme zu finden; in jeder Stadt war ein Beamter ernannt, der sich um die Fürsorge reisender Brüder zu kümmern hatte.

Die täglichen Beschäftigungen der Ordensbrüder waren einer strikten Ordnung unterworfen. Der Tag begann mit Gebeten, nach deren Beendigung die einzelnen Brüder von den Aufsehern zu verschiedenen Aufgaben abgeordnet wurden. Nach einigen Stunden der Arbeit versammelten sie sich

zu einem Reinigungsbad, und nach diesem nahmen sie die erste MAHLZEIT des Tages ein. Danach gingen sie wieder zu ihrer Arbeit zurueck. AM Abend kamen sie wieder zu einem Reinigungsbad zusammen, das dann wiederum von einem Gemeinschaftsmahl gefolgt war. Ihre Hauptbeschaeftigung lag auf dem Gebiet der Landwirtschaft, aber wir wissen auch, dass sie eine Reihe von Geschaeftsunternehmen und Handel betrieben. Philo weist jedoch darauf hin, dass jeder Handel untersagt war, da ein solcher zu Gier verleiten koennte. Gleichzeitig war auch die Herstellung von Waffen untersagt.

Philo und Jospheus nehmen jede Gelegenheit wahr, um die Essener als Musterbeispiele der Moralitaet uns vorzustellen. Sie beschreiben sie enthaltsame, einfache Menschen ohne irgendwelchen Ehrgeiz oder Gelueste. Sie assen und tranken das Minimum dessen, was zur Befriedigung ihres Hunger's und Dursts notwendig war. In der Tag scheinen sie mit sehr einfacher Kost zufrieden gewesen sein. Sie vermieden jede Art von Luxus. Sie vermieden auch jedwede Art von Verschwendung, und sie liessen sich neue Schuhe und Kleidung nur dann zuteilen, wenn die ihre voellig unbrauchbar geworden war.

Man kann die die Hauptelemente ihrer Lebensphilosophie folgendermassen zusammenfassen:

1. Sie waren freie Menschen und sie hielten keine Sklaven.
2. Ihr Word hatte den gleichen Wert wie ein Eid. Sie fanden einen Eidschwur schlimmer als einen Meineid, denn "wem immer man erst glauben kann, nachdem er Gott angerufen hat, der ist bereits verurteilt. Herodus respektierte diese Einstellung der Essener und er absolvierte sie von dem Treueschwur, den alle seine Untertanen ihm schworen mussten.
3. Sie lehnten die Salbung mit Oel ab, da sie diese als eine Verletzung der Reinheitsgesetze ansahen.
4. Vor jeder Mahlzeit nahmen sie ein Bad in kaltem Wasser; das Waschen der Haende war ihnen nicht genug, denn fuer sie hatte die Mahlzeit einen sakralen Charakter. Sie nahmen ebenfalls ein solches Bad wenn sie ihre "Beduerfnisse befriedigt" hatten, d.h. nach der Defaecation und dem Urinieren. Auch nach jedem Kontakt mit einem Aussenstehenden war ein Vollbad vorgeschrieben.
5. Sie erledigten ihre "Beduerfnisse" an einem Ort, der ziemlich entfernt war von ihrem Lager. Mit Hilfe ihrer Schaufel machten sie ein Loch in der Erde, ungefaehr 30 cm tief, und wehn sie ueber diesem Loch hockten, bedeckten sie sich mit ihrem Mantel, "um nicht die Sonne oder den goettlichen Glanz zu beleidigen". Nach der Beendigung ihrer "Beduerfnisse", deckten sie das Loch mit der vorher ausgeschaukelten Erde wieder zu. Worauf sie dann, wie bereits erwaeht, ein Vollbad zu nehmen hatten. An Sabath-Tagen vermieden sie es so weit es moeglich war, ihre koerperlichen Beduerfnisse zu befriedigen, as diese waren mit koerperlicher Arbeit verbunden, was eine Verletzung des heiligen Tages darstellte.

6. Sie waren immer in weiss gekleidet.
7. Sie waren in keinerlei Gegner der Ehen, lehnten solche jedoch fuer sich selbst ab, dasie Frauen als unkontrollierbar und Treue-los ansahen.
8. Sie sandten Gaben an den Tempel in Jerusalem in Form of von ihren eignen Produkten, aber keinerlei Opfertiere, da sie ihre eigene Opferdarbringng der des Tempel's ueberlegen glaubten. Aus diesem Grunde war ihnen von den Tempelbehoerden die Zulassung zum Tempel verboten.
9. Ihre gemeinschaftlichen Mahlzeiten wurden von den Priestern zubereitet, die sich an die genauesten Vorschriften der Torah und der Reinheitsgesetze hielten.

Josephus erwachnt, dass sich die Essener nach ihrem Reinigungsbad fuer einige Zeit in einen besonderen Aufenthaltsort begaben, zu dem kein Uneingeweihter Zulass hatte. Nachher betraten sie den Speisesaal, als wenn dieser ein Heiligtum waere. Nachdem sie ihre Plaetze eingenommen hatten unter Bewahrung absoluten Schweigens, verteilte der Backer die Broter - die Verteilung erfolgte genau nach Senioritaet, d.h. der Hoechststehende erhielt sein Brot zuerst usf - und darauf stellte der Koch einen Napf mit einer einzigen Speise vor einen jeden. Darauf begann der amtierende Priester zu beten, und niemand durfte das Essen beruehren, bevor die Gebete beendet waren. Nach Ende des Mahles wurdewieder gebetet. Diese Gebete waren Danksagungen an Gott, dem Lebensspender. Niemand sprach ein Wort waehrend des Essens. Nach Beendigung des Mahles legten sie ihre Kleider ab, denn diese waren ja ihre "heiligen Gewaender". Dann gingen sie an ihre Arbeitsplaetze zurueck. Nach Beendigung ihrer Arbeit wurde die darauffolgende Mahlzeit in ghaeicher Weise eingenommen."

Man hoert gelegentlich, dass sich die Essener des Weines enthalten haetten wie es die Therapeuten, die Pythagoraer und die Juedisch-Christlichen Eboniten taten, aber das stimmt nicht. Diese Idee kam aus einem Missverstaendnis in einem Bericht des S. Jerome ueber die Essener. Es ist nicht anzuzweifeln, dass die Essener Fleisch assen. Wir wissen, dass sie in Qumran Rinderherden hielten, und bei den Ausgrabungen wurden Knochen geschlachteter Haustiere gefunden.

Es gibt auch keinerlei Unterlagen dafuer - wie manche Forscher vermuten - dass es sich bei den Essenern um eine heretische Sekte gehandelt hatte. Ihre Ideen und Glaubensgrundsaeetze waren voellig juedisch. Sie glaubten stark an eine Vorsehung. Sie gehorchten kritiklos den Vorschriften der Torah. Nach Gott selbst war ihnen Moses das meist verehrte Wesen. Man sagt, dass wer immer Moses laesterte, mit dem Tode bestraft wurde. In der gleichen Weise wie die anderen Juden ihrer Zeit studierten und erklarten sie die Torah - nur mit dem Unterschied, dass sie in ihren Auslegungen allegorische Esklaerungen bevorzugten.

Der Sabbath war ihnen im wahrsten Sinne ein heiliger Tag. Sie stellten nicht einmal ein Gefaess von einem Platz zum anderen, und sie vermieden - wie ich bereits erwachnt habe - sogar die Verrichtung ihrer Notdurft,

falls sich das ermöglichen liess.

Dem essenischen Gedankengut entsprechend hat die Sonne, die fuer immer einen vollkommenen Kurs einhaelt, als Spenderin des Lichts eine ganz besondere Stellung. Aber das bedeutet nicht, dass damit auch die geringste Art eines Sonnenkultes verbunden waere. Josephus hat niemals einen solchen Verdacht ausgesprochen, auch nicht wenn er schrieb, dass die Essener noch bevor die Sonne am Horizont erscheint "sie gewisse uebermittelte Gebete an sie richten, als ob sie die Sonne bitten, doch sichtbar zu werden". Der unberechtigte Verdacht einer Sonnenanbetung ist noch damit besaetigt worden, dass sich die Essener - wiewohl ich bereits berichtete - beim Defaekieren in ihren Mantel einhuellen, um die Sonne nicht zu "beleidigen".

Die Rabbis der fruehen Mishna (Sukk.5.4d) sahen es als ein Vergehen an, Gebete direkt an die Sonne zu richten. Zu der Zeit war die Begruessung der Sonne bei ihrem Aufgehen eine weit verbreitete, bereits dem Platon bekannte Sitte. Es wird immer noch diskutiert, ob irgendetwas von dieser Gewohnheit auch den Essenern bekannt war. Vielleicht haengt es damit zusammen, dass die Essener ihre Gebete nach dem Osten gewandt verrichtetet und nicht nach dem Westen, in die Richtung des Kempels, da sie die Heiligkeit dieses ablehnten.

Der Initiant musste schwören, dass er die Lehren der Sekte anderen Mitgliedern nur in der Form und Art weitergeben wuerde, wie er sie selbst anvertraut erhalten hatte. Unter Todesstrafe war es verboten, die Geheimnisse der Sekte Aussenstehenden mitzuteilen. Die Sekte hatte eine eigene und weitreichende Bibliothek und die Buecher wurden mit groesster Sorgfalt behandelt.

In den essenischen Lehren spielten Engel eine grosse Rolle. Die strengen Eide, die ein Initiant ablegen musste, schlossen auch das Versprechen ein, niemals die ihm anvertrauten Namen der Engel zu verraten.

Das Studium medizinischer Pflanzen, der Heilkraefte gewisser Steine, Erze und Mineralien mit Bezug auf die in den heiligen Schriften dargelegten Richtlinien wurde eifrig betrieben. Sie hatten einen guten Ruf als Heiler. Sie behaupteten von sich auch, dass ihnen auf Grund ihrer ununterbrochenen Rainigungen, prophetische Gaben verliehen worden seien.

Die Essener hielten, dass der Koerper vergaenglich, die Seele aber unsterblich ist. Ihrem Glauben gemass hatte die Seele urppuenglich ihren Aufenthalt im Himmel gehabt, wurde dann aber durch des Menschen Sinnlichkeit auf die Erde gelockt, wo sie nunmehr im menschlichen Koepper wie in einem Gefaengnis eingesperrt ist. Sobald sie aber von dieser menschlichen Sinnlichkeit frei ist, wird sie wieder in die Hoehe schweben. Gute Seelen koennen im Jenseits eine Existenz voller Glueck und Schoenheit erwarten, waehrend die boesen Seelen schwere Strafen erwarten duerfen. Dieser Glaube an ein Jenseits ist einwandfrei aus den Qumran Schrifetn herauszulesen; aber der Glaube an eine Wiederauferstehung ist nur in zwei Stellen angedeutet. Man kann aber einen solchen Glauben aus den Worten "ewige Freude" oder "ewige Erloesung" oder "ewiges Leben", die nicht weiter erkluert werden, herauslesen.

Die Qumran Schriften haben unsere Kenntnisse ueber die Ideen, das Leben und die Organization der Essener sehr bereichert.

Die Sekte von Qumran glaubte von sich, die wahre juedische religioese Tradition zu pflegen, waehrend die anderen Juden einen solchen Anspruch nicht erheben koennten. Wie Israel auch war die Sekte in Priester, Leviten und die Laien unterteilt. Fernerhin erhielten sie die Aufteilung in die urspruenglichen zwolf Staemme weiter aufrecht, und diese wiederum wurden in Einheiten von 1000, 100 und 10 aufgeteilt.

Die Priester stellten die hoechste AUTHORITAET dar. Von ihnen ergingen Befehle ueber eine Generalversammlung an alle Mitglieder, aber wenn es sich um Glaubensfragen handelte, war es den Priestern, den "Soehnen des Zadok" oder den "Soehnen des Aaron", wie sie genannt wurden, ueberlassen, die endgueltige Entscheidung zu treffen.

Zujeder Gruppe von Zehn gehoerte ein Priester, der die Segenssprueche ueber die Mahlzeiten aussprach und dem staendig fortgesetzten Torahstudium die Richtung gab.

Die Gemeindefuehrung lag war den Aufsehern anvertraut (den Mefaker). Ein "Priester-General" und ein "Beschuetzer Aller Lager" standen an der Spitze der Sekte; diese hohen Beamten mussten ihr Amt niederlegen, sobald sie das Alter von fuenfzig Jahren erreicht hatten.

Niemand konnte volles Mitglied werden, der nicht die Vorschriften der Torah streng einhielt. Wer ungehorsam war, wurde ausgeschlossen. Diejenigen Mitglieder, die ausserhalb des Lagers oder der Siedlung lebten durften Privateigentum besitzen und mit Nicht-Juden Handel treiben.

Es scheint, dass in Qumran Frauen zugelassen waren, denn es sind Graeber mit Skeletten von Frauen und Kindern gefunden worden.

Das Hauptziel der Brueder dieser Sekte war es, ein ununterbrochenes Leben goettlichen Verehrens zu fuehren, in welchem die "Soehne des Lichtes" ihre Lobeslieder in Gemeinschaft mit dem himmlischen Chor der Engel erheben duerfen. Wenn es hell wurde des morgens und dunkel am Abend wurden Gebete verrichte. Philo, Plinius und besonders Chrisostomos beschreiben die Essener als eine Gemeinschaft von Philosophen, die in der Wildernis an den Ufern des Toten Meeres lebten und sich der Kenntnis Gottes und der Liebe der Mitmenschen widmeten. " Sie sollen in Gemeinschaft Wahrheit ueben und Bescheidenheit, und Gerechtigkeit und Aufrichtigkeit, Wohltaetigkeit und Bescheidenheit soll ihnen den Weg zeigen", besagen die Richtlinien, die der Initiant erhielt.

Die Sekte hatte ihren eignen Kalender von 52 Wochen. Die vier Jahreszeiten bestanden aus dreizehn Wochen. Jedes Jahr und jede Saison begann an dem gleichen Wochentag, und da die Sonne und der Mond wurden an dem 4. Schoepfungstag eingesetzt, und darum fand jedesmal Neujahr und jeder Pesach an einem Mittwoch statt, und jeder Yom Kippur fiel auf einen Freitag.

Die Sekt verabscheute den Tempel in Jerusalem, und in ihren Augen waren die Jerusalemer Priester falsche Priester.

Da heutzutage keinerlei Zweifel mehr bestehen, dass die in Qumran lebende Sekte mit der der Essener identisch ist, die uns Philo und Josephus beschrieben haben, können wir die aus beiden Quellen stammenden Kenntnisse zusammenlegen. Es bestehen zwar in den Beschreibungen des Philo und des Josephus einige Widersprüche mit den Lehren und Tätigkeiten der Qumraner, die wir aus dem dort gefundenen Schriftrollen erlesen können, aber diese Widersprüche können leicht als durch die Bestrebungen dieser Sekten, ihre Geheimnisse keinem anzuvertrauen, bedingt erklärt werden. Philo hat niemals behauptet, dieser Sekte angehört zu haben, und Plinius, als Römer und Heide konnte niemals Mitglied gewesen sein. Josephus mag einen mehr direkten Kontakt mit den Essenern gehabt haben, aber seine Veröffentlichungen geben doch den Eindruck, dass er niemals dort eingeweiht hat sein können. Das heißt also, dass Philo, Plinius und Josephus als Aussenstehende über die Essener geschrieben haben; sie mussten daher Erklärungen und Beschreibungen bringen, die ihre Leser, uneingeweihte Menschen haben verstehen können. Die Essener stellten einen esoterischen Bruderbund dar, und das bringt mit sich, dass Aussenstehende, die über diesen Orden schrieben und ihre Methoden und Geheimnisse unmöglich alle Einzelheiten gewusst haben können. Sogar wenn wir zugeben, dass diese Schriftsteller eine gewisse esoterische Kenntnis von anderer Seite her oder aus anderen Quellen besaßen, so würden sie sich doch gehütet haben, zuviel darüber an die Öffentlichkeit zu bringen.

Archaeologische Untersuchungen stellen fest, dass die Qumran Sekte in der ersten Hälfte des zweiten vorchristlichen Jahrhunderts geblüht hat. Es ist sehr unwahrscheinlich - wie gewisse Religionshistoriker behauptet haben - dass buddhistische oder indische Einflüsse in den Lehren der Sekte nachweisbar sind. Ein persischer Einfluss mag in der essenischen Analogie sowie in dessen Dualismus erkennbar sein, aber es ist doch wohl eher der Fall gewesen, dass diese Einflüsse auf das Judentum als ein ganzes eingewirkt haben zu der Zeit als gezielt auf die Essener Sekte. Und weiterhin kann gesagt werden, dass obgleich Josephus, Nicolaus von Damaskus und andere die Qumran Sekte als "Juedische Pythagoraer" bezeichneten, ein Einfluss pythagoraeischer Ideen, Lehren und Gebräuche kaum bestanden haben kann, obgleich die hellenisierten Juden damals in diesem Gedankenkomplex wohl bewandert gewesen sein mussten.

Lasst uns noch kurz untersuchen, ob zwischen den Essenern und den Therapeuten irgendeine Ähnlichkeit, vielleicht gar eine Identität bestanden haben kann.

Diese beiden Sekten hatten Vieles gemeinsam. Erinnern wir uns doch, dass mancher Forscher den Namen der Essener nicht von dem Wort "Hasid" sondern von "Assai" ableitet - und die Übersetzung des letzteren ist Hilfkundiger.

Gleichzeitig können wir auch viele Andersartigkeiten zwischen den beiden Sekten entdecken. Die Therapeuten z.B. vermieden den Genuss von Fleisch und Wein; sie hatten alle 50 Tage ein besonderes Fest und verbrachten diesdiesem Fest vorausgehende Nacht in Fasten und Beten. Von solchen Sitten wussten die Essener nichts.

Man kann solcher Art von Unterschiedlichkeiten damit erklären, dass die Essener in Palaestina lebten und die Therapeuten in Aegypten; dass die Therapeuten eine strengere, möglicherweise mehr esoterische Untergruppe der Essener gewesen sein mögen, dass solche Sekten in grosser Zahl und in vielen Teilen im Ausgang der Antike vorhanden gewesen sein mussten, und dass wir unsere Kenntnisse über die Therapeuten ausschliesslich Philo verdanken. Es mag wohl sein, dass die Qumraner und die Therapeuten ein und dieselbe Sekte waren, eine und die gleiche Organisation darstellten, die gleichen Gebräuche und Lehren besaßen, die gleichen Zeremonien und Riten ausübten, dass sie nur als verschieden erscheinen, weil sie von verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten gesehen und beschrieben worden sind. Was immer auch der Fall sein mag, wir müssen uns darüber klar sein, dass uns nur spärliche Auskünfte übermittelt worden sind, dass viel Gerede und Vermutung hinzugefügt worden ist, und dass es höchst unwahrscheinlich ist, dass Aussenseiter überhaupt irgend etwas Substantielles über die Lehren und die Art des Zusammenlebens einer Sekte haben erfahren können, deren Mitglieder durch schreckensserregende Eidschwüre zum absoluten Schweigen und Verschweigen verpflichtet worden waren.

Die wahrscheinlichste Erklärung alles dessen was ich bisher vorgetragen habe ist wohl die, dass der Orden der Therapeuten und die Sekte der Qumraner der gleichen Organisation angehörten, u.zw. der der Essener, dass die ersteren einen fortgeschritteneren und strengeren Grad innerhalb des Ordens waren, und dass sie aus diesem Grunde von ihrer Hauptorganisation in jeder Beziehung unterstützt und (im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes) ernährt worden sind. Denn es muss dem Studenten der Therapeuten Sekte auffallen, dass diese keinerlei Mittel hatten oder erhielten oder verdienten, um sich zu erhalten. Deshalb dürfen wir wohl annehmen, dass die allgemeine Organisation der Essener den Therapeuten die Mittel zu ihrem Unterhalt zur Verfügung stellten.

Es kann fernerhin darauf hingewiesen werden, dass der Unterschied zwischen der palaestinensischen und der ägyptischen Sekte der war, dass die letztere einen höher stehenden und entwickelten Mönchsorden war. Ein Zeichen einer solchen höheren Entwicklung, eines höheren Grades war wohl auch die bereits entwickelte Tatsache, dass bei den Therapeuten Frauen nicht zugelassen waren, dass die Therapeuten ein Leben der Besinnung und des In-sich-Schauens führten, während die Mitglieder der Organisation in Palaestina regelmässige Arbeit verrichteten und mehr Verbindung mit dem täglichen Leben hatten. In Qumran war der Wein- und Fleischgenuss gestattet, während die ägyptischen Mitglieder sehr enthaltsam lebten. Aber es scheint, dass die Essener und die Therapeuten die gleichen Gebete hatten einen ähnlichen Studienplan entwickelt hatten, die gleichen oder ähnliche Psalmen und Hymnen sangen, und dass sie nach einem ähnlichen Kalender das Jahr einteilten.

Es ist zu hoffen, dass neue Entdeckungen manche unserer Fragen beantworten werden - nur um in höchster Wahrscheinlichkeit neue solche vorzubringen.

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Herman M. SELZER Coll.

An optimist ponders
about his people's survival
pt 1 (p. 1-99)

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Herm.

A N O P T I M I S T
P O N D E R S A B O U T
H I S P E O P L E ' S S U R V I V A L .

Hermann Selzer
Jerusalem 1935/36

I N D E X.

PART I

1. A few introductory remarks.....	4
2. Is mankind's survival endangered ?	35
3. Can Judaism survive ?	58
4. Will Israel survive ?	131
5. How will Israel survive ?	160
6. Will Israel be allowed to survive ?	185
7. Another look at jewish-moslem and israeli-palestinian relationships..	206
8. Is the Diaspora a factor in Israel's survival ?	229
9. Will Aliyah contribute to Israel's survival ?	245
10. How great is the danger of islamic extremism ?	264
11. Is Israel eroded and endangered from within ?	280
12. Will the hostile world cease to threaten Israel ?	289
13. Is there hope on the arab front ?	295
14. Does the Israeli's character ensure Israel's survival ?	310
15. Why is religion in all this not a helpful factor ?	321

PART II.

16. Will God and not man ultimately decide our survival ?	338
17. Does religion not play a role in our survival ?	366
18. How I interpret the religions' history. Another excursus.....	380
19. Some of what until now I did not know about Judaism.....	401
20. Another chapter about Judaism aforming.....	446
21. A process of adapting, reinterpreting and reforming.....	453
22. Can only an ethical Judaism survive ?	467
23. A short excursus into other religions	477
24. What should be the conclusions I have reached ?	517
25. And so.....?	560

Hermann Marcus Selzer
Jerusalem 1994/1995

PART ONE

If you find in my essay metaphors wrongly applied; or images not properly fitting in; or parables not very suited in one context or other, please let this not stop you on the way. Try to apply some goodwill - even charity - before you reject out of hand what you find unacceptable or even objectionable. If you are unable or unwilling to do so, better leave off and close the MSS. But it would be a pity were you to do so, for I have so very much to say; and I would have continued to say all I have to say, undisturbed by your remarks, questions or arguments. I only ask you to try and understand what I have to say; to appreciate at least my effort to find the proper words for what I have to say. Perhaps you will then be induced to ponder about what I have said.

First a few introductory remarks.

I too am surprised to find myself sitting again in front of my Word-processor, intent on writing an essay which, I must expect, will take up a great part of my remaining days; and which, I must suppose, will fill up a great number of pages. But there is a to me acceptable sounding reason why I feel thus driven: it is the need to put into some kind of order the thoughts which have of late been crowding in on me.

In actual fact this step I am taking is not only due to the urge to satisfy my curiosity; nor have I set out on this possibly preposterous task only with the intention to construct a frame for the set of still vague conclusions I have reached. There is another reason, perhaps the main one, why I have undertaken this adventure: because I want to build a stage on which I can freely, and without doubting myself, and without raising a storm of arguments in me, defend to myself the respectability of the material I am going to adduce; where I can defend the uncommon approach I am taking; where I can defend the courageous conclusions I am going to reach. And, finally, where I can have an ambience in which I can hope to find the welcome place, the fitting arrangement, and the proper soil for my Weltanschauung.

I consider it one of the advantages I have gained on reaching my age - in addition to the impact all the variegated good, and the many unpleasant experiences had on my life - that, fortunately, I do not anymore need to identify with the foibles of my world; and that I am no more obliged to adjust my judgements, beliefs and hopes to my environment's self-deprecating level. And - I may possibly illusion myself in this respect - even if I had not gained this more advanced insight; nor had I not been allowed to take my actual seat in the ivory tower, I would still not be willing; nor would I feel inclined, to associate with; or to become a partner of; or to be a participant in, what is labelled today

as an "advanced culture". But not rarely, I have to confess, have I still to fight off the pessimism - and, alas, often also the hopelessness - which overcome me at times when, under the light of my newly acquired awareness, I observe the general deterioration of morals reported from all over the world; when I read about mankind's everywhere apparent slide into an uncontrollable self-affliction; when I watch the disharmony - and what I view more and more as a dangerous ethical ineptitude - in my immediate surrounding; and when I have to judge the goings-on among the Jews in the Diaspora as a trend to self-destruction.

I am very clear within myself, that at this moment - that is to say, when setting out on this essay - I do not know where my ideas are going to lead me; into which direction my thoughts are going to take me; and what form my conclusions will have in the end. But because I am responsible to nobody but myself, I do not feel under the obligation either to strictly categorize the material I am about to use; nor to filter the thoughts flooding in; nor to warily censor the facts I am scrutinizing at the moment; nor to carefully avoid straying off the subject I shall have from time to time under discussion. But I know also, I will have to allow unreservedly room to the associations which are sure to come from time to time pushing themselves forward in trickles or in huge waves; and I know also quite well, I will encourage whatever my reflections and ideas maybe, to flow unrestrictedly along with the current of my associative thoughts.

All these introductory pages, as well as the following ones, will not be addressed to anybody in particular. I am talking only to myself. I do not try to convince anybody. I am not interested to persuade or impress others with my ideas. I only try to make things clear to myself. I only want to put some kind of order into my thoughts. I am going to find out, whether what I think, believe and deduct rests on logical ground. I am going to find out, whether what I am going to bring forth, can somehow be made to fit into the slots of what biology teaches; of what history reports; of what historians compose; of what theologians believe; of what scientists maintain; and of what simple, straightforward, plain logic permits.

Somewhere I have once read the warning of some respected person - regretfully I do not recall his name - that furrowing in the past is a rather useless enterprise, which at best - especially if the explorer makes excessively use of suppositions; and gives too much latitude to

his imagination - can bring along mostly only misleading results. But, to my mind, this attitude is wrong. One should never allow oneself to be kept back by an even well-meaning advice to ".....leave off this kind of work; what is past is past". Past history - be it of the universe, of the planet earth, of mankind - is like unearthing a treasure; and which to explore in its finest details is mostly a unique pleasure. No limits are placed on one's exploratory dive and drive into the past; and one's sense of freedom and pleasure is enhanced by one's being entitled to make use of a "may be" here and an "if so" there. And while one is expected to communicate one's ideas to others in the field, one is also entitled to defend one's conclusions to these others; to share one's ideas and discoveries for all others' better understanding of what is and of what was.

This is in no way intended to be a scientific paper. What I am trying to construct in this essay will only be an attempt at producing a simply worded outline of certain basic concepts I have formed for myself. I know quite well, that to be respectable and acceptable this composition would at the minimum have to be provided with an appropriate number of footnotes; and would have to be followed by many pages of bibliography. However, I do not think I will or can go further than what I intend to do. For were I to take the risk of reaching beyond what I have set as my limits, I would surely fail; because I do not possess the required far wider knowledge of history; and I would have to draw from a much greater store of all possible facts than I have available.

This problem does in any case not arise, for I have no intention to research the issues I have raised at a greater depth and on a scientific level. Nor am I interested in going on to collect still more of the material which would be required, were I intent on drawing a wider compass; or on delving into a further, a much more intensive and extended, study of the philosophies prevalent in the past, and of those in vogue now; or on involving myself in the theologies which had prevailed during the various stages of human evolution; or on acquiring the factual knowledge which had been available to mankind in the various periods of its history.

On the other hand, however, I will readily concede, that all the knowledge I have acquired by my studies of old and modern world histories - that is with respect to their anthropological, spiritual and ethical ramifications - have greatly incensed my curiosity; but that it would in no case suffice to make me embark with safety and without embarrassment

on a wider ranging and more ambitious program. Even in case my ambition should at one or the other stage have run away with me; and in case I should have attempted such a vaster sweep, it would certainly have been beyond the time I still have at my disposal. This recognition of my limitations may in addition - according to Friedrich Schlegel's own experience - possibly turn out to be a blessing by saving me from an unwarranted disappointment. "You would be shocked", he said on one occasion, "were you one day really to understand the world as you so ardently wish".

I am not a philosopher; and I do not wish to give the impression that I am even trying to indulge in philosophizing. Nor will I enter what is called - rightly or wrongly - the field of "the specific jewish philosophy". This statement I make not out of any humility, but because I have now, nor did I ever have, any such inclination. I am in the lucky position not to have to mind making this statement, because I would only follow the example of the Grandmaster of jewish thought, Maimonides, who denied being a philosopher; and I would be in this respect in the company also of Buber and Rosenzweig, who requested "not to be called philosophers indulging in jewish philosophy".

At best I may pretend to view the questions I am raising with the spectacles of a philosophizing Jew.

(I sincerely hope, that only my children, and possibly also their children, will one day find the leisure to read these pages. But I also hope they will not make any further use of them. For - as I have made it clear on a preceding page already - I am primarily writing this essay for my own satisfaction only; and - I am not hiding this - also in the daring hope, that whatever I had to say might one day be of benefit to my progeny. After all: whoever writes, be it theses, novels or whatever else, does so to persuade first of all only himself; and at best, and in second line, those near to him.)

For a long time I have been pondering the complex of questions and problems I am about to raise in the following pages. I have not discussed them with wider educated and better informed men or women. I would not dare doing so, as I do not possess the solid and detailed

knowledge this would require; nor am I - as I have already stated - a well-versed or even a half-trained theologian or philosopher.

In part I have not searched for an opportunity to discuss my ideas with my peers, because I have difficulty to imagine what these better educated and better endowed persons might think or feel about what I think and feel. And in addition I cannot - better said I have not the patience - to dress up my own thoughts and feelings into the kind of general terms which would make them fit the intellectual level, and would suit the mind-range, of others. Let me cite as an explanation - and an excuse, if you want - what Plato asked (in *Thaetetus*): "Are you quite sure that the several colours appear to any animal whatsoever as they appear to you.....or that anything appears the same to you as it does to another man?"

I would have no less also difficulty to adjust myself - and to react - to what I might not understand in the complexities better educated professors and better versed rabbis like to dress their talk, even if the matter is presented to me by a kind priest, a wisened philosopher or a well-informed teacher.

I shall start out on my essay with airing my thoughts about a problem, which in these days is agitating not only scientists and politicians, theologians and environists, leaders and planners, but which causes disquiet and worry also among the well-read and educated general public: what is going to happen to this world of ours?

This question concerns all of us today. This issue has to be faced by each one of us. The urgency to find an answer to this problem is well recognized by the experts, who approach and discuss it with a scientifically objective state of mind, while in the world at large - especially under the shadow of the forthcoming ending of the second millennium - it is acquiring an ever greater emotional tinge; is getting an increasingly more metaphysical shading; is given a marked prophetic undertone; is immersed into the radius of religious light; is becoming the main ingredient in the stew of predictions and warnings emanating from the steadily growing number of cults.

Their predictions and warnings may amuse most us, but what is going on is not a laughing matter; nor is it one of the recurring popular fads to be shrugged off. To those involved and affected it is not a fantasy. Although the expected world-wide catastrophe, supposed to

bring about the end of humanity, is most unlikely to happen in connection with the artificially created counting system of the calendar in use all over the world - which was started not at Jesus' birth, but when he was 4-5 years old - the fear, that the end of our civilization may approach; or that all humanity will be wiped out; or that the end of the world may be near, has for quite different, but real and substantial reasons, never been more justified than today.

I recognize the emotional background of the increasingly noticed apprehension among vast sectors of the people; and I acknowledge some degree of validity in the arguments on which the threat to the survival of our world is made to rest; but, whereas these apprehensions and emotions are mostly one-sidedly argued and insufficiently, if at all, documented, I do not view them as all-inclusively acceptable; nor do I consider their arguments sufficiently supported. And whereas I am fully convinced, that at a certain point in time our world has been brought into being by a Creator, it would be unacceptable to maintain; and it would be wrong to postulate and illogical to think, that this planet will die exclusively due to man's mismanagement or mischief; and that our world will suddenly cease to exist without humanity's - ultimately and finally over-flowing - spiritual or ethical failings being the ultimate contributory cause.

In other words: all the worries of this generation's humankind about the insufferable man-created pollution of the atmosphere; and all the fearful prognostications about the exhaustion of the planet's natural resources, appear not to take in consideration the possibility, that the Creator of this planet "may also have a say in this matter".

Science has made tremendous progress in every sphere touched upon by man. The scientists, never ceasing their endeavours to find answers to our existential problems, take every care, that their answers, flawed as so many of these are, appear based on factual grounds. But scientists are not all-knowing. They are only human beings. They can prove that the Universe exists; and they can tell us, how it functions. But when they try to let us know how the Universe started, they do so, not based on absolute facts, but from within the realm of guesswork.

(In 1929 Edwin Hubble made the important discovery, that the Universe is constantly expanding. From this he concluded, that the Universe must have originated in the wake of a tremendous explosion, a big bang, which

he designed the "Big Bang". From the thin threads of this discovery scientists had tried to spin a picture. They tell us, that the Universe started from a "black hole of infinite mass and zero volume". When the Big Bang erupted, space and time began. Electrons, neutrons, positrons, photons burst out, collided with each other, and in the course of the first 700 000 light years readied the matter from which the stars are formed. Ten billion years later, we are told, life appeared on earth. And for good measure they tell us also, that our Universe is expected to "die" in about 100 billion years.

It is a great pity, that we shall never know what was and what happened before this big bang. Hubble's calculations showed, that this event must have happened about 7-20 billion years ago. However, the calculations of other, more recent experts have reduced the age of the Universe to 7.3 billion years "only". And I read recently that other very respected astronomers have - by measuring the ratio of velocity/ distance for remote receding galaxies ("Hubble's Constant") - come to a different value: they calculated that our Universe is 9-14 billion years old. And lately the scientists have, with the help of a special ultraviolet telescope, found traces of nine billion years old helium gas, which, they decided, could only have been left from the gases - made up of 90% hydrogen and 10% helium - which had been formed by the violent explosion of the Big Bang.

And still another set of scientists has discovered that the Universe contains apparently more galaxies than the astronomers had realized; and they warn that this fact could have a major effect on the mass of the Universe, which in turn could have an adverse effect on its fate.)

Weighing the miracle of creation, I have noticed, is no more as simple and easy as it had been for Immanuel Kant, who saw in the starry skies above his head, and the moral law within himself the true wonders of Creation. But on the other hand it seems to me, that the "Big Bang" theory - the Universe having been filled with compressed hot gases - can be fitted into Creation the Bible describes.

(Stephen Hawkins - whose cosmology appears to dominate the scientific view today - sees cosmology as a branch of physics; but, he thinks, cosmologically organisms are of least importance. He sees the cosmos as "dumb matter expanding and contracting.....in an insensate exercise in quantum mechanics and non-euclidian mathematics" (E.Dobb). Since Einstein scientists have, in pursuance of the quantum factor, been looking for proof that - gravity excepted - three of the fundamental factors in nature (electro-magnetism, the strong and the weak nuclear forces) are manifestations of a more fundamental force. Such a unified theory would govern everyththing in the Universe. I mention this, as such a force is supposed to have been active at the creation of the Universe.)

I have given space to these variations, theories and discoveries, as I see in them more than anything an indication of our lacking in concrete knowledge.

What we are told about the "birth of the universe", i.e. that it started with the famous "Big Bang", may somehow or other be made to fit into the range of our limited knowledge; but we have to realize also, that all these theories, explanations and working models are based on an 'ergo hoc propter hoc' kind of proof. Of course, the scientists cannot be blamed that they fight strenuously against the answer the monotheistic religions make available. "Faith", Nelson Glueck pointed out, "is a personal matter and not subject to scientific enquiry".

And even if all these theories offered us - along with endless intricate calculations - were indeed based on facts and truths, nobody has ever been able to tell us - nor surely nobody ever will - what had originally caused that bang; who had made the "bang" to go off; who and what has timed that primordial "Bang"; who and what has controlled the force and the extension of the "bang" ?

No scientist will ever have the knowledge to answer the question, who has created the Universe ? We shall never know whether it was a chance phenomen. For us to know - or at least to make us believe we are made to know - whether the creation of the Universe was due to a series of miraculous chance occurrences; or whether it had been the intentional intervention of a Creator; or why the Universe exists, one

has to enter the domain of metaphysics. Or the realm of religion. At best we have to calculate, that the range of contribution made by a Creator - and this means in fondo to know the Absolute Truth - cannot be discovered with the help of physics or any other scientific means; that there might be physical laws which are outside of what we can observe, sense and perceive with our five senses.

The New Age School has another approach. It teaches that reality is that which you think it is. Did God create the World because only by being visible is that which is believed to exist made to exist? Said Stephen Hawkins: "Discovering why the Universe exists will be equivalent to knowing the mind of God".

To gain an understanding of Creation, we must approach from outside the scientific area. We should be aware that the scientists have no - in every respect full or sufficient - knowledge of the origin, of the purpose, of the fate of man and the Universe, of man in the Universe. There is always an unknown quotient, an "x" and an "y" in each of their hypotheses; and these unknowns they have introduced into their formula as a concession of their ultimate ignorance. Philosophy may supply the solution of the "y"; but the formula checks out only if transcendence provides the solution of the last unknown "x". And even then - we should never forget - we shall never know the full truth.

We human beings are full of conceit. We believe ourselves the most essential part of the world; but in nature's economy we are only one of the immense number of living species here on earth. We believe ourselves the most important quotient in nature's calculations; but nature treats us not differently from any other living beings. And, vice versa, our influence on nature is minimal at best. We have, for instance, not the slightest influence on our planet's course; not even on the weather. Even though we have the free will to act; even though nothing which happens in our life time is predetermined - except for the inevitability of our death - a limit is set to what we can ever hope to achieve.

And furthermore - I do not mind being accused of fantasizing; I do not even mind being labeled a fool - I have the firm inner conviction, that the role the Jews have to play; and that the place Israel occupies here on earth within the scheme of things, have to be

calculated as a quotient in any formula about the state of the world; have to be fed into any calculus about the end of our civilization.

These are the thoughts and reflections which have occupied me for a long time. These are the ideas and cogitations which will make up the program of this presentation. These will be the ideas I want to air in the coming pages. My thought about, my view of, my attitude to this complex of questions and problems will occupy me for the near future. I shall try to align the dangers mankind in general has to face. I shall try to outline the difficulties which confront Judaism and Jewry today. I am going to weigh the question, whether Israel the country, the nation, the state, the homeland has fulfilled its duty. Whether it has in truth justifies its rebirth.

I shall try to fit all I see around me, into the frame of what represents my personal Weltanschauung. I shall try to harmonize what I may discover with my notion of mankind's purpose of existence. I shall try to align, whatever I may conclude, with my conception of Israel's specific past and present task and duty.

I want to start my presentation with a statement, which is based on what is to me personally the absolute truth: that the universe has been created by a Supreme Being; that the Creator had a purpose in doing so; that life has been made to sprout on our planet Earth with a special aim; that a most diversified flora and fauna have been made to grow for a definite reason; that the species of homo sapiens has been made to develop with a specific intent.

This is to me quintessential truth. This is Truth in the sense of the Sikhs' greeting: "Sar Sri Akal", Truth is eternal.

The heated discussions about the concept of "Creationism" - the divine origin of all living beings as defined in the Bible - versus Darwin's theory - of life on earth as the outcome of a developmental process - are going on. They will most likely not cease so soon. It is a fact, that none of these two opposing sides can offer the proof which would be needed to disarm the other side. This is a fact, even though it has to be freely conceded, that the philogenetic development, which even a layman can observe in the flora and fauna on earth, gives Darwinism an advantage.

(Darwin's Theory of Evolution found enthusiastic acceptance, and caused many reverberations, during the time of extreme anti-religious Enlightenment. But later on he himself expressed doubt about his theories. He had "made many blunders", he stated, "... and had not been able to wriggle out of them, as there are so many aspects of man which cannot be explained by random selection and spontaneous generation". Had he lived today and learned that DNA research indicates evolution not to have been a gradual but a sudden process, his doubts would have been still more increased.)

But the facts all of us can easily detect; and all the discoveries the scientist diligently offer in explanation of this phase or that of the facts of life, do not answer the eternally emerging question of the "how" and the "why"; that is, how and why the Creation had at all been set in motion, be it by a Creator, be it by a spontaneous process. The controversial problem separating the two camps - the Creationists and the Evolutionists - is compounded by the fact, that the biblical story of Adam and Eve has to be viewed - like so much else in Scriptures - as a metaphoric explanation of the definite fact of a creational and developmental process into which Darwin's idea can without much of an effort easily be fitted. Instead of laughing about the "Six Days of Creation" or any other biblical story, the Darwinists could successfully use it to make their's comprehensible to the average people. It is worth mentioning that Chaim Abramowitz in his Bible translation explains the passage Genesis 2:3 (asher bara Elohim la'assoth) - in which for the last word no proper explanation nor any suitable translation has ever been found - as "God ceased from all work which he created **for evolution**". Shien Levin follows suit and translates the entire passage to mean ".....which he created for evolution".

A priori we have to start from the working thesis, that all we see in nature; that all we know of the developmental processes in nature, has a logical basis. Nature works in precise - and, yes, also logical - ways. I feel, therefore, entitled to deduce that, once the Creation had been in place, there had to have been a guidance, a direction, a purpose. Why do I think so? I do not know. I cannot know what the Creator's purpose may have been; what the aim, what the reason and what the intent of the Creation were and are. Nobody knows. To know, would mean I can look into God's mind. Nobody can do this. And by the way and in parenthesis: I consider it fortunate, that nobody knows - and that most probably nobody will ever know. Otherwise mankind might cease to be curious. And mankind would in consequence stagnate; could lose all initiative to progress further; might give up its search for the

truth; will have no interest to mature further.

But I claim for myself the same right to form my own ideas; and to construct the answers I think fitting, as those who - in their search for an understanding of what has to be accepted on faith; and for the knowledge for which there is no absolutely factual basis - though they have no more solid material or given facts available than I, construct their so often changing hypotheses; and form their so often temporarily valid theories.

But for me one thing is definite and clear: there had undoubtedly to have been a purpose behind the entire process of the Creation. And I can only see such a purpose in the gradual, step-like building up of species of living beings, one range of which had to develop into huminoid beings which finally culminated into homo sapiens. Why was this so? For what purpose? For what reason? Certainly not so that they culminate into tennis stars, nuclear researchers, Wallstreet tycoons or Members of the Knesset. Not even into talmudic sages. All these variations of the human typus are only side-products in humanity's development. As the aim and purpose, as the target and acme of the developmental process I see the eventual morally perfected and ethically completed human being.

And - to my mind and on the basis of its election and appointment - it follows logically, that the Jewish People are, by the moral laws in their trust, by the ethical guidelines to their behaviour and conduct, to act as the prototype showing the way to this perfection.

If this explanation is not convincing enough, I am willing to add as a further, or even as the basic reason for the original divine Creation, the explanation of the rabbinical Sages of old, that God has created man in fulfillment of his wish for companionship. I will for good measure add also my own contribution: that God - in his wish to see an ideal society of ethically perfect beings finally grow up; who will live in harmony with each other; and will take care of all the other creations in existence - has been experimenting with man.

Mankind, in the course of its evolution, has been given every opportunity to grow onto an ever higher level of mental and physical evolution; has been taught to steadily gain an ever wider range of knowledge; has been helped to acquire ever greater technical capabilities.

But there is also a "hitch", a touchstone, a test. Man has reached technical and intellectual levels which have made him feel god-like. And which have made him deny that a God exists.

Nobody of us will maintain, that anything even approximately like an ideal society has so far grown up. And in my pessimism - and in view of the way which mankind is taking - I fear we have not only no justified expectation, that such a perfect society will ever come to pass, but have also to fear that man by gaining ever greater scientific acquisitions may threaten his own very existence. May be, that these advances and acquisitions have been made available to him for just such a purpose: a test of his moral steadfastness, of his ethical caliber.

In plain words: I sincerely fear, that mankind is racing towards its own destruction.

Of course, the God who has created our complex world, could equally well have at once created an ethically perfected society; but such an act - which would not have allowed for mankind's programmed process of evolution; that is would have come to be without the gradual process by which such an ethical society would develop on its own and by its own free will - would disqualify the purpose and value of what I see as a divine experiment.

This experiment, in my view, may be supposed to finally lead to the hoped-for outcome; but every stage and chapter in the process - leading to this predetermined end-result - are not predetermined, i.e. have not only not been outlined in any detail, but have not even been ordained in detail. It is left to man how he proceeds in this experiment to this for his survival predetermined goal. Man has been granted the free will to chose his own way; and thereby also to determine his own fate. He has been well provided with the proper qualifications to achieve the desired positive end-result; but he has to search it and achieve it by his own efforts; and he has to reach it in the course of an ongoing process of trial and error.

This explanation suffices me as a working hypothesis.

What will happen to mankind if it fails ? What is going to happen now that mankind may actually be on the verge of failing ? What will be the consequence ? Will a natural disaster come over us by which life on our entire planet will become extinguished ? Or will our immediate world be preserved and - the Creator having acknowledged to himself that his experiment has failed - only humankind will be made to disappear down the sink of history ? Is the rise and disappearance of the human race only one in a series of such failures ? Will the Creator start on a new "experiment" by selecting another species on our earth, to be set on a developmental ascent into intelligent and

reasoning beings entrusted with the qualifications to create in due course, by themselves for themselves, an ethical society ? Will these newly elevated specimen - having been supplied with the proper bonded strains of DNA; having been provided with the ideal cluster of genes; and having been entrusted in turn with the souls and their karma the humans had harboured - be entrusted with all the necessary intellectual tools, all the moral laws and commandments mankind too had been granted, on which the newly appointed species will have to rest the ethical society it will be expected to build ?

What I have outlined just now may sound like a theme more suited as material for a science fiction film or a futuristic novel, than as a topic for a serious discussion. But these questions I raise are to my mind no less unbelievable, even fantastic, than the evolution man has made so far; than the avalanche of scientific advances we enjoy to this day. They are surely no more overwhelming than the astronomical explorations; than the electronic achievements; than the biological advances, which man has been able to register in the course of last two generations alone !

There comes now to my mind the question: is this only a theoretical matter to be kicked around by theologians and scientists ? Or is this an eventuality which will threaten us at some point in the not too far away future ? Can it be, that this is not the first instance such a change-over has occurred ? That this is not the first time when such a divine experiment has been abandoned ? Is it not possible that, before man was set on his developmental path, another kind of living society had already existed; which had failed; which had disappeared; and which had been replaced by homo sapiens ?

I may sound weird, but am not the only one to put forward this kind of hypothetical questions. They have been raised in nearly every generation past. This question must also have agitated the mind of those who introduced into the Bible the legend of "...the sons of God, looking for the daughters of men, saw they were pleasing, so they married as many as they chose.....the Nephilim were on the earth at that time..." The Flood brought that society to an end. The humans of that time had, apparently, proved unfit to survive, and Noah was made to start a new series of human generations. Can I say, that something like this must - sorry, may - have truly happened, because the memory of a terrible, all-destroying flood disaster has remained in the subconscious realm

of mankind since; and because it belonged to the folklore of the peoples nearly everywhere in the ancient world ?

Can I even dare to say, that the mythological depiction of such a happening is made to explain a deeper truth ? Mind you: I am talking of an episode which might have taken place many millions of years before that apparently well documented catastrophical event, when a huge comet is supposed to have destroyed a large part of the earth; which must have caused huge floods; and which is said to have ended the age of the dinosaurs. And may I even go further back, that there had been in existence organized societies, well adjusted living beings, even before the dinosaurs "took over" ?

(Geologists tell us, that the history of our planet indicates five episodes during which life became nearly extinct. The last one, the one I just now mentioned, happened - according to the geologists' calculations - about 66 million years ago, when the dinosaurs were extinguished by what is supposed to have been a large meteorite; which catastrophe was followed by huge volcanic eruptions. And most likely also by huge floods. Was this "The Flood" ? A larger catastrophe is said to have occurred 245 million years ago; the cause of which is thought to have been a sudden cooling of the earth climate due to the shifting of the polar land masses.

But each time some biological life must have been left over, for new life did grow up again. It has been estimated, that it took possibly ten million years each time for vegetation and fauna to regrow. Things may not be as favourable in the wake should another such catastrophe hit our planet today. There are among today's clear-thinking and facts-facing scientists many who fear, that in case a similar catastrophe should happen now, the possibility of a regrowth of various forms of life does not exist anymore, as whatever there could be of life sustaining space and matter is today being destroyed; and a possibility for their renewal does not anymore exist.)

I will go even further ! The early human society made to develop on our earth, had been entrusted with clearly outlined regulations and well defined ethical rules, which were simple in structure and easy

to follow. The Bible tells us, that after many efforts and trials; that after many disappointments and disillusionments with the pre-Flood populace, God had decided to destroy the entire then existing populated world; and to start thereafter a new one with Noah and his family as the nucleus. "For in seven days I will make it rain upon the earth for forty day and forty nights; and I will blot out from the earth all existence that I created".

After the Flood the new post-Noachic world began. During the forty days in the Ark he and his family had passed the test which proved their trustworthyness and their sense of duty: they looked after, cared for and fed the large mass of animals Ark harboured. This may have been the final test; after this Noah was entrusted - notwithstanding the weaknesses he revealed - with the task to rebuild a new humankind.

This new human race, comments Martin Buber, was not set on its way with a blessing as the first world, but with a curse. I cannot believe that Noah's new world was initiated by what I perceive as an unimaginably immoral act. There must be a misunderstanding ! This would have been an unethical start of a new world. I would instead say, that the new world began with a warning and a firmly outlined program. I would say, that Noah was given precise guidelines at the time he was entrusted with the task of starting mankind anew.

In the course of the human race's further evolution, the Children of Israel were chosen to receive and to carry forward the moral heritage with which Noah had been entrusted, and which he was ordered to transmit to mankind.

I have come to believe that, while Noah and his descendants had not been made to carry on with this task; and while Israel's inheritance and election have never been canceled, Judaism's existence and survival depend on whether, and how well, it fulfills this task. I will go further and state my firm belief, that Israel has been created - and continues to exist - to be the showcase in which the Jewish People can exhibit the virtues deriving from the ethical commands imposed on it; that Judaism is now at the stage, where in and through Israel it can testify to the successful performance of the task its appointment demands. And I believe further, that mankind's existence depends on Judaism's fulfilling its duty and on Israel acting as the arena.

This, in rather short outlines, is the program on which I intend to elaborate in the following pages.

However, having at last reached the point from which I am going to start, I have become aware, that much of what I am going to write - or better said, when I am going to describe the conclusions I have reached - cannot be understood without the reader having at least to some minimal extent been made familiar with the ideas and perceptions I have evolved for my own better understanding of my world and of myself; and which conceptions play a godfather-role in what I am about to write. Much of what I intend to elaborate on, can hardly be understood without my introducing an eventual reader to at least an outline of what I think is the sense of our existence; of what I perceive is the significance of our life; of what I take to be the meaning of death; and of what is my perception of man's soul. Most of it may even appear confused and incomprehensible.

I think it, therefore, advisable to add here a short outline of the concepts and the conceptions which make up my Weltanschauung.

What I am going to say now in this part of the introductory chapter, is a resumé of my thoughts and beliefs which I have already in greater detail explained in some of my previous writings.

I believe we are endowed with a soul. I do not know whether that which we call our soul has been directly transmitted to us by our parents; or whether it has been supplied to us by God "on an individual basis", as is explained in most monotheistic religions. Nobody knows; but many are the answers from which we can chose one which suits us.

But this should not make us envy the Atheist because is the least bothered by such a question. Such a person denies there is a soul. He seeks the truth not somewhere in the heavens but within himself. This aspect of his "non-belief" I can accept. For even the Atheist - I firmly believe - who seriously seeks the truth within himself, will ultimately discover God within himself. Or will be aware of something I call "God" and for which he will search for a label from among the definitions in his dictionary.

(However it is impossible for me to comprehend the mind of an educated man among my acquaintances who boasted of being an atheist; and believed himself an intellectual by repeating to me the words he had read somewhere: "...our consciousness is nothing more than the chemical and electrical discharges in our brain; ...and when our brain

dies, our consciousness ceases..... The place where you were born is nothingness; and there we shall return when we die". He is the type of nihilist who would not even benefit from the assurance which is provided by the Buddhist philosophy of nothingness.)

Can there be any doubt, that our rationally functioning world; that our logically proceeding nature, could have come into existence - and can continue to exist - without there having been a definite purpose ? And without there being a clear-cut aim ? If this is so, how can man's existence not also have a purpose ? How can it be possible, that a man dies and all of him disappears without there being something of value left ? Without something of that to survive which made him function ? Something which is called "the soul" ?

I do not know wherefrom the soul originates; nor do I know where its final destination may be. Nobody knows. It is a fact, as the 4th century monk Aurelius Augustus lamented, that it is our own Self which we are unable to understand. The Cabbala's explanation, that souls are divine sparks which once upon a time had fallen down onto the earth, is as good as any.

Since man has been able to think, he has never ceased to ponder about his soul. I might say, that the discussion about man's soul has occupied the philosophers more than any other subject. And, accordingly, the definitions and descriptions are manifold.

(Plato taught that the soul is distinct from the body; that it is often associated with the body's failings and mistakes; that it is not dissoluble; that it can move of its own. Pythagoras taught, that the soul is attuned to the body's form; that it is not independent from the body. Aristotle taught, that the soul is only a function in animals and plants; that the soul is not a material substance; that it needs the harbour of a material element to exist; that its function is one of feeding and reproduction; that in addition it has in man also a rational activity; that it disappears and dissolves along with the body. He further taught, that man's "active part" of the intellect, which comes from the outside, is immortal and will persist. Maimonides taught, that man's soul can be damaged and turn unhealthy; that a healthy soul prompts the individual to perform

acts which are good, pleasant and beautiful; while a diseased soul leads to the performance of evil, harmful and ugly deeds.

In orthodox belief, and in jewish folklore in general, the soul stays with the body inside the grave. Hassidim will assemble at the graveside of a relative, of a teacher, of a great man a year after the individual's death, to recite psalms in order to "elevate his soul a bit". And in case of need they pray at the Tzadik's grave that he may intervene for them with God.

I am certain in myself, that we carry a soul within us; that the soul carries karman-like memories of past experiences, and also a load of defects; that the purpose of our life is to give the soul a chance to free itself from a load of what you may call the sins and other deficiencies it has accumulated in past incarnations, so that finally and ultimately an ethically pure humankind populates this earth. I believe that the souls of men are indestructable and eternal; and that they will finally and ultimately animate the individuals who will make up the divinely planned ethical society on this planet.

It cannot be otherwise than that the souls survives the body's death. The soul is reincarnated, I believe, for the next stage in its karmic destiny, which is in the main a further stage in its purification process. It can hardly be supposed, that the choice of body in which its next incarnation takes place, is a pure coincidence. In its search for an environment, where it can next fulfill its karman, the soul is directed - by what I visualize is an inbuilt computer-like guiding system with an to a human mind unimaginable number of bytes - to its next stage of its incarnation into a human, whose body it enters at the moment of birth. This comparison may sound rather forced; but let us realize that the human-made Cray computer - which in this context must appear as a very "primitive and simple" instrument, can perform 16 billion calculations in a second.

The Scriptures appear to have three names for what we understand as the soul: **Nefesh, Ruach and Neshama**. I have searched throught the jewish-theological and -philosophical literature available to me, but have not found a, to me at least, sufficiently satisfying explanation, why three names are necessary for one and the same subject. As far

as I know, this would be an unusual feature of the Scriptures; that is to say, such a multiple choice of appellations is not offered, as far as I know, for any other subject or concept. This would also be illogical in addition - and the Tnach is anything but illogical. The Rabbis have, of course, provided what they consider suitable explanations. These are reflected in the Siddur, the prayerbook, which allows us, in the passage "My God ! the Neshama you gave me.....", to be recited in the morning, to pinpoint at least the origin of the Neshama. And also another prayer gives us a lead: "The God who preserves the Neshama, has in his hands the Nefesh of all living things, and the Ruach of every human being".

(This is, by the way, one of the many instances, where the Siddur is helpful in clearing up interpretative problems and difficulties raised by obscure passages in the Scriptures; and in the case under discussion we are granted the latitude to form our own arrangement regarding all three biblical aspects of the soul.)

I think, as I have mentioned on some other occasion, that the early teachers in Judaism had hinted at a solution to this puzzle, which permits me to form my own acceptable classification: Nefesh comes to the ovum the moment it is fertilized; Ruach begins its function as soon as the first movements and other signs of life appear in the embryo; and Neshama, the soul proper, finally enters the infant at the moment of its birth. But I have no objection, if the designations for these three stages are switched around.

How far, and how specifically, does this complex systematization apply to the Jewish soul ?, I may be asked. What happens to the Neshama of a gentile after he converts to Judaism ? I have also here my own answer ready, should the question imply, whether with the moment of conversion to Judaism an individual's DNA and genes - that is, according to my conception, his Nefesh and Ruach - turn Jewish. Of course, this does not happen. Nothing changes either in the genes nor in the DNA of a convert to Judaism (nor in what one may call the specific biological features of a Jew converting to another religion); but by his absorbing - in the course and in the aftermath of the conversion - Judaism's culture and essence; by following the ethical commands of Judaism; and in general by living as a Jew and with Jews, the Convert to Judaism becomes like the branch grafted onto a tree: nourished by the sap of the tree, the graft will soon have become identical with this tree. In the truest sense it has become a branch of this tree. And the leaves and the fruits born by this grafted branch acquire in due course the

same characteristics and the very qualities as those of the entire tree. It will in its turn also transmit the same characteristics and qualities as the host tree. And whereas by converting to Judaism he has taken upon himself the duties and the task of a Jew - that is to say henceforth his perceiving and living his Jewishness will be the way he is going to be tested - it depends on his conduct and behaviour as a Jew how much he has become a Jew.

(At the end of this chapter - and, I suppose, also here and there I shall have some more to say about the soul of man; man's relationship with this soul; man's duty towards his soul.)

One may raise the question, whether my conclusions apply to all kinds of converts; whether they apply even to those converts who are "racially different", as for instance the "Black Hebrews", a sect of Afro-Americans - a large number of whom have illegally immigrated into Israel, where they are now tolerated, but hardly welcome - who claim to descend from one of the original tribes of Israel. There is hardly a legal, theological or administrative institution in Israel which is willing to recognize their genealogical claims. They must consider themselves lucky, because not only political and ethical considerations prevent their expulsion, but also the fact, that they had destroyed their american passports the moment they had landed in Israel. Yet, were it in my power, I would grant them full access to - and where possible integration into - the Jewish Nation. I would accept them as members of the jewish people because to all appearances they obey all the Tnach's 613 demands and commands; and because they live in concordance with the specific precepts and concepts of Judaism.

A similar controversy surrounds now the "Bnei Menashe", as an obscure tribe somewhere in the North-East of India calls itself. They appear to have certain customs which can be interpreted as being similar to jewish ones. It has nowhere been stated, for how long this tribe has followed these customs; whether since "times immemorial" as it claims, or since it has been taught these vague rituals and customs by some missionary some time in the last century or so. But these "Bnei Menashe Indians" have gained now many supporters in Israel and abroad. A number of their families - mostly made up of young people - have already been "imported" to Israel, where they have shown themselves eager to learn; where they have proved themselves easily adaptable; and where they are now even considered an asset.

From the side of the israeli Jews of every cultural and religious

spectrum in the country, these racially distinct "New Hebrews" are, so far at least, not received with open arms. I should better say, they are not received at all. These Jews, whether Ashkenazis or Sephardim, think that such racially widely differentiated individuals cannot fit into the Jewish nation. However, their attitude is as wrong as are their, mostly heatedly presented, arguments. Racial admixtures from outside have since the beginning of Jewish peoplehood been a feature in the make up of the Jewish Nation. This should become quite evident to whoever takes a stroll through the streets of Jerusalem: he will encounter the "Ashkenazi Caucasians", the "Sephardi Arabians", the many shades of black Ethiopians, Yemenites etc.

And furthermore, it has to be pointed out, Jewish thought, Jewish history and Jewish society have traditionally always welcomed converts.

(The Tnach brings a number of instances where converts were not only not discriminated against, but had been granted legal and social rights equal to those enjoyed by all Jews. Tamar and Ruth were not Jewish-born. Nowhere is mention made that they had converted to Judaism even. One of them mothered a son of Judah, the son of Patriarch Jacob; and the other a son of Boaz. Both these men were progenitors of King David, from whose family the Messiah is expected to originate. The ultra-orthodox Jews - who usually so very strictly follow the Halacha's categorical ruling that only a matrilineal descent is valid for the recognition of one's Jewishness; and who will deny this recognition to the offspring of a marriage where only the father is a Jew - surprisingly agree without demurring, that King David and the eventual Messiah are halachically fully acceptable. One may give as reason for the Ultra-Orthodox Jews' waving whatever possible objection, because all this happened a very long time ago. But this argument loses every validity in face of the judgement, passed by a Rabbinical Court in 1994, which annulled a 12-year old marriage of an Israeli couple, because a progenitor of one of them - a Cohen - had some 2500 years ago married a divorcee. No, this is not a misprint; this "misgenation" happened two thousand five hundred years ago ! And whereas a Cohen, a member of the priestly class, is not permitted to marry a divorcee, henceforth all this first couple's descendants of the last two and a half millennia are for ever to be treated as "mamzerim"; that is they are bastards, who cannot for ever and ever marry a Jew. However, not all the rabbis are as strict: some of them rule that only the first ten generations of a mamzer are prevented from marrying a Jew.)

I will go even further and say, that the addition of converts to the Jewish People - as King David's family tree quite clearly proves - has been of definite benefit to the Jewish society; especially so, whenever the Jewish People had passed through a catastrophic time; even whenever it had only been involved in a crisis.

(You may have noticed that I never use the words "Jewish race". I have purposefully avoided doing so; for I consider it definitely wrong to describe Jews - as is so often the case - as being of "the Jewish race". There is no Jewish race. The Jewish People has, since its formation into a people; has since its appointment as a nation, represented an admixture of an unending number of races, be it due to marriage, or conversion, or conquest; and not rarely also by rape. And let me for good measure quote also Lucia Cavallo-Sforza, a geneticist: "The more we learn about humankind's genetic differences, the more we see that they have almost nothing to do with what we call race".

There are also the voices of those - regretfully mostly heard from Jews - who deny the Jewish People a Jewish nationality. This sounds incomprehensible to me. Those who do so are as no less wrong as those who deny a Jewish attitude, a Jewish psychology, a Jewish instinct, a Jewish tradition, a Jewish history.)

Although I have already explained - and I believe to a sufficient degree - my views about Ruach and Nefesh, I cannot avoid the impression, that I have not completed painting the picture of my views about Neshama, the soul of man; the immortal part of man. I think it important, that I give a fuller definition of my views. Because the better understanding of my views in this regard will also provide the key to the understanding of the kind of spectacles I use to view my world, my people and myself.

(The perception of the soul as a metaphysical, non-physical, immortal entity is known to most religions. This principle was - as far as I could find out - first mentioned in the sixth century BCE's Orphic Cult. It was thereafter taught by Pythagoras, and after him by Plato, as the Psyche, as the essential conscious Self, pre-existing and surviving the body. "As the world soul is immortal, so is the human soul immortal", said Plato. Aristotle, on the other hand maintained, that it is the intellect which is immortal and will survive. In Hinduism it is Atman, the supreme element in existence. In Buddhism it is samsara, the principle of survival. In Persia's Zoroastrianism the surviving soul consists of two parts: Urvan, the soul proper, and Daena, the conscience. In Japan's Ancestor Worship it is acknowledged that the soul exists survives after death. In China it is Yin and Yang. The Qu'ran, however, does not provide us with a clear definition of Islam's view about the human soul. The Qu'ran has maintained some of the biblical concept:

it speaks of NAFS - as the equivalent of Psyche - which can be improved, and by proper conduct in life, can bring peace; and it speaks of RUH - as the equivalent of Nous - the spiritual factor which differentiates man from animal. Fundamentally to the Moslem Ruh is Allah; also for the Sufis it is the centre of being. In Christianity, as in Judaism, the soul is the essential immortal self. However, contrary to original Jewish teaching, it is not pre-existent; it survives the body, however, to be ultimately raised along with the body. Aquinas expressed his view about the soul in his statement "Anima mia non est ego" = my soul is not me.)

Everyone of the philosophers who has put pen to paper, has made his contribution. The relative list of philosophical contributions is long; I shall, therefore, content myself with mentioning only a few. Descartes taught that soul and body are one; while Hermann Cohen wrote "...as the Jewish People never dies, so also the individual soul of the Jew never dies". C.G. Jung's contribution was, that "...the spirit is above intellect", since it embraces the latter and includes human sensations as well. It is "the guiding principle of life that strives towards the superhuman, shining heights". To the philosophers of our own generation the "Self" has become the modern substitute for soul. And, finally, these are the words spoken shortly before his death by Y. Leibowith, the orthodox iconoclastic Jew: "...a person is not buried; only his body is buried".

Likewise we are presented with a plethora of ideas about the origin of the soul; of the end station which the soul will reach in due course; where the soul rests when not "engaged". I have in addition a personal question: have we the right to interfere with the "program" the soul has to follow? A murderer does this. Does also a suicide? Is the latter a failing? A final failing in a karmic test? Will such a death, like every other death, be nothing but an interruption inviting the continuation or the repetition of the test, and not also a failed test?

(It is interesting, that Judaism appears to have faced this question. In Jewish law a person who is mentally disturbed; who is even only temporarily depressed; or who is simply unable to cope with his problems, is not regarded a suicide. This individual, such a suicide, is entitled to all the respect accorded to a deceased person. Only the individual who kills himself out of cynical disregard for life, is called a suicide, with all this entails. But how can such an attitude to life be proved after death?)

It is my belief, that our soul is reincarnated again and again; that it in every successive incarnation is offered opportunities to get freed of the negatives it carries; that it is reincarnated to get cleansed of the blemishes and defects it has acquired in the course of past incarnations, including the last one; that it will return to its divine source as soon as it has been purged of all the "impurities".

Poets know better than philosophers to define and express their belief in reincarnation. "Why", asked Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "should it be impossible for an individual to have appeared more than once in this world? Why is it impossible for me to have once before, or more than once, taken here all those steps which expose man to merely temporary punishments and rewards, but are in the end leading to my perfection? Why should I not return as often as I am capable of receiving all knowledge, of achieving new capabilities?" Lessing was more generous than Goethe, who reserved the return of the soul for another cycle of life only to those who are of a higher intellectual range - as himself, for instance.

(Judaism has never explicitly accepted the belief in the soul's reincarnation. Saadia and Albo called it a "pagan nonsense", while Abarbanel praised it as evidence of "pagan wisdom". It is important that I mention, that Reincarnation should not be mixed up with the Jewish teaching of a resurrection of the soul - along with the body - when the Messiah makes his appearance. Talmudic rabbis decreed even, that whoever does not believe in a future Resurrection has no right to survive in the next world.)

It is my belief, that the individual, who thinks he can be satisfied with his achievements in life; who thinks he has reached all what life has to offer; who thinks he has been blessed, because all his wishes have been fulfilled, has not understood what goes on in life; what is the true purpose of his life. He has lost his way; and he will miss the opportunities made available to him to cleanse his *karman*. It is my belief, that the rich man, who thinks he has achieved the acme in his life because he has become rich, has mismanaged his life. I think the many who feel fortune has smiled on them, because they are successful in life, have failed the most important test. I think the poor who complain about their and their dependants' chronic hunger, do not realize that they are living out their *karman*. I think the miserable ones who lament their occasional or unending misfortunes,

are wrong, because they do not view their miseries as testing means. They all, the rich and the fortunate, the poor and the miserable ones are misled by the ancient sages who have decided, that rewards and punishments are passed out during one's lifetime; that merits earned are reflected in the benefits their children inherit; and who are never warned, that the effects of their lives will become evident at a far later stage, sometime after their death; sometime in a newly incarnated existence. Also the biblical threat and its rabbinical interpretations, that whatever the deeds of the parents - whether ethical or unethical - will have repercussions on their children, is wrong, must be wrong, because it is an unjust and unethical principle.

In truth and reality - of course, in what I personally perceive as truth and reality - these rich and poor, these unfortunate and fortunate ones, are tested and retested; and whatever their benefits or punishments may be, will be become manifest in the course of the repeated reincarnations of their soul, their Self.

After the soul is reincarnated - thus is the "picture" I have painted for my better understanding - the actions and reactions of the person harbouring the soul, in face of the vicissitudes and dangers, the temptations and satisfactions of life, will be the opportunity to repeat the tests it has failed in the last and other past lives. All life-long the individual will be tested; his actions directed - but not controlled - by his spirituality, his moral self, by his karman. His soul, his Neshama, will register his deeds and will be affected, be it positively or negatively. In other words: throughout the individual's entire lifetime - whatever he or she does and omits to do - will again serve, and will again be valued, as tests of his or her moral value; will reflect and react on his or her soul's ethical status. When a test proves failure, a further load will be added on the soul's karman. When an individual's action passes the test, a debit on his karman will be erased, and the load on his soul will be eased.

The kind and nature of the tests and their evaluations - depend on the individual's reactions to the opportunities and the deprivations he or she encounters; to his or her direct and indirect reactions to his or her fellow creatures and other living beings; how and whether he or she suppresses or gives way to his or her self-centred instincts. The evaluation of the test results, I imagine - it cannot be otherwise because otherwise it would not be just and right - will be adjusted and attuned to the situations and times into which the soul will have

been reincarnated, be it in a chinese coolie or a Wall Street financier; be it a danish sailor or a german professor; be it in a Jew or in a Mormon.

Rightly I may be asked, what I understand as or with a test ? What kind of encounters would I in general categorize as a test ? What have I in my own life recognized and evaluated as tests ? I can in a few words explain the meaning of what I said just now: it is my attitude to next man. It is the way I behave in an encounter with any fellow-man, whether a friend or a stranger, whether a social equal or a dependent. It is my way of acting in a situation whatsoever. It is any decision whatsoever I make.

And the question quite naturally follows: how do I know whether I have passed the test ? I may judge - I should have better said, I may be judged to have past the test - if without even being conscious of my incessantly being exposed to the testing, I will react with a sense of satisfaction should I have behaved humanely and pleasantly in certain adverse circumstances; should I experience sincere regret whenever I did not comport myself honestly and with restraint in an unpleasant situation; should I react with shame whenever I could not control myself in a hostile encounter; and should I react with sorrow, whenever I have not behaved as I would have wanted my opponents to have reacted towards me in any similar circumstance.

In the course of our life; and on the basis of our experiences, we construct for ourselves concepts and precepts, outlooks and attitudes which will remain with us for ever as our self-contained principles. It is these principles which are tested; and when they pass the tests - even when they are not proved and supported by further experiences - we feel ourselves lifted to a higher level of being and understanding.

I do not mind imagining, that somehow all such occasions - whether pleasant or unpleasant - reflect similar ones with which I have had to deal in former incarnations; and that I had most likely failed these in that life.

If we live long enough - but on deeper reflection I would say even if we do not - we experience in some way or other in our own life or in our own person or in our children what we should have done but have missed to do; what we should have appreciated but have shrugged off; what we should have avoided but have not cared to avoid. And should we ever have such an experience - nevermind if in a positive

or a negative sense - we should make the effort to relate it to a similar or an identical one in our past. In our own conscious past. To give an example: I wonder if the wife of Ex-President Reagan will remember - Regan himself will be most likely beyond remembering - now that her husband is a patient of Alzheimer's Disease, that during his reign as President of the United States he cut off most government subsidies for elderly helpless people; and in particular all the funds for Alzheimer research? Will Reagan's wife - and in this instance the ex-President possibly too, now surrounded by a large nursing staff paid for from government funds - be consciously realizing the sufferings of the less favoured Alzheimer patients in the US? Will the Reagans be aware, that they had been tested and have failed the test?

(The Reagans boasted they were faithful Bible-reading Christians. Was Martin Buber wrong when he said, that whoever reads the Bible with an open mind cannot avoid to realize, that what happened once continues to happen? Does Buber with these words want to express his personal conviction, that man is tested with a repetition of events in the hope, that he will have learned, if not to correct his faults and failings, at least to become cognizant of them?)

When we recite in our prayerbooks the endless recording of our people's suffering; or when we read in the documentation by Jewish historians and theologians of the antisemitic outrages the Jews had to face in the past - and are today still facing most everywhere - it is explained to us, that the sufferings and the persecutions have come about "because of our sins". I can only interpret this as an allround explanation which states, that the sufferings and persecutions the Jews have had to suffer throughout history, have to be seen as indications that the Jews have each time and in every generation failed the tests which they individually, or as a community, had been made to face.

The way we react determines our human value which is tested in every situation and circumstance. In this sense I interpret Maimonides' all encompassing advice: "If one is irascible, he has to control himself so that even if he is attacked or eviled, he will not feel offended". And let us also keep in mind, that every individual is responsible for what he does. And so is every community and society, every people and nation.

But let us no less be clear in our minds, that nothing of what

happens arounds; that nothing of what we encounter; that nothing of what happens to us directly and personally, is predetermined. Nothing can - and should ever - be shrugged off as "our fate". Each one of us is individually responsible, not for what happens, but how we react to what happens. I could not better the words I read in chapter Three of The Sayings of the Fathers: "Everything in the world is foreseen, yet free will is granted; the world is ruled with divine goodness, yet all is according to the amount of a person's work".

Having reached this point in my reasoning I realize, that I have not shown the right self-discipline: I have allowed my mind to wander off. But before I take up the theme of my essay, I want first to complete what I said in my excursus about the human soul.

Yes, I maintain that there is no specifically jewish soul, nor a black man's soul, nor an indian woman's soul. A soul has no such specific structure or genre. The soul is not "specialized". Our jewish heritage - its features, its characteristics and their survival - are located in our genes and their DNA chains. Through these the Jewish People's specificity is preserved; by these is its survival continued. It is in them that the Nefesh and Ruach are specifically jewish.

The Neshama is not specific. The Neshama, the soul - responsible for the moral control, if not conduct, of the body it inhabits - adjusts to whatever body it inhabits. The Neshama, the soul, is responsible to its own karman.

The principle of karman; of the human soul's survival after death; of its transmigration from one human being after another until it has been cleared of its "impurities", is the sine qua non of my belief system.

Hinduism is based on the karman principle, but every ethical religion - that means most every religion - has in its nucleus the karman principle; but the meaning of karman is easiest studied in Hinduism. To comprehend what Hinduism sees as karman begins with the understanding of the inevitability of cause and effect: of the principle that every action has a consequence. Every good action has a good consequence; and every bad action has a bad consequence. However, the consequences of the consequences do not always become immediately apparent - or in our lifetime even - but in the life we enter after our rebirth. In Jainism, as also in Buddhism, rebirth can come about into an animal, a tree or a stone should the karman have been too much stained during its last incarnation.

(Post-mortals existence does not mean immortality to the Hindu, but a continued miserable existence. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam the concept of an end-station in a blissful environment gives the migration of the soul a less pessimistic aspect. Immortality is Nirvana in Buddhism; it is Amata, a state of deathlessness. Or it means the sojourn in a paradise-like environment. It is a state which can be achieved also during one's lifetime on reaching the status of a Bhodisattva. Or it can be achieved through a life lived in compassion, grace and spiritual power.)

Judaism does not recognize reincarnation, nor transmigration, as I have already mentioned. But it preaches the resurrection of the soul along with its body at the time designed "The End of the Days". Judaism's original conception was, that the soul is stored after death, along with its shadowy body, in Sheol, a kind of a sub-terranean cave. This long accepted, rather very depressing image underwent a drastic change only at a relatively late stage: at the time of the Maccabees, sometime in the last 2-3 centuries BCE. The concept of the soul's survival, of its immortality, became then an acceptable conception; however, it was not applied to the individual, only to the Jewish People in its entirety. But it has to be conceded, that Judaism - with the exception of Kabbala and Hassidism - continues to this day to be rather ambivalent when it comes to reincarnation and transmigration.

The question comes to me just now, whether the Shoah is not related to the Jewish People's karman; or whether it is bound to affect the Jewish People's karman. For also a people has its own karman. Until now I had difficulty to accept this idea, but I am about to change my mind. But it is still my opinion, that the Shoah is not so much the outcome of the Jewish People's being tested, as of the testing process itself which is decisive for the Jewish future. In addition I perceive the significance of the Shoah also as one of the rare instances where a divine intervention has definitely occurred.

If in this connection again the question is asked: "Where was God when Jews died in Auschwitz ? Why was he not in Auschwitz ?", I shall answer also in this context: He was there.

And finally I want conclusively to add: if there is a purpose in whatever exists and lives, the human soul must have been endowed with insight and understanding; and these qualities will grow, advance and reach perfection in a process of maturation, which in the infinite

course of further incarnations will be completed.

In addition to what I have just now hinted, I want express more definitely my belief that, apart from the original divine plan's final end-destination, there is neither a predestination nor a predetermination in man's fate; that man has the free will to determine the path he takes and the life he leads. And that the same applies to a people and to a nation as a whole. But I do believe, that there are occasions when God does interfere; when he pushes a nation or an individual into a different direction, away from a dangerous situation or threatening development.

And I no less firmly believe, that the Jewish People is under God's constant supervision; that it is this divine interference; and that it is this evidence of the divine guidance, which we register as the markstones in the history of the Jewish People.

I expect that in the following pages and chapters I shall here and there have to take up one or other of the "beliefs" I have expressed above.

2.

Is mankind's survival endangered ?

Everywhere, and from every possible angle, do I nowadays hear and read the question discussed, whether mankind has a chance to survive; how it can overcome the threats to its survival; and in what shape and form it will at best survive. I am not going to review all the problems and issues which are raised by environmentalists and hygienists; neither shall I detail the solutions proposed by politicians and economists; nor shall I report all the explanations offered by philosophers and theologians. Any half-way educated person must be familiar with these issues by now; for they have by now been thoroughly elaborated upon in a number of learned publications; they are nearly every day, in one form or other, amply discussed in the printed and electronic media; and they have been made into the main platforms of political parties.

In view of the fact that for one reason or the other, the opinions of most - if not all - the scientists dealing with these problems and related side issues are found wanting; and in view of the fact that the solutions offered by most of the official or self-appointed guardians of public welfare, are not very realistic; and in view of the plethora of opinions and solution pervading this field, I do not feel out of place to involve myself too in this problem.

How and what indeed is my and your immediate future ? Has mankind a chance to survive even for the next hundred years ? These questions - and all they imply - may sound exaggerated and theatrical; but they are in my opinion consider fully justified. One of the issues I want to air first is the one which worries me greatly: it is the question, whether the scientists in the fields of biological and bacteriological, of nuclear and electronic research, have opened a Pandora Box from which the ingredients for the final destruction of mankind have started pouring out. Are no limits set to mankind's achievements in the sciences and in technology on its race into a dangerous in which mankind's survival is threatened ? Is there no limit set to the estoishing technological

and scientific developments we witness ? Are these not like centrifugal forces which hurl us into a future which we cannot control ?

I can abstract the issue on which I have touched now in a short sentence: the causes and the culprits of the dangers we face is primarily man himself; he has to bear responsibility for any eventual end of our civilization; he will be guilty for any, all mankind finally destroying disaster.

Never more than now has the world's environment been unfriendly to mankind. This is especially the case in the developed, the so-called civilized western world. Violence - not only physical violence but also moral and economic violence in every possible shape - has grown in recent times. "Oppressive language does more than represent violence. It is violence", said Toni Morrison in the 1993 acceptance speech of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The western democracies harbour in their midst more destructive elements than ever before; and they are losing control over this threat. All of a sudden their confidence in the vaunted values of democracy and its moral controls appears to have become impaired. With dread they become aware, that their cultural heritage - a most important asset under these circumstances - has lost its impact; that the former social solidity of the community has been weakened. The western world is more than ever plagued by a rising criminality.

The influence of the church and the compactness of the family have been eroded. Sexual activity among teenagers follows more the individual's instincts than any socially instituted and culturally directed guidelines. Venereal diseases in 13-years-olds are met with in the hospitals. The rate of illegitimacy is increasing. It is not rare to encounter 16-years-olds with their third illegitimate child. In the middle 'nineties 28% of all births in the US - where reliable statistics are regularly published - occurred in unmarried women; the number was 11% in 1970.

Does all this mean, that morality is weakened ? That ethical values have been eroded at its very roots ? The US is a nation, in which since its establishment, in which the people's religiosity is a dominant feature. And whereas religiosity presupposes a moral basis, these recent developments are indeed a cause for worry.

The large number of teenage pregnancies are in addition bound to place an ever greater economic burden on the immediate family and

and on the welfare institutions of the state. In this respect those western nations, who are most in need of stability; who are economically overburdened; and who are morally weakened, are far more endangered than the US.

(It is worth making the point, that disheartening as these conditions are, they are today hardly known in the developed or developing nations of Asia. And I think it important also to point out, that similar social and other changes indicative of a lowering of the morality, had been registered in the Roman Empire before its ultimate collapse.)

We are living in a world faced by tremendous uncertainties. Until not very long ago individuals, communities and nations could project a future stake; could plan ahead; could dream of an ideal to reach; could work towards an achievable economic level. What kind of future can mankind, nations, governments project and hope for today? Are those right who predict, that the 21st century will turn into one of social turmoil, of political and economic deficits, and of a religious vacuum? We hear no more, as in the past, the theologians preach, and philosophers speak of the ideal end goal free of inequality, sorrow, crime and needs man should always have before his eyes. They do not even point anymore to the signboards leading into that direction.

Their new vagueness is due to a new uncertainty, which in turn is not so much due to the frightening images and fearful expectations which people all over the world associate with the approaching end of our millennium, but to the state of hopelessness which, since quite a long time already, has overcome the intellectual and spiritual guides of our society. Their predictions and depictions, their judgements and threats - the outpouring of the vivid, often diseased minds of modern-age pseudo-prophets - are due to the trend, to put the blame on the tremendous events which are expected to affect our world at the end of this century. In reality they are only a cover, under which they try to hide the true causes of our world's malaise.

I am deeply bothered by the thought, whether divine judgment might not conclude, that the start - let me say another start - of a totally new human society; organized along plain and simply formulated lines; and ruled by plain and simply presented ethical laws, would not solve all the complex problems with which mankind has to wrestle in these days? Whether what goes on is not an indication that such a danger is ahead of us? That what we observe is not in all likelihood a warning to this effect?

I am taken by the thought, that man has been granted to develop all his formerly unheard of technical powers; that this generation has been blessed with such a sudden burst in knowledge, for one main purpose only: so that he can prove his moral strength; so that he is aware of his ethical duties.

Is this the cause for the advancements the Scientists have made in the unreveling of the DNA's secrets, of the genetic material, of the life factor which is found in the cells of every living creation past and present ? Is this the basis for the scientists urge to change the environment in which we live, with their research in field of "GMO", of the "genetically modified organisms" ? Are the scientific researches advancing us not only to ever greater, but also to ever more fearsome levels of knowledge ? Who controls the scientists ? Who checks on their work ? There is no human instance to control them; only the laws of ethics could possibly control them. Only limits of morality could place a check on them. For there is no country yet nor any government; there exists yet no law nor any institution, which would control them. No precautions are yet prescribed to ensure, that from the genetists' interference in the nuclear structures of man, animal or plant no danger to nature and mankind will result. There are no safeguards yet, that these manipulative researches of the scientists will not eventually destroy all life on this planet.

But mankind's existance is not secured; its survival is not assured, even if all possible precautions are instituted; and were all the necessary specific laws promulgated, for we can never exclude the, possibility, that there might be a rogue state, a ruthless ruler, a mad scientist who will not feel the slightest compunction to abuse the genetic manipulations of human life for some nefarious purposes of their own.

(The dangers evolving from the genetists' unchecked genetic researches involve next to the medical, legal, social and ethical implications, also the problem of the eventual ruin of all that mankind has achieved until now; and no less also mankind's very survival. The scientists involved intend to check on the pathology carried by all and every gene, be it the human ones or those of other species. And even those of viruses and bacteria. The results of these researches may have many unforeseen consequences. Very many people, for instance, who on the basis of the DNA studies are informed, that they may expect to develop cancer or insanity or other devastating ailments; or that they will transmit such defects to their progeny, will surely be induced not to marry or not to produce children. Or they may decide to end their lives before they reach the danger zone where such diseases or defects develop. Alas, such

effects of the Gene Project will only affect the educated and intelligent strata of mankind, and not the vast primitive masses who produce the largest number of children.)

It can be argued, on the other hand, that were not all these researches associated with all these possible dangers, one could even welcome the Human Genome Project of the genetists as a possible mean to counter the dangers associated with the overpopulation the planet faces.

Our century has registered a number of great discoveries in every field of the sciences. This steady stream of new scientific discoveries could be of the greatest benefit to mankind, were it not that - by their being nearly always also indiscriminately applied to the perfecting of modern warfare - they threaten the very survival of our civilization. Our own civilization is threatened today by the relative cheapness, and the easy availability, of biological weapons against which there is no protection. A far greater danger - and a far greater menace to our civilization - is the development of nuclear fission in general, and in particular the atom bomb, respectively the hydrogen bomb. The menace is bound to increase year by year. The spread of knowledge in the field of fission - whatever beneficial side-effect it may also have - which is inherent in the nuclear armament itself; and the danger of nuclear terrorism, which is an unavoidable outcome, are threats growing larger almost every day. There cannot be any doubt, that nuclear power, in whatever form, may turn out to be an ever growing, uncontrollable danger to the survival of our world. There are not even sufficient or proper means available to control the malfunction of a bomb or a reactor. The event which might bring our existence to an end - and which is most feared by the general public and by scientists alike - is a sudden escape, be it in the course of a war; or following an accident in a reactor, of an uncontrolled nuclear radiation of massive dimension, causing a chain-reaction. The danger is compounded by the fact, that the governments - and even less the public - are as a rule not informed of every instance of a nuclear accident; and that the alarm is not raised - at least not in sufficient time - when enormous masses of nuclear material have escaped.

The threat hangs from now on over our lives, that with the steady increase in the number of nuclear installationm everywhere in the world, inevitably many instances will occur in future, when dangerous nuclear material penetrates the atmosphere.

More nuclear material is produced nowadays than is needed. The experts have not found a safe way so far, how to destroy - or otherwise to render harmless - the abundant stocks of plutonium and other nuclear materials. They have not even found a safe solution for the disposal of the ever growing huge stocks of nuclear and other toxic waste which are accumulating in every part of the globe.

I consider it an immense tragedy for mankind that - had commonsense prevailed and had mankind's morality and attitudes been properly aligned - the discovery of the atomic power, and the methods to harness it, could have been the starting point of a new era bringing the greatest benefits to the entire world. Alas this is by far not the case. On the contrary: the nuclear power has turned into a threat to mankind's survival.

In addition to the great advances in technology and in the sciences man has made in the last 5000 years of organized life on this planet, he has also made great strides in the realms of culture and art; but spiritually he has not advanced far beyond the range of what, once upon a time, had motivated his primitive ancestors. Modern mankind has not advanced beyond the attitudes and the care, primitive man had for his fellowman's interests and wellbeing.

Are modern man's reactions to its environment; man's ways of life; man's ethical comportment, in all respects possibly a divine method to test man's worthiness to survive ?

(The warnings and threats continuously uttered by environmentalists - in Israel their appeal loses much of its urgency because it is a monopoly which has been usurped, and a weapon which is being used, by ambitious politicians - against the abuse of nature by the excessive use of chemicals, have in the main had the effect to terrify the population; and have not been effective to gain its collaboration.)

There is a progressing deterioration of the global environment. Weather conditions have greatly changed in the last twenty years. The "greenhouse effect" - the general warming of the globe - is due to an alarming increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Ice shelves are breaking up in the Antarctica. The winds blow warmer there. If only 1/10th of that continental ice melts, sea level will rise by 10-30 feet. Another manmade change in the atmosphere is the reduction of the ozone layer; due to this a greater than tolerable amount of ultra-

violet radiation penetrates from outer space. In consequence of these disturbances in the atmospheric order, climacteric changes have developed with extreme weather conditions, crop failures and outbreaks of often uncontrollable epidemics.

By all this neglect and carelessness nature's balance system is in danger of being so much overwhelmed; and its control system so widely destroyed, that soon our planet may reach the stage, where life may not be anymore sustainable.

(But pollution, overpopulation, exhaustion of the national resources are equally to be feared as a possible cause for the final, though less sudden extinction of the human race. The world's population is estimated at 5.6 billion; it is expected to reach 6.3 billion in the year 2000, and 8.5 billion within the next 25 years. But we can count on this "moderate increase" only, if the people of the underdeveloped countries can be induced to restrict their population's unrestricted growth with the help of contraceptives. Should this educational campaign fail, the population on this planet will be the year 2025 have increased to 12.5 billion instead of the projected 8.5 billion. Where is the food for all these billions to come from? Food is already getting scarce. It is already difficult to feed today's 5.6 billion.)

The agricultural yields have already now reached their maximum. And this problem will steadily increase with the rapidly increasing global population. Food consumption is even today in developing countries beyond the limits of what their land can possibly supply. Every year the world's farms must feed an additional 90 million people, while 24 billion tons of topsoil and trillions of gallons of groundwater have disappeared forever.)

It may not even take a generation: by 2025, if the current trends continue, some 30% of the lands' productivity will have been eliminated. By that time it will have become impossible to produce the quantities of food needed to sustain all humankind, not only due to the shortages in food supply, but also due to the continued severe mal-distribution already apparent today. And many of those living today will watch today's scarcity turn into famines.

(Famines in the less developed, poorer countries have become a fact of life. Due to overfishing the seas are getting depopulated of fish. Today's fish catches are insufficient to provide for the vast masses of people who depend of this source of food. The scarcity of supply is to a great measure due to the use of the huge nets which are dragged for miles over the seabed. In addition a 130 000 sqkm region of the Pacific Ocean in the Antarctic has - due a rise in the waters' temperature - lost 80% of its zooplankton, the microscopic organism near the base of the fish population's food-chain. And furthermore, to understand why the former vast sources

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Overpopulation is in part also caused by today's longer life expectancy. To some degree this extension is registered in every part of the world. In 1900, for instance, average life expectancy was 47 years in the western countries; and only 3% of the population lived past 65. In the USA of the year 1920 men lived on an average 54.6 years and women 53.6. In 1990 the life expectancy for men was 71.8 and for women 78.8; and 80% of all deaths occurred after the age of 65. This may justly be called a medical and hygienic victory. But this does not apply only to the West; similar statistics are provided by all the developed countries, including those of the "Third World".

The high birthrate registered in many parts of the world - most often in the poorest of all the countries - contributes massively to the dangerous level of today's over-population in the world. As an example I am going to cite China. It is only fractionally bigger than the US but has four times its population.

(China's population is nearly 1.3 billion, and is steadily growing. Food production presents a problem. It will become more so in the near future, as much land is lost to soil erosion and desertification; and because much land is used for industrialization and urbanization;

and because the agricultural sector is more and more neglected.

With only 0.008 hectares of arable land per head it is well well below the world average of 0.07 hectares per person. But also many other countries do not reach this minimum. Worse off still are Kenya, Bangladesh, Jordan, Somalia and Vietnam. Also Israel, with 0.06 belongs to this dis- advantaged group.

What solution will China find when it has to start importing food ?)

The worrisome situation arising from all this - and the search of ways how to control this situation - has since quite some time agitated the minds of all the leading experts. Thomas Malthus has already in the last century warned that the world population will outgrow the world food supply. Recently this has been the theme of a World Conference in Cairo-Egypt. The undoubtedly most efficient method proposed for limiting the yearly increase of the world population - that is, making abortion available whenever indicated or even requested - has been fought by the Vatican and the traditional islamic countries.

(Scientists tell us, that it will be possible to develop an agriculture which produces higher yields without the use of excessive chemicals and the resulting pollution of soil and water; that it will be possible to breed plants that make better use of the sun's energy; that it will not be impossible to perfect a long-acting, safe, cheap and reversible contraceptive with which to control the over-population. But not only the access to a safe, easy-to-use birth-control technology must be available everywhere to support the global effort to halt the population growth in a humane way; and to start a controlled decline of the birthrate, but also a more sustained education of the people; and making them aware of their duty to mankind. This is not specifically true for the poor and overpopulated countries, but also for the rich and overpopulated countries, because these latter are more than other countries the biggest overconsumers of the day.

A well-organized neo-malthusian movement has joined the world-wide campaign of those who warn against the earth's overpopulation. It has set out on a sustained campaign, pointing out that without a control of, and care for, the resources indispensable for human existence - food, pure water, clean air, and even sufficient housing - the now available resources will soon be overstrained; and will within a short time become insufficient, to sustain human life on earth. Should such a situation develop - the Neo-Malthusians point especially to this angle of the problem - the starving masses might become desperate and

uncontrollable; and this in turn will accelerate the danger to mankind's survival by the additional threat of a total suppression of all the democratic and moral values without which our civilization cannot survive. And because the affluent and less affected countries will be flooded by the starving masses pouring in from the countries of the Third and Fourth Worlds; and because the invaded countries will have to react in ways which should be totally unacceptable to our moral and democratic values, all the inherited and acquired, all the accumulated and cherished culture and civilization will forever be destroyed.

The World Health Organization's Centre of Disease Control and Prevention warns not only that "...poverty and ecological changes are contributing as much as the global worsening of the weather and the vulnerability of the population affected; but that our life system is threatened by the exhaustion of the stored carbons and other living resources". Every year rain-forests the size of Costa Rica are destroyed. At least a quarter of the earth's surface has been made useless for agriculture.

But also unsolved problems of health and hygiene are threats to our survival. A city of one million inhabitants uses on average every day approximately 625 000 tonnes of water and 9 500 tonnes of fuel; produces 950 tonnes of poisonous substances which pollute the air; produces 500 000 tonnes of effluents.

The World Health Organization warns, that a majority of children in the Third World dies from diseases caused by contaminated water; that every year 15 million children die of hunger; and that infectious diseases are emerging globally at an accelerated rate. New viruses are routinely discovered. Aids, Ebola and other virus diseases have withstood all efforts to eradicate them. And no cure or control of these infections is in sight. These diseases have the potentiality to endanger mankind's survival.

Also another worrisome factor has emerged in the field of disease control. A considerable number among the nowadays available antibiotics - the development of which had only two generations ago been proclaimed one of the great achievements in medicine - have to a large degree lost most, if not all, of their effectiveness.

(Is it only ironic, that on the one hand our clever scientists make preparations to land on the Mars, while on the other hand we have been invaded by diseases for

which no remedy is available ? That such a number of infectious diseases have become resistant to antibiotics due to the genetic mutations the microbes are undergoing, and we have no remedy available ?)

Is along with the microbial threat; along with the strangulating over-population, also a subconscious death wish leading mankind do its destruction ? I find this expressed in many a form. It is, for instance, an established fact that cigarette smoking and other tobacco uses are dangerous to the health; thousands of cigarette smokers die every month. But some 15% of the people - men, women and also children - continue to smoke cigarettes; and the cigarette factories continue to produce cigarettes. The Tobacco Industry spends 11 million dollar **every day** on propagandizing its wares.

The same comments apply to the abuse of all kinds of drugs. "A spectre is hunting. It is the spectre of illegal drugs", warned Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary. The seriousness of the drug problem was brought home to me when I read, that also in Switzerland - the very country which I have always associated with clear-headedness and self-discipline - drug abuse has become a social problem; that e.g. in Zuerich the "Needle Park", a disused railway siding in the centre of the town, is one of the rendez-vous places of a growing number of local drug addicts.

No less significant also for mankind's stability - and its eventual survival - is the increasing damage to the morale of the people. This applies to all the peoples of the world, and to the western countries in particular, where the lack of work; where the generally insufficiently available work places; where the appreciable lowering of income to a level which is insufficient to feed the people affected, are flatteing the morale and the morality of the people.

(Free trade arrangements; the availability of masses of cheap labour in Asia; and many other factors associated therewith, liberate the western industries from the need to modernize their factories; or to spend money on developing new methods of production. Unskilled jobs are being abolished. This inevitably results in the reduncancy of a large percentage of the local labour force, mainly that made up of the younger age group. These youths can hardly expect ever to enter the labour force again, even after they are re-trained. It surely will be impossible to maintain a safe and stable society, when the labour of a large and growing segment of the population is no more needed.)

In the West, no less also in the US, more and more citizens slide into the pit of poverty. The ratio of income of the richest segment to the poorest is 11 in the US, is 7 in Canada, is 7 in Britain, is 5.5 in Germany. (I have no statistics available about Israel). The cities have to curtail their welfare budget because the tax revenues have dropped below the red line. Many a city is bankrupt. Many a government proceeds to cut all welfare expenses in the vain hope, to avoid thereby an ever greater deficit. The demand for soup kitchens and food stamps is increasing.

Today, at the turn of this century, great changes have occurred in the social structure of the world. These are indeed a cause for worry.

* The class of blue collar workers had risen very quickly in the beginning of the 20th century; and it has as quickly fallen again at the end of this same century. There are not enough jobs - and there will never be again - for the untrained and non-specialized workman. These dissatisfied, desperate, hungry men represent a source of great danger to the stability of the society and no less also to mankind in general.

46

* A large part of the uneducated workforce had once been made up of household helpers. In times not so long past the families who had less than three household helpers, were classified as "lower middle class". This class of household-workers has more or less disappeared, most likely for ever.

* In the beginning of the century the major part of the population had been engaged in farming; now only 1-2% are true farmers; and their farming is mainly a computerized business.

* In the world of jobs and work one cannot any longer count on landing - much less on keeping or being prevented from losing - a good job, because of social standing, parental influence, or membership in the right club.

* It is perceived as a warning - and if not as also a threat, at least as a matter of reflection - that immigrants from East Asia are so successful due to their self-discipline and their traditional family cohesion.

The result of all these developments is, that the western countries have today an excessive, unhappy, dissatisfied and threatening labour

potential for which they cannot provide employment.

This has the secondary result, that criminality is rising and that drug abuse is increasing.

(Before continuing with enumerating the danger signals I perceive in the social and communal make-up of our generation, I want to explain - or apologize, if you want - that most of my statistical data; or the results of social research I report here and also elsewhere, refer to publications of the American newsmedia, or of various United Nations Organizations, only and purely because these are easiest available to me. However, I am assured that they can be generally applied also to the "anxious class" everywhere.)

Secretary R. Rich categorizes as "America's anxious class" the group of millions of employees who feel insecure; who fret about losing their jobs; who cannot count on having their jobs next year or even next month; whose wages have stagnated; or whose income has lost ground to inflation. And this large group is steadily growing in size.

But even people who are securely employed; who feel safe and are satisfied with their actual job position and its monetary reward, are by far not happy and satisfied. The majority of them is deeply distressed by some financial problem or other. These men and women are in addition worried about the future of their children. They view and criticise their environment, their government only insofar as they affect their immediate life. They are liable to forget the gratitude and duty they owe to state and society. They categorically abrogate their cherished concepts of social duty; they are no more willing to sacrifice themselves, or anything of theirs, for the common good. And not rarely will they use illegal means to improve their and their family's situation.

It is a fact, that worried and depressed, dissatisfied and unhappy citizens are not likely to be good citizens.

The dangers I have just now only superficially outlined, may take on even greater dimensions in countries economically less favoured countries like China, Africa and India, which until recently could balance their trade with the help of the unlimited supply of their malleable, unskilled, cheaply paid workers. But in the course of the ongoing changes in the labour market, also most of these workers in these countries will have to become redundant; and it will not

be long before also the governments of these countries will have to supply subsistence for hundreds of millions of unskilled workers out of work. Otherwise... It will not be difficult to imagine what will otherwise happen.

(Western economists and politicians, statesmen and experts of all kinds regularly assemble under the auspices of the UN and other World Organizations to find answers and solutions for these and the many other associated problems of mankind, as e.g. that more than one billion people - which amounts to one in five of all mankind - live below the poverty line; that nearly another billion people cannot get a job or cannot even find enough work to make ends meet; that one in every 115 people is a refugee, driven from his home because of war, famine, quakes, floods or other reasons. But the experts and politicians from all the world who regularly assemble, socialize and make speeches, do not and cannot find a solution to these problems; nor do they or can they see even a faint possibility of finding a solution; nor do they or can they on parting assure each other, that any of these depressing conditions, especially those in the job market, have a chance to ever improve.

On the contrary. They - especially those viewing the problems from the West's point of view - cannot but predict a worsening of the problem, should the asian countries' program to form a commercial - if not a political union - materialize. For should the asian world succeed in realizing these plans, it will form a far greater trading zone than those of Europe and America; and I doubt if they will ever feel called upon to reciprocate the concessions or benefits they had in the past harvested from the West. The countries of Asia form potentially the largest market place that ever existed ! Many of these nations are advancing in skill and education at a pace which outstrips the West. Within a generation at the most they will dominate Asia and may be the world. This may not endanger the survival of mankind, except for the possibility, that irresponsible elements in the West might use illegitimate means to make sure, that the East will not replace the West as the leading power.)

It is beyond my knowledge; and it is outside my capability to judge, whether it true that the strains which are said to be developing in the balance of power between Europe and East Asia might have drastic consequences. Nor can I judge, whether these strains - in case the economic pressures now existing world-wide among the great industrialized states were to increase still more - might have consequences of yet unforeseeable consequences. But it should be evident to every intelligent observer, that by the economic tensions already existing between the East and the West; and that due to the mercantilistic competitions which

range between Europe and America on one side, and Japan and the powerful economic empires in the East on the other side, the safety and security of the world are threatened and no less also those of mankind.

Europe has formed a Union. The Americas are bound by a common interest to assure their own political and economic survival. Asia is surging ahead in making sure its own future is secured. Only the countries of Africa - and to a great degree also those of the Middle East - have not yet made any preparation to secure their long-range economic future. They do not even show sufficient interest in their immediate future. In general they appear to be unconcerned about their own future. They waste time, energy and resources on what the actual day brings or demands. Their rich citizens prefer to invest their fortunes abroad, in one of the developed countries. The developed West and East show no interest to advise these capitalists otherwise; nor to teach the governments of Africa and the Middle East that they should not spend all those many billions on armaments, but should better invest in their future economic safety.

When I survey the developments in whatever field I approach - the cultural and religious, the intellectual and ethical - I am aghast at the progressive loss of values which in the last decades of this our century has taken place in every sphere of life. Our society is not functioning as it should. More frequently the rampant violence, which since decades has affected life in the communities, does not anymore stop outside the immediate family circle. This should be very much a cause for worry, as this type violence includes wife-beating and child-abuse; and these traits seem to be transmittable - not only by imitation, but as if they were carried in the genes - from one generation to the next. According to the US Department of Justice, every year on an average 1500 murders of women by their present or past mates are reported. An unexpectedly large number of wife-murders occur also among Jews in Israel. This evil can surely be eradicated by a proper and directed education !

But such an educational program - and the mature sense to realize that such education is needed - are missing among those who carry the responsibility for such an education. Marriages are easily dissolved. Children are neglected. Materialism is a leading motivation in most what is going on. Idealism has no important place anymore in human society. Spiritual values have lost their intrinsic significance.

Nolens volens the United States of America carries the leadership role in these days. I will not go as far as Moshe Ahrens, who in all seriousness maintained that "...America is the greatest country in the world - besides Israel, of course". The world looks upon the United States of America not only for martial prowess and technical advances, but also for guidance in matters of democratic values, of moral conduct and of social management. Alas, things have changed now. The United States of America - which was founded on religious principles; and whose government, guided by exclusively ethical directives under Abraham Lincoln, had even in my school-days in Germany been cited as an ideal worthy of copying - is in our days hardly anymore the proper model to be paraded for imitation. Were today's Americans even only to pretend that they can serve as a role model, no society in the world would accept their offer; and were they ever to make the attempt even to spread what they proudly proclaim as their own specific culture, their efforts would all the world over be repulsed.

(Out of the many instances I think of at this moment, I shall select a recent Congress election, because it has greatly surprised me on hearing of it; and because it exemplifies well what I said. With justification the USA has the reputation of being the leading democracy in the world; but statistics show, that on the occasion of the 1994 Congress elections - which was known to all concerned as of great and decisive importance, only a very small number, less than 40% of the citizens, did consider themselves duty-bound to cast their vote. But surveys of previous election show, that in almost all of them the numbers were hardly different.)

But whom else should the world select as its model? When I listen to the world's leaders gathering here and there for their frequent summit meetings, I hear them discuss military problems; I hear them arrange financial affairs; I hear them air the problems of commercial growth; I hear them worry about economic stagnations or deficiencies; I hear them indulge in world-embracing politics; I hear them handle population issues; I hear them talk about women's rights. But I never hear anybody among them ever mention their countries' democratic flaws; or the world's spiritual problems; or the damage their societies' ethical values have had to sustain; or what mankind's moral needs might be; or what responsibilities man has to man.

Not that I expect these meetings should be chaired or co-chaired by a rabbi or a bishop or a maulvi; but it would be of enormous benefit to their peoples, were these political leaders to appreciate, that

with its essentiality religion might offer them some well needed guidelines, some realizable promises and some effective consolations. I am reminded of the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, that religion "...is indispensable to the maintenance of public institutions". And I am made to think of President Eisenhower, who in 1954 said "...our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith - and I do not care what kind of religious faith it is". But, alas, religion has today been turned into the handmaid of politics, and has thus lost its effectiveness along with the people's respect.

With regard to ethical views and moral conduct, the western world offers the worst possible example. The same applies also to the asian countries. Whether they profess Christianity or Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism, Zen or Confucianism, they seem not to know of the ethical messages their religions preach. Few are the indications that they know of reciprocal love and respect among human beings. These traits - if they are at all mentioned, whether knowingly or mechanically - count no more as valid currency.

Everywhere the religions' exponents compete ruthlessly with each other. Economic interests and security needs - but not religiosity or spirituality or morality or humanism - do nowadays bind the peoples and nations. In addition there is another common interest between the countries in the East: they will always see in the West an enemy; and will combine whenever one of them feels threatened by the West.

So far I have in this chapter cited only a small part of what I think has a negative effect on man's mental and physical, spiritual and moral wellbeing. Though I have only occasionally hinted at the dangerous consequences I perceive as the result of such a deficiency in human altruism, I hope any potential reader will on his or her own draw the right conclusions.

Looking back on what I have written so far, I realize I have not granted the sciences an appropriate space; and I have to ask myself now whether I have to reach the conclusion, that in today's society the sciences have not the answers we want to hear, because they are not always - or in any case not in every aspect - synonymous with knowing; and certainly not with logic? That religion can neither

provide the guide-lines which we crave, because the acceptability of what religion offers - though presupposing neither knowing nor logic - demands faith and trust ? Or do my questions perhaps indicate, that I am too much of an optimist; that I have been expecting too much from the scientists and from the theologians ? Can this indicate, that also mankind has expected too much ? Or does it possibly mean, that mankind does not care ?

Or does this perhaps mean, that unknowingly and unperceivingly mankind is undergoing a series of tests ? That each and every one of us is being tested ? Is what I have enumerated possibly an indication, that we are about to fail the test; or that we may have already failed the tests ? For were today's men and women morally strong and ethically secured, they could certainly have no real difficulty to remove all the threats mankind is facing; they could easily overcome all the dangers imperilling our civilization. But, it seems to me, there are today among us neither men nor women of sufficient moral strength. Nor is there a proper leadership of the right ethical fortitude. From all I see and hear and read, there are today not many people possessed with that moral strength; filled with that sense of responsibility; endowed with that intellectual maturity, who would render the world livable; and who would offer mankind the proper chance to survive.

There arises now in my mind - though still in vague outlines only - the thought, that all what we see; that all what is happening; that all what is developing as if rolling off in a logical sequence, has a sense, has a purpose, has an aim. This leads me to ask: has mankind, undoubtedly created for a purpose, failed in its primary purpose ? Is mankind, not having a care to see a purpose in its existence, about to dig its own grave ? Has mankind, having deviated from its original destination; and having neglected to live its destiny, become redundant within the scheme of things ?

And, as if in answer to what I have just now asked, I remember a saying of Genet, which in its proper sense - and without unnecessary commentaries - can find application to what I have just now asked: "Homosexuality is a refusal to continue the world". His statement has an ominous meaning, if homosexuality, according to recent statistic, has indeed greatly increased recently all over the world.

But there are so many other - and in addition proven, confirmed and evident - factors which indicate, that the survival of mankind could indeed be endangered.

I give free reins to my thoughts to roam among these factors.

Is there the possibility - at which I have hinted a short while ago - that mankind might be made to disappear; and that it will be replaced by another species? Will this newly evolving species grow over a span of some millions of years into one of intelligent reasoning beings? Will a society, a community, a tribe selected from among these newly evolved beings to be entrusted with the task of creating an ethical society within a world continuing to function perfectly? Do we not see around us many animal species which are already endowed with an unusually high degree of intelligence?

Or will our planet one day - sooner than the scientists predict - be totally squashed by a gigantic comet? Or will it end incinerated by the explosion of the sun?

I am going to enlarge further on what I have written so far, in order to try and fortify myself against the most likely forthcoming accusation that I have been indulging in disaster-mongering. Above all I am going to bring some more facts of which I believe they support my thesis, that the human race has been created to live the ethic laws and commandments imposed on mankind; that, therefore, this our world cannot survive unless it is populated by men and women leading a morally inspired and ethically directed life. That what we have learned of the humans' development; and what we know of mankind's history, are progressive steps in the evolution into such beings. That during his life time every single one of us humans is undergoing a constant testing whether we are fit to be the individual building stones of such a perfected race populating this planet sometime in the future. And for completion's sake I will mention already at this point my firm belief, that the Jewish People have been selected to head this process; to project the rules and regulations; and to serve as models parading the expected achievements.

Under the impact of the reports in the newsmedia; impressed by what today's modern sociologists, researchers and investigators have to say; observing the developments around me; and watching what is going on in other parts of the world, I can at times not avoid feeling aghast

by what I see and hear. It seems to me, that the world is sinking into a state of chaos. Nay that it is already wallowing in a state of chaos. And from what I know of history - and in the light of the pessimism radiating from my often unconscious trend to judge history in accordance with the fate the Jewish People suffered in chaotic times, when they were living in a hostile diaspora environment and were made to serve as scape goats - I cannot avoid the impression, that never as in these our days the world has seen so much chaos in every part and on every level; found itself in a state of such moral dissolution; shown such a potential for a global disaster.

What I observe and conclude is the more impressive - why do I not use the word "fearsome" instead ? - because I see the values of culture and civilization melting away, notwithstanding all the advantages science and civilization have provided. Mankind can register progress in every possible field; but it is also regressing on the moral and cultural levels. Materialism - as I have somewhere already pointed out - predominates in our society; violence, drugs, illegitimate births are now facts of life. And there is nowhere the steady progress toward that higher level of existence; toward that relaxed happiness; toward that range of favourable life-prognosis, which should have been the reward, which today's advances in science and technology have promised.

More and more countries are in a state of chaos; and those making up these countries' leadership, who have the factual opportunity, the intellectual means and the brutal power to intervene and to restore order - and would certainly have done so only a generation or two ago - refuse to get involved. The resulting danger is compounded by the asocial elements interpreting this reluctance as a weakness of the predominant classes in their country. In consequence they feel encouraged in their aggressive ways - and increasingly also in their criminal tendencies - inside and outside their own country.

Even though also in the past large segments of the population have shown a vast range of an apparently uncontrollable criminality; even though it can be said, that there was not a country which did not harbour people exhibiting a plethora of unchecked asocial traits, these individuals and that state of affairs would in times past not have presented a danger to the stability of their country; nor would they have been judged a threat to the vitality of their society, because

the authorities would have made use of the very same means which were then - as they are now - at their disposal. They would have known to deal in an effective and decisive manner with the perpetrators of crimes and the disturbers of peace. There is in these our own days - mainly because ours is the age of nuclear power - a clearly outlined additional danger: that these very same asocial elements will not have the incentive to apply the commonly valid moral strictures; will not be of the quality to obey the rules of law which put a limit to their excesses; will not feel themselves under the obligation to care for the wellbeing of their fellowmen; and will not see it in their own interest to preserve the purity of their environment.

(The wide-spread introduction; and the often unchecked application of nuclear power, represent indeed a major danger to our survival. I would go further and say, that nuclear proliferation is the greatest threat to the survival of our civilization - if not of mankind in general - since the destruction of the communist empire. No doubt, this new form of energy has many useful applications in civil life. More often it serves also as a military deterrent, because a potential nuclear aggressor, knowing that he risks his own country's destruction, will be wary of starting a nuclear war in the first place. But dictators without a sense of responsibility, may take such a risk. And there is also the danger, that the threat of a nuclear attack may get awry.)

And of course: a nuclear device can become a dreadful danger the moment it falls into the hands of terrorists.

No wonder then, that from many a point of view, and from many a quarter we hear the complaint: "This country is becoming unhinged".

The cultural standard of a country - and with it the cultural future of its people - is reflected in the quality of its schools. And within the frame of what I am exposing, it should not surprise us that - speaking in general terms - the intellectual standard of the western nations, and especially the educational achievements of their youth, have in the second half of this century been considerably lowered, while those of the nations of Asia shows the opposite trend. There are more reasons for this state of affairs, than only the justified accusation that the TV and its dim-witted programs are responsible for this lamentable state of affairs. Teachers and parents are no less to blame.

Are we going to witness the transfer of the cultural and commercial leadership - and in the not too distant a future possibly also of the military predominance - from the West to the East ? Can the men and women who actually stand at the head of the western countries, truly maintain, that they are at the world's controls ? It is true, there is still a dominant upper layer of highly intellectual and well educated, of thoroughly trained and strictly disciplined individuals at the top of most of the western nations, but the populace in these countries is to a frightening extent made up of uneducated and dull, of criminal and undisciplined, of poor and welfare-dependent elements, among whom drug addition and illegitimacy steadily increase.

Is the prognosis justified, that the overfed West will one day be overwhelmed by the starving non-West ? Is it inevitable, that the world will still further - and much deeper still - be divided into two unequal and separate camps; into east and west halves, or north and south ones ? Will at some stage in the not too distant future the rich and developed countries be overrun by mass immigration from the poor and starving countries ? Let us not forget that such a mass immigration of restless peoples; and that such penetration of starving masses, had initiated the collapse of the Roman Empire.

I claim the right to say, that all of us who can look beyond the needs of the next day, feel culturally deprived; that those of us who have eyes to see, can observe a steady deterioration in what we have until not so long ago cherished as cultural achievements; in that which, rightly or wrongly, is today still called "culture". Will that which we are transmitting to the next generation, give our descendents the required strength to withstand all the threats to their future ? Will it provide them with the necessary stimulus to fight for their survival ? Will the future generations be at all ready to work for - and willing to fight for - their survival ? As I have already pointed out, I disagree with those who think that the recent advances in the realm of the sciences; and that the huge achievements in the field of technology, will guarantee mankind's survival for a long time to come. It is more saddening than painful to hear the boast of the representative of this kind of misplaced optimism, that in future books will not be necessary anymore; that in their stead the video cassette will serve

as efficiently.

In the past there was somewhere always a nation which could serve as a guiding star; a people which carried a promise; a country which could serve as an example; a state which could serve as a prototype; a society which could serve as a light. There is none such now. We see degeneration and murder, dishonesty and strife in every country and in every corner of the world.

(When I survey the world scene, I am again and again induced to take the United States of America as an example, as a measuring rod, as a road sign, because it is the only superpower in existence; and is in addition the leading democracy. And also because it provides the most honest and complete informations. Let us not illusion ourselves: the world - and with it the Middle East - is still economically, politically and militarily dependent on the US. And the State of Israel more than most.)

The world is today looking for guidance from the USA, but - as I have already mentioned - it is evident that we have from now on to forego this hope. The politics of the United States' tend at times to degenerate into confusion. Its leaders often give the impression that they are in danger of losing their grip. This is a weakness which may turn out to be a grave danger to the democratic world. Whichever the Congress party in opposition, it is led by cynics, who often - purely for obstruction's sake it seems - will cast their votes even against legislations which are certainly most needed; against changes, which might be of great benefit to the people and the nation.

America can still boast of an impressive intellectual stratum; but the number of highly intelligent individuals, of wise statesmen and of inspired leaders appears to be growing less. The IQ of its youth is getting steadily lower. An underclass of people is being bred, which in today's sophisticated, mechanized and computerized world will not be able to find an opportunity to earn its living; and is in danger of drifting into crime. This terrifying state of affairs is not expected to develop sometime in the distant future; such a threatening situation is already very much evident today. And this danger-loaded situation is compounded by the fact, that the majority of this underclass is made up of Blacks - today still an a priori underprivileged part of America - who have the potential to let their misery explode into racial hatred.

But neither should we disillusion ourselves, that we are not directly or immediately involved; that the dismal picture I have painted is restricted to the United States. The situation is in no way better; and conditions are in no way different, in most other countries, among many other nations and in a number of other parliaments. At times I cannot suppress the fear, that many of these western-civilized peoples will be reduced to the standard of life which prevails today in the african and asiatic countries dominated by a class of often subhuman dictators.

(Perhaps I have been amiss by giving the impression, that materialism, as an objectionable trait, is a newly introduced phenomenon of our society. Materialism has since ever been a dominant ingredient in the make-up of all nations. But in our days materialism has acquired a particularly negative colouration, because the public sphere - made up of thinking and arguing individuals fully aware of what they believe are their god-given and society-promised rights - is more than ever dominated by the drive for economic growth at whatever the cost. Also this would not be too bad, had the gap between the rich and the poor been bridged. But this is not the case. On the contrary: what is more an abyss than a gap has been growing steadily in depth.)

Again I feel impelled to point out, that without exception in each of the so-called civilized countries large numbers of the poor, of the underprivileged, of the disinherited - especially among the youth which sees no future for itself - resort to crimes or escape into taking drugs, and have to finance their addiction with all kinds of criminal activities. It is more profitable for them to "push drugs" than to work as unskilled workers for a minimal wage.

I am furthermore ready to concede, that all the blame for this state of affairs should not be heaped on the governments. In the given circumstances it is difficult for any government to find any effective solution for the problems it has to face.

Even at the danger that I may repeat myself, I am going to bring data, with the help of which I will try to illuminate what I see as the dangers undermining human society; and which, in my view, contribute to the danger facing mankind's survival.

(I shall first bring a few statistics to illustrate the prevailing deplorable conditions, the like of which

have never been known in civilized countries; and which I see as the indication of a deficiency in mankind's basic instinct of self-preservation. These data derive mainly from the USA, but again only because they are the only ones available to me at this moment; and also, because volens nolens the United States of America is made to serve as a reference in every sense, whether a positive or a negative one. But there should be no doubt - as I have again and again learned in the course of private conversations; as well as from books and the newsmedia - that conditions are in no way different in Britain and France, in Germany and Italy, in Japan and Israel.)

* In America every 36 minutes a child is killed or injured by a gun. In the last 15 years 15 000 children have been killed by a gun.

* In 1991 - the most recent year for which figures are available - more than one million girls between 15 and 19 had become pregnant.

* The ratio between the country's shelters for battered women and the shelters for stray animals is 1:3 in favour of the animals.

* In the US 300 policemen are said to commit suicide every year.

* The US has one million prison inmates. In 1994 thirty billion dollars were spent on these prisons. The federal prisons are overcrowded: some of them house 2-3 times the number of people they were designed to hold. The total federal prison population increases by a rate of about 10 000 a year. In California alone 58 prisons are not enough and twenty more are planned.

* In the US, 60% of all inmates of Federal Prisons serve time for drug offenses.

* It has become a must for a young man of the ghetto to have passed through a prison. To be a man he has to own a gun. "Also good kids carry guns", a well-known educator said, "because they fear to be waylaid on their way to school".

* American upper-class white males are accused in the newsmedia - though not always with justification - of enjoying too many unjustified privileges. They are accused by Blacks of being racists; by females of being chauvinists; by Jews of being antisemites; by educators of being backward; by Republicans of being spendthrifts; by Democrats of being immature power-seekers. They are also accused by educators of wrongly educating their children. To all these accusations the white males react by not reacting.

Similar conditions, as I already said, prevail in most of the other western countries. For instance: Switzerland with 1% unemployment

has 30 times more murder cases than Britain with 12% unemployment. No less worrisome are the conditions which prevail in Israel; but of this I shall have more to say later on.

Can it be denied that such a slide into moral degeneration and social disorganization contributes greatly to the other threats mankind would have to overcome in order to survive ?

And now, hoping that most of my points have been proved acceptable - even though only reluctantly - I shall not be able to avoid my facing a barrage of questions. And mostly of my own questions. How can the situation be improved ?, I ask myself. How can the status of the disinherited and poor be corrected ?, are only two of my questions. They appear to be the easiest ones to answer, but nobody has so far found the answer. Will the progressive worsening of the situation which I have presented in rough outlines, indeed lead to the destruction of mankind ? Many seriously thinking and forward looking intellectuals do indeed think so.

Man cannot blame but himself for this state of affairs. And nobody can help mankind getting over this danger. Only we mankind can do so. We have the free will - and therewith the responsibility - to plan the way we develop our destiny; and how we form our fate. We have on our own to search for the proper direction out of this impasse. Are we paying now the price for the mismanagement of the manifold opportunities, which in the past had been available to mankind ? And of which most are even today still open to us ?

Nations are formed and again destroyed. Will our own mankind - if it is judged to have mismanaged its world - be destroyed in the same or similar way prior worlds have most likely perished ? Will a new species - as I have already ventured to depict - be allowed to grow into a dominant position ?

3.

Can Judaism survive ?

Yes, I am asking now also about Judaism's chances of survival. In other words, I am asking whether Judaism is endangered; and if so, whether to a degree that might interfere with its future existence. In still plainer words, I am asking whether there exists the threat that Judaism might disappear; whether there is even the slightest possibility, that nothing will be left of Judaism but a small chapter in the annals of history. I am asking, whether there is a threat which implies, that the Jewish People will share the fate of the many nations which had once existed; had once made an impact on their world; and of whom nothing but the memory is left anymore.

And I will go further and ask, whether - in face of all the dangers it is going to face; and contrary to all the predictions floating about, - in case a residue of the Jewish People continues to survive, it will be as a living, homogenous, identifiable national body; or whether nothing more will be left of the People of the Bible in Israel and in the Diaspora than a remnant somewhere, to which only the lowest possible standard of "Who is a Jew" will at best be applicable ? Will only those Jews be left, who continue to call themselves Jews because they belong to one of the strange sects which have recently turned up ? Or who belong to any of the passing cults which from time to time come floating to the surface ? Or who belong to any of the freak cultures, which will continue to spring up with an initially great vigor; which will try to root in the vacuum left by the Jewish people; which will pretend to be the true descendants, the legitimate heirs of the biblical Children of Israel ?

Will perhaps only Orthodox Judaism - in actual fact it is indeed Judaism's less endangered and least assimilated section - survive, though with its strength and influence reduced to such an extent, that it will be forced to forgo the basic halachic precondition, by which they

acknowledge only those as Jews who are Jews by an accident of birth, i.e. only those who are children of a Jewish mother; or only those who are Jews, because they have been converted *lege artis*, i.e. according to halachic rules? Or will it be acceptable to recognize henceforth also those as Jews who want to be Jews; who feel they are true Jews; from whom it is only demanded, that they believe in God and in what the Torah and Prophets say? Can Judaism possibly ever become weakened to such a degree, that the change in circumstances will force Orthodox Jewry to be satisfied with the formula in use today in Liberal-Reform Communities, i.e. that also the descendants of a Jewish father have the right to be counted as Jews? Alas, I do not anticipate, that healthy reasoning or a divinely inspired insight will ever bring about such a situation.

I have not raised these questions to initiate a talmudic discussion. I did so, because I assume for myself the right to raise these questions in view of the grave dangers Judaism is facing in these days from within and from outside. These nothing but purely theoretical questions I am raising mainly to initiate the specific discussion I have mentioned. Within myself I am certain, that the situations I have outlined for discussion's sake, even though they are still far away, will never come about; that the conditions I have painted as desperate and imminent are speculations only and will never arise. I am certain, that Judaism will never be so seriously weakened, as to be satisfied with such minimal demands for its existence. I am certain, that Judaism will never be reduced to such a minimal moral and numerical residue of its proud and unique inheritance.

But no less readily I agree also, that the conditions prevailing today in the Jewish Diaspora give much cause for worry. I agree, that the future of the Jews in the Diaspora looks anything but assuring. I am, on the other hand, no less also sure, that also a totally pessimistic assessment is not justified. And I am further willing to concede, that my optimistic assessment of Judaism's future; and the arguments and reasonings I am adducing in support, may sound a bit too metaphysical; may sound, as if it had been brought in from the realm of mysticism. This is not the case. My optimistic statement originates from my open-eyed faith in Judaism's specific place in the divine scheme. It is brought about by the way I interpret the Jewish People's history.

I realize that I have to express myself in clearer terms before I continue. I shall, therefore, first attempt to circumscribe in the context of my discourse - in as understandable phrases as possible - what I mean when I talk about Judaism and the Jewish People. This is the more important, as in this chapter at least I shall avoid approaching the issue from a theological angle.

Like all major religions Judaism preaches love for the next man; endeavours to bring mankind to moral maturation; outlines ways how to better mankind's spiritual world. Like most other religions Judaism exerts a social function: it teaches, that conflicts and strife can and should be avoided; that the fellowman's misery and pain must and should be eased. Judaism's very foundation, however, differs from that of other religions insofar, as it aims to convey to man the realization, that mortal beings do not - and cannot ever - possess all the answers; that for his wellbeing on earth, man has to be made familiar with the principles of ethics; and that, to assure mankind's his future survival, it has to be guided onto the path leading to an ever higher level of being.

Philo, the Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria between 20 BCE and 50 CE, defined Judaism as the belief in the One God; as the belief, that there is only One God; as the belief, that the world has been created by God, but that his creation is not eternal; as the belief, that there is only one Universe; as the belief, that God cares for the world, and all the creatures therein, as a parent cares for his children. Maimonides, who lived between 1135 and 1204, defined Judaism and God in his famous thirteen clauses. He preached that God is unknowable; that it is absurd to search for traces of the Divine in the phenomenal world.

(May this excursion into the metaphysical suffice for the moment. I may have to return to this subject at a later stage, although even then it will find it impossible to report the definitions formulated by the thousands of philosophers and theologians who have made their contributions.)

But Judaism differs also from other religions insofar, as it has entered into a covenant with God. Or more precisely said, God has selected the Jewish People from among all other people; and has entered into a Covenant with it. This Covenant is eternal and unchangeable, even though from time to time it may have to be reinterpreted to fit the exigencies of the time, as had been the case so often in the history of the Jews; as is in particular necessary now in the wake of the Shoah; and as is the case now in the light of the rebirth of the State of Israel. But it has never to be reargued. Nor has its true sense ever been changed.

Judaism is also otherwise not a religion in the common sense. I be better careful and say, it is a religion unlike all other religions.

Judaism is a religion associated with a unique history and a specific tradition. Judaism is permeated with history. It is interpreted by tradition. Judaism's history and ideals are reflected in its prayer-books. As was unavoidable throughout Judaism's history - and as it continues to be the case in our own days - tradition and background, hostile environments and the fight for the very survival, had to leave their impact on the Jewish People; and had to find their precipitation in the prayers. The Jew's prayer is not - as are those of the devotees of other faiths - mostly and mainly quests and demands. And whereas a Jew's doings and deeds should not only be the matrix of his prayers; should not only apply at the time he acts and reasons in the pursuit of the eternally established tenets of his faith, but also at every hour of his daily life, a devoted and understanding person will be guided to search for a meaning in everything that happens to him and those near to him. With the help of his prayers he is meant to find an understanding of what God may have intended for himself or the community. A true prayer should bring about an insight of what man should do for himself and others, rather than carry man's demands of what he wants to have God or fellow man do for himself and those near to him.

Ultimately man should succeed in acquiring the knowledge, that - even if he asks for God's help; even if he prays for God's involvement in his personal fate - his prayer for God's direct help might ideally lead to the insight, that he prays for God's assistance to find his own ways and means to solve his problems; that he prays to God to make him develop the necessary strength to overcome his sins, faults and mishaps; and that he prays for God's help to realize, that man - all on his own and by himself - bears the full responsibility for what he does and omits to do.

It was unavoidable that the Jews, by finding refuge under the umbrella of their traditions; and by searching consolation in their daily life by applying the lessons inherent in their history, have created in their gentile host countries a rather specific - but rarely sympathetic nor accepted - image of a mental and psychological make-up of the Jewish People.

However, the Gentiles' belief in the otherness of the Jewish people; and their prejudices based on the assumed physiological or physical difference of the Jew from the Gentile, are outgrowths of

fantasy. For were the criticising adversaries of the Jewish People to probe only a little deeper, they would discover that there is no justification to attribute to the Jews a diversity of character and nature; that at the deepest developmental level there is no difference between an aryan and a semitic, a mongolian and an african psyche; that fundamentally and ethnically all talk of racial originality is a fable.

(A growing number of scientists are certain, that the concept of race is antiquated. A growing number of anthropologists and genetists have become convinced, that the biological concept of race is outdated. In addition they have often found genetic differences and variations between individuals, who by traditional racial definitions, should have the most in common.)

The essence, meaning and values of Judaism are based on the Torah. And likewise they derive also from the Torah. The entire body of doctrine and commandments - written or transmitted - constitute the Torah. It is the moral codex for the Jewish People. It is the basis for jewish religious life. Its essence is contained in the 179 words of the Ten Commandments. There is no written work which has been so much dissected, studied, analyzed as the Bible. It is painful to see modern researchers and theologians find excuses for re-interpretations by which the meaning of the text gets twisted. There is no need for commentaries or additions. Whatever such are offered, only explain or emphasize what the Torah says. They do not, cannot and dare not change what has been said at Mount Sinai.

It has, however, to be realized, that the Torah - that is the Pentateuch - is not a consecutive narrative. It is now accepted, that the Torah had been composed in the course of many centuries. Therefore it has also to be accepted, that the writings and wordings of the Scriptures reflect the intellectual, educational and social back-ground of those centuries. It stands furthermore to reason, that in the course of these centuries the interpreters and teachers have felt called upon, to add to the corpus; or to embellish it when needed. And above all, material must have been added, whenever it was thought necessary to explain the miracles narrated in the Torah; and to deepen the mysteries, when it was believed opportune. The modern Bible reserachers and explorers have acquired the habit of producing filaments of fantasy and imagination, which they weave into complex hypothetic structures; on which they then try to perform their acrobatics.

During the last two centuries the question is asked all over the

world, whether the Bible is true; whether its narratives represent real events; whether the people described really existed; and if so, whether they acted and behaved as the Bible tells.

We can often hear today, that in the Bible "faith is a subjective response to objective historical events". Alas, archaeological findings do not always confirm the biblical records, especially those supposed to have happened in the Middle Bronze Aged (from 2000 to 1500 BCE) and even in the Late Bronze Age (from 1500 to 1200 BCE). This applies, for instance, to the stories of relating to the fall of Jericho, or to the conquest of Canaan. Thus the exclamation of Sir Leonard Woolly, excavating in Mesopotamia, "I have found the Flood"; or the published belief of others to have found Noah's Ark, must not be taken seriously. But in other instances archaeology has provided proof of the beginning settlement of tribes of Israel in Canaan and in the Kingdom of Israel. No proof of earlier periods - e.g. the paradise, the sojourn in and exodus from Egypt - has so far been found by archaeologist. Nor can historians, theologians or Bible scholars bring such proof.

Bible research started to make great progress the moment it was recognized that archaeological research does not necessarily prove biblical history and stories right or wrong.

The enemies of Judaism - the churches, but also the secularists - out of ignorance or deliberate malice - represent the Jewish Bible as prescribing a system of harsh justice, of vengeance, of cruelty and of grudge bearing. For their own reasons, the rabbinic schools try to find in their commentaries ever new excuses and arguments to explain away what is indeed a cruel and harsh judicial system. But to judge the biblical juridical system in such a negative way, is uncalled for. It was the kind of justice prevailing and accepted in biblical times. The LEX TALONIS - eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, limb for a limb etc - was the standard of legal ethics at the time the Torah was written down; but by the time the Rabbis of the Talmud started to teach and preach, this cruel revenge-type practice was re-interpreted as meaning that - with the exception of murder when the life of the accused was forfeited - only financial compensation was required for any physical damage done to some other person.

Originally - modern Bible Researchers say - the Jewish religion had not contained any myths. But by the time the Torah was completed, the old habits and customs, the ancient mythical beliefs and concepts,

which had in the course of time evolved among the Israelites, had been given the seal of approval as if they were divine laws.

The "Akeda", the story of Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice, is such a typical biblical myth. It belongs to the line of similar legends in ancient cultures, e.g. the death of Iphigenia at the hand of Agamemnon - her body was in the last moment substituted with of a hind; and she survived as a priestess - and the legend of Phrixus, the son of Aelus, who was to be sacrificed to avert a draught, but was saved by a ram sent by the gods, which animal Phrixus later sacrificed to the gods. As usual, the fantasy of the Rabbis is given free rein also in this instance: they think Isaac had indeed been killed; and that his ashes are a metaphor for those on the Temple altar; or that the Akeda is meant to represent the sacrifice and martyrdom of the Jews over the ages, and so on. The Church is not to be denied her own say: she sees the Akeda repeated in Golgotha. Others see it as a Zen Buddhist incident, wherein "a most important subject in one's life is destroyed to test one's spiritual enlightenment", and whereby one proves one's total lack of attachment to material things. The Akeda is of great significance for Islam. In their version Ishmail takes the place of Isaac.

We, who are living in modern times, should be taught to acquire the insight which explains, that the miracles and wondrous tales which abound in the Tnach, were - at the time the Torah was written down - explicitly woven in, because those responsibly involved must have thought, that only with the help of such additions would it be possible to properly teach the essence of what had been transmitted to a people without any education; at least not with a sufficiently sophisticated education.

The basics of Judaism have never changed. They have - at least to the traditional Jew - remained unchanged since Judaism's fundamentals were pronounced at Sinai. To all traditional Jews - whatever their individual denomination may be - Judaism is first of all faith in the Creator. It is furthermore reverence for life. It is the sacredness of life. It is love of justice. It is love of peace. It is practice of charity. It is avoidance of all immoral behaviour. It is belief in the coming of a messianic time. It is duty to maintain the sacredness of the family and the home. It is deep respect for education and learning. It is the responsibility of all for the community of Jews.

Most unconditionally and uncritically is the absolute obedience to the abstract, remote and unfathomable God of Israel demanded of and by Jewish Orthodoxy. The unrelenting faith of Jewish Orthodoxy is based on, due to and explained by the divine revelations described in the Tnach. It is characterized by absolute adherence to God's commands. The absolute obedience to every command of the Bible; and the complete submission to all the interpretations given to these commands by the ancient Rabbis in their formulation of the halachic rules, represent in the eyes and minds of Orthodox Jews the main significance of Judaism. Not the slightest compromise is tolerated. Whatever interpretation is offered by the wise and learned, always remains within the defined and established limits. To Orthodox Jews there is no room for even the minimal argument or discussions about their religious attitudes. They see no need to justify their traditions and customs. They react with incredulity when asked to defend their beliefs. Their religious conviction surrounds them by a far more unsurmountable wall than that of any other stream in Judaism.

The Orthodox live in accordance with the principles of the Halacha; and in obedience to the commandments of the Torah, which are repeated in the Mishna, interpreted in the Talmud and illustrated by the Midrashim. Their education is directed to provide an uncritical and undestructable love for the Torah; and it instills in them a deep sense of the perfection and righteousness of the way by which they interpret Judaism. They are blessed by their deep religiosity - I may say their intimacy with their religion - which grants them the unshakable conviction, that Israel is under the special protection of God.

There should not be any doubt that, by their firm conviction of having specifically been selected to serve God, the will of the Jews to withstand the persecutions of their enemies had throughout the past been greatly strengthened; and that the Jews' certainty of having been elected God's own people, had over the centuries proved of immense value in the fight for the Jewish People's fight for survival. And though the modern, secularized, cynical Jews of today do not want to associate their actual and future existence with this metaphysical denominator in whatever the prognosis, I am not alone in my conviction - which agrees with what Rav Avraham Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel preached - that the Jews of today are, and continue to be, the chosen people; and that there is not the slightest doubt, that God will in due time

redeem his people. I see the election of the Jewish People as a continuously flowing source of the morality on which the Jewish faith is anchored. Nevermind, that among the Jews many will be found, who see in Judaism's special mission a burden; and that there are many others who ridicule the claim to particularism by divine selection.

This particular status of the Jews - whether Scripture-based or self-proclaimed - has been accepted and denied, envied and ridiculed by the gentile world. And many were and are those who claim in their turn this very same divine appointment. The early 16th century English-Protestant settlers in America were certain that the English were the elected and selected people; that they had especially been chosen by God to spread the Gospel abroad. And to this day there are Christian sects raising such claims for themselves. Many Americans think they are the chosen people. Moslems have no doubt that they are Allah's preferred people and have been elected to guide and rule the world. There are streams among Jewish Socialists who see the selection of the Jewish People in the superior morality of Judaism; and the election in its obligation, to spread the Jewish faith-based message of brotherhood among the masses.

The Orthodox Jew classifies the Liberal-Reform Jew as being beyond Judaism's pale. In certain Orthodox circles this group is even denied the right to count themselves as Jews. Except for the Ultra-Orthodox the "average-Orthodox" Jew condemns the Masorti, i.e. the Conservative Jews, with less absoluteness, because - though they have reached the conviction, that certain ancient rules of the Halacha and some of the laws of the Bible are to some degree in need of adaptation to the modern times - they have preserved, and in their daily way of life continue to observe most of the ancient traditions.

The Reform Movement was born in Germany in the 1830s, when the forces of Enlightenment - with the notion of freedom for all mankind on its banner - conquered the civilized world, and liberated the Jews from their ghettos. Jews of the Reform Movement proclaim the need, and claim they have the right - in the light of the world's intellectual progress; and in the light of the view they have of the changing times - to contribute in their own way to their perception of Judaism's place in modern times. And they maintain and demand they have the right - in view of the totally different outlook that has developed in these changing times - to adjust the way they conceive and express their view of and faith in Judaism. They have taken upon themselves the right

to remove customs and practices which to them have lost their meaning. By the institution of this process; and by the realization of their program, they intend to keep always contemporary the perception and representation of what is real and essential in Judaism. They intend to go on adapting the way a true Judaism has to be lived to the various ambiances and to the variegating conditions in the different parts of the world. They have made it their program to teach the basics, the ethics and the laws of Judaism in such a way, that they are accepted and understood in line with modern terms. And, above all, they will strive, that whatever they teach and preach will always be in harmony with contemporary laws.

Reconstructionalism too wants to work for the revitalization - even at the cost of some modernization - of the Jewish religion. It demands, that tradition may have a vote, but should not have a veto. Mordechai Kaplan - the pluralistic rationalist who founded the movement - preached, that Judaism is not a religion but a dynamic religious civilization; that the Jewish civilization is in perpetual development; that in order to meet the intellectual demands and the spiritual needs of life in the contemporary world, Judaism has to be reinterpreted. Jews are not a chosen people, the Reconstructionists maintain; they are part of the world family. The reconstituted State of Israel is the home of the historic Jewish civilization; but this has not to mean, that the Jewish communities in the Diaspora have not also to be maintained and strengthened.

I am not going to detail the many other subdivisions which populate the religious world of Judaism - and which give Judaism a very welcome pluralistic pattern - as none of them shows fundamentally new concepts; and as none of them presents a danger to Judaism.

However, of the religious-pluralistic Jewish communities few if any do live in the sense and meaning of "Pluralism"; that is to say, there are not many who live in harmony with, in acknowledgement of, and with tolerance to the other currents living, praying, preaching alongside them. This is a great pity, even a grave sin: the religious pluralism, which is since long a feature of Judaism, could with so much ease lead to its enrichment, were it not for the equally long-standing lack of tolerance between the various currents of Judaism.

After having only superficially described some specifics of Judaism; after having enumerated a few of the religious currents in Judaism; after having hinted now and then at the perils facing Judaism, I want to clearly and definitely dispel any impression I may possibly have created that the Jewish People is about to disappear. On the contrary: I want to state categorically, that there will always be a viable Jewish People carrying forward a living Judaism. The survival of Judaism does not depend on numbers. It is Judaism's quality and not its quantity which will assure its survival. Judaism has survived in the Middle Ages when its number was at the most a million only.

Nor does its survival depend on the type and kind of religious direction. Every consciously-religious Jew carries Judaism forward. What Heinrich Graetz, the Jewish historian, wrote in the middle of last century, is still valid: if we want Judaism to exist, we cannot depend on the secularists but rather on the religious Jews who have a religious consciousness. Rav Kook said on his deathbed: I yearn for the day when Jews who are great will also be great Jews.

The Jewish faith is intimately interwoven with Jewish history. And Judaism's history is not only one of persecution and suppression, of suffering and martyrdom, but also one of survival against the most awesome odds. Can this survival of the Jewish People be explained otherwise than by the special role to which it has been appointed?

At no stage in its 3000 years old history has the Jewish People, in its totality ever lived according to the principles of Judaism; nor has it ever been possible to say, that it has realized all the ideals which have been set before it. But neither has there ever been a time until now, when it had been allowed to live in that total peace and in that full freedom, which might have provided it with the atmosphere where such a life could be practiced and such ideals can be lived.

From the day of its creation into a nation at Sinai, Judaism has been threatened by the laxity and the disloyalty of its adherents. To some degree, and in later times, the Jews changed for the better. They became fortified in their faith. But whenever whatever changes did occur, these were only the Jews' temporary turns and returns; they were not permanent changes in their attitude to their Jewishness. They changed their way of life, and returned to the observance of the Jewish laws mostly only whenever they met with threats and suffered persecutions for no other reason than because they were Jews.

This is not the place to unroll the history of the Jewish People. Nor do I want to set out on compiling a sad and painful - and monotonous and repetitious - list of the times when the Jews deviated from their faith; when they fell into idolatry; when they assimilated to foreign cultures. But in proof, that in the course of its history Judaism's survival had many times been put in jeopardy by such deviations, I shall bring, in short outlines only, a few of the occasions when they faced such dangers in the early stages of their existence.

* When the Children of Israel - on ending their forty years' migration through the desert - had settled in Palestine, they turned from nomads into farmers. They began to cultivate the land. But a number of them developed into traders. Their trade expanded beyond the frontiers of Palestine. It was inevitable, that the Israelites were thereby brought into contact with the advanced cultures of foreign nations, those of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites in particular. Thus, slowly and insiduously - initially only by commercial contacts - came about an infusion into the israelite cultural make-up and religion of elements of foreign habits, religious customs and ideologies.

Much of what the Israelites adopted from the culture of the Canaanites and Phoenicians - and what, next to other effects, had also an impact on their religious practices and the hebrew vocabulary - had been taken over from their neighbours and is still evident to this day. The lunar calendar, which the Jews adopted sometime after the babylonian exile - before that they counted the months according to the course of the sun - is still used by Jews. Nearly all of our jewish festivals show similarities with the agricultural and fertility cults of the ancient Canaanites. Some of these festivals in the jewish calendar have similarities with those dedicated to the cults of Baal, of Astarte and of their son Tamuz. And it is interesting, that this godhead Tamuz was also called "Adon".

However, although Judaism had throughout that early period of transition been greatly endangered by the more attractive religions of the surrounding nations, the jewish faith in its essence and entirety, born in the Epiphany at Sinai, survived all temptations and lures.

* After the death of King Solomon ten northern tribes split from the davidic kingdom and established their own state under King Jeroboam. It was called the "Kingdom of Israel". The remaining two tribes who had settled in the southern part of the country, kept their loyalty to King Rehoboam and the "Kingdom of Judah". In the course of time the Kingdom of Israel, the "Northern State", became a vassal of the assyrian

kingdom; and it took not long before it was dissolved. The ten tribes of the Kingdom of Israel disappeared among the nationals of their new overlord. Those inhabitants of the Kingdom of Israel, who remained faithful to the Jewish tradition, were absorbed in the Kingdom of Judah.

(No historically or scientifically data about the fate of the "Ten Lost Tribes" exist. Can it be that the Samaritans, who had never left the Land of Israel, are the descendants of these ten tribes? Or is the claim of the Lambas in Africa; the Blacks in America; the Chaing Min in China; the Ebo in Africa; the Beni Menashe in India; and the Mormons world-wide, that they are the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes, credible and acceptable?)

Throughout that stage in history Judaism's existence had been greatly endangered; and its survival had become questionable. But the danger past as if by a miracle. Had this - the elimination of the Northern Kingdom - been one of occasions when, "fate" had intervened in the Jewish People's life? That due to this development Judaism has survived unharmed and unchanged? For Scriptures say, that Judah was true to tradition, while "Ephraim" - as the tribes of the Northern Kingdom Israel were called - "was luxury loving and lax in following the commands of the Torah".

* It appears, however, that the ensuing historic developments were to put also those to the test, who had remained faithful to their religion. After the ten Israelite tribes of Palestine's Northern Kingdom had in the 8th century BCE become separated from the Kingdom of Judah, also the remaining two-and-a-half Jewish tribes were faced with the threat of extinction. For it took only a few decades before also the inhabitants of Judah started to slide off the prescribed path. They began to contravene Judaism's religious ordinances and the laws. They disregarded the commandments and the principles they had inherited from their forefathers. They too had begun to succumb to the religious practices and cults which had never ceased to infiltrate into Palestine from the neighbouring countries.

* When in 568 BCE Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah, and its entire population was exiled to Babylon, Judaism was again in danger to succumb to the lures of a far more attractive world. This time it was in danger to disappear for ever. And when - after the Jews had spent only a few decades of exile in Babylon - King Cyrus offered them their freedom, a large part of the exiles refused to return home. They felt quite

comfortable in Babylon and preferred to stay on.

It was fortunate for Judaism, for its survival and its future, that the majority of the patriotic Jews who had instead chosen to return home to Palestine, were in one respect or other - mainly culturally and intellectually - individuals of superior quality.

The conditions to which the Jews had to adapt during their exile in Babylon, had brought on a profound change in the way they perceived their Judaism; and in the manner they practiced the precepts of their faith. They could no more perform the traditional Temple services which in form of animal sacrifices was the traditional, prayer-like approach to the Divinity; and which according to Jewish law could not be performed outside the Temple of Jerusalem - and had to substitute them with a kind of theoretical performance of the Temple sacrifices by reciting them in their prayers; by referring to them in their homilies; and by rehashing and analyzing every detail of the Temple ritual in their learned discussions. In fact, a large part of the Babylonian Talmud is made up of discussions of the Temple rites.

Another profound contribution to the revival of Judaism in the devastated Palestine was the geniality with which the men and women, who had returned to their homeland, adapted the perception and practice of Judaism's essence to the changes which had taken place in the living conditions; in the mental attitude; in the cultural level; and in the intellectual range, of the people. Under the direction of Zerubabel the Temple was rebuilt. Judaism was reconstituted on the basis of the adapted ancient traditions; and a democratic system of government was introduced.

(In the end - and with hindsight - it turned out to have been a blessing, that the masses of Jews who had totally assimilated to the ways of Babylon, had not come back. Had they taken part in the process of re-dedicating and renewing, of forming and formulating the reborn Jewish culture, they would have influenced these developments according to their negative attitude to, and their assimilatory outlook on Jewish traditions. And had they continued to pursue - and to enforce - the foreign habits and customs they had acquired, Judaism in its exclusively true form would most likely not have survived.)

It took some time before the returning reformers could complete their task. The Judaism as we know it today, took its definite form only at the time of Ezra (around 444 BCE). It was in no way a new creation. It was the original, but purified and consolidated formulation

of Judaism of the Jews returning from Babylon, who had remained conscious of their Jewishness.

(By the way: the appellation "Jew" - Yehudi - had until then not been in use. It was first applied to the exiles in Babylon to indicate that they belonged to the Land of Judah.)

It may with some justification be argued that, great as the changes had been in the Jewish People's fortunes at the time the First Temple was destroyed, these changes - as well as the dangers resulting therefrom to the survival of their nationhood - cannot seriously be compared with those far greater changes; and with the much more serious threats of annihilation, which Judaism faced after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. And this criterion applies still more to the Shoah; and even to the early years after the State of Israel was established. But this would amount to nit-picking. During each of these episodes Judaism had been in mortal danger. Each time it survived possibly much stronger than before.

However, it is my considered opinion, that with regard to the fate of the Jews and the history of Judaism attempts at comparison are futile; that there is no measuring code with which to measure, value or classify such historical events! And especially those events, where "the finger of God" is detectable; i.e. those moments in Jewish history that cannot be explained or understood without adding the divine factor to the calculus.

* During the last two centuries before the actual era, continued internecine fighting affected the peace and security of the Jews. Many parties existed, and each denied the Jewishness of the others. The sect of the Essenes was formed. They too accused the other Jews of having introduced foreign elements into Judaism. They withdrew into the desert, there to live what they perceived as the only pure and traditional form of the Jewish religion.

(The Essenes were the first to introduce into Judaism Satan - who until then had only been a controversial angel - as we know him today: as God's diabolic enemy, as the demonic cause for all evil. The Essenes saw in him the Force of Darkness whom they, the Sons of Light, have to fight in an ongoing battle. The Church was to adopt - and to intensify the maliciousness - of the satanic figure.)

* Many have been the threats to the Jewish People's during the Second Temple Period: hundreds of thousands of Jews were slaughtered by the Babylonians and the Greeks. The danger increased after the country had come under Roman occupation. In the year 66 CE the Jews - reacting to the humiliations and provokations of the Roman Governor Gessius Flavus; and encouraged by their belief of being God's selected people - rose in revolt. With the utmost cruelty the Romans subdued the revolt. They must have been waiting for the opportunity to eradicate the entire Jewish People. They found a far greater opportunity - and created thereby the greatest threat the Jewish People's had until then known to its survival - in the wake of the Bar Kochba Revolt which lasted from 132 to 135 CE, when the Hasmonean Kingdom was ended; when large numbers of Jews had been killed; when the country's capital Jerusalem was totally destroyed; when the Temple was in ruins; when the Temple cult and the priesthood had been for ever abolished; when Hadrian - as had Antiochus before him; and as Oman and the Crusaders were to do after him - forbade the practice of the jewish religion in the jewish land; when all political activity was forbidden; and when the parties of the Sadducees and Essenes - the custodians of Judaism's traditions - had been wiped out.

It must be counted as Judaism's salvation - it is not enough to call it fortune - that small but representative groups of Pharisees, of "the separated ones, of the pious ones", had survived. It is owed to them that Judaism has survived. From their ranks grew the rabbinic leadership which sustained the Jews and the jewish faith from the 1st to the 7th century.

There is abundant historic material available in proof, that it was not so much the occupying hostile power, but disunity in the ranks of the leadership and internecine strife among the Jews, which had brought this disaster upon the Jewish People. To me at least this is a likewise clear indication, that the jewish people could have avoided this disaster - or at least could have greatly reduced its extent - had they not forgotten the basic ethical tennets of their guidelines. They had been tested and had failed their test. History shows that they had been given again an opportunity to learn from their failings; to benefit from what they had learned; to positively apply what had been planted into the Jewish People's karman.

Alas, the Jewish People's character - and in consequence its fate

- appeared at such time to have been draped over a skeleton held together by strands of excessive self-confidence woven together with the trend to forget; or at best to wrongly interpret what is impossible to forget.

"Jews failed to unite in the gravest hour of their history, on the eve of the destruction of the Second Temple.....for the catastrophe could have been prevented", wrote Ben Gurion to Menahem Ussishkin in 1936. "But in the Diaspora", Ben Gurion continued, "the Jews have achieved what they would otherwise not have achieved: driven by their striving for excellence and moral superiority, they maintained their identity and a certain degree of solidarity".

* Another danger element surfaced during the Middle Ages. Jewish thinking and reasoning - by having in the course of the centuries absorbed aristotelian thinking and reasoning - had become flattened and had lost its depth. But luckily, and at the right time, a jewish-spiritual renaissance emerged, whose leadership assured the Jewish People's worthiness to survive, by successfully neutralizing the dangers that might have threatened Judaism's value and essence; and which would have otherwise imperilled its existence.

Jewish history reports also an unending series of temptations, by which so very often the Jews' basic instinct of self-preservation was put to the test. We may call it luck, coincidence or providence, that there were again and again - and at the right time and in the proper place - steadfast men and determined women of the right caliber, whose deeply grounded faith in Judaism's destiny made them personally overcome all these temptations and inducements; and who in turn imbued their jewish correligionists and compatriots with their great knowledge and moral strength, their faith and trust, their confidence and fortitude.

It is justified to view Jewish history - starting from its earliest days and extending into modern times - as mainly the depiction of a minority within the jewish communities among the various host cultures, who never ceased to struggle for the maintenance of Judaism's religious values; and who zealously fought for the survival of Jewry's cultural specifics.

In the course of their 2000-years lasting diaspora the Jews have learned to adjust to the precarious situations, the tempting inducements and the life-threatening dangers they were made to face. This gradually

acquired experience enabled them to make sure - whenever necessary by absorbing certain assimilatory features from their surrounding cultures - not only that the essence of Jewish ideology and culture remained preserved, but also that the Jewish People could survive as such.

However, I would be amiss not to venture my personal opinion, that the Jews had been blessed with a significant advantage - you may call it a kind of secret weapon - in their confrontations with their hidden or open enemies: the pride in their divine appointment; and the certainty of their ever-valid election. Wherever and whenever they lived in the Diaspora, they have always preserved their inner pride, because they never considered themselves inferior to the other peoples. This was even the case, when they were exposed to the severest pogroms. In such and similar situations they must have been sustained by the inner certainty, that the Jewish People cannot disappear, because God has chosen Israel and his people to rank high above all other nations.

And history again and again tells also of times and situations, when Judaism's moral fiber was put to the test; when the Jewish People's cohesion was under stress; when the Jews' inner strength was sorely tried; when the Diaspora Jews' resistance against the odds facing them everywhere, was eroded. And in every case the cause and reason, the pathology and malady can be filed under the heading of "Jewish self-hatred". This well-defined, thoroughly studied and amply documented weakness of the Jewish People has pressed on it like a curse all through its history.

I have observed in these days many instances of Jewish self-hatred among the Jews of Israel and of the diaspora. This is the more painful, as in most of these individuals the self-hatred is mainly bred by these persons' utter ignorance. Many are the instances I can cite from recent history alone; and I shall do so when I review this breed among the Jews of Israel. I do not have to point out that, as in times past and at many stages of Jewish history, the vicious trait of Jewish self-hatred continues to undermine the cohesion of the Jewish People; continues to deprive it of the necessary strength to resist its enemies. In other words: it puts Judaism's very existence at risk.

However, to better define what I meant, I am bringing at this stage already a few instances picked here and there from various points

in Jewish history, to show that the Jews have always been their worst enemies; that they like shooting themselves in the foot:

* A fratricidal tendency has since the earliest time been a Jewish affliction. There is not a cause or issue which cannot be cited as having invited infighting in Jewish society. In the past it was mainly politics, and so it is to this day. One political party sees in the other personal enemies, even traitors to the country. Every stage of cultural progress and every advance in human enlightenment have divided the Jewish people into camps. Religious differences - and the hostility deriving therefrom - have threatened more than once the peace among the Jews; have made them ridiculous and vulnerable in the eyes of their enemies. Interpretations of the Tnach, even a single word - in certain cases even a single letter - have caused outbursts of the severest anger and hatred in one camp for the other. (I do not know if the actually prevailing conditions in Jewry are less threatening, but at times it appears that the various religious camps may even take up arms against the others.)

* Disrespect for their spiritual and political leaders has often posed a threat. I will recite one instance reported in the Bible: "...and the people joined forces against Moses and Aaron and said to them: 'You take too much upon yourselves! The whole community and all its members are consecrated, and Yahweh lives among them. Why do you set yourselves higher than the community of Yahweh?'"

* Very little good can be said of the kings in biblical history who showed no love or sympathy for their people. On the contrary!

* The Roman General Tiberius Julius Alexander - a Jew, the nephew of the Jewish philosopher and interpreter Philo - was second-in-command in the war against the Jews. He personally was cruelly and unfeelingly implicated in the destruction of the Second Temple.

* Also Josephus, the famous historian of the antique, collaborated with the Romans in the war which led to the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth.

* During the calamitous Roman occupation of Palestine following the destruction of the Temple, a great number of casualties were caused by Jews fighting against Jews.

* During the terror of the Spanish Inquisition, great numbers of Jews converted to Christianity. A majority of them became enthusiastic collaborators of those who were engaged in the Church's efforts to destroy the Jewish People.

* Internecine fights among the Jews were throughout their history anything but a rare feature; but the propagation by Jews of negative view of other Jews; the defamation of Jews by other Jews - in short all possible manifestations of jewish self-hatred - appears to have greatly flourished during the Emancipation, when jewish writers and preachers, in order to justify their own escape into assimilation, cast other less fortunate and less accultured Jews - mainly those of eastern european origin - as pariahs; decried them as a different, as an in every sense of the word inferior race of people.

* But we do not have to go that far back in history. Coming nearer to our time, I will mention Edmund Montagu, who is a typical jewish self-hater. Made a Lord, this english Jew forgot - or tried to make others forget - his background. In Lloyd George's government he reached the high rank of Secretary of State for India. This same man, who was responsible for the passing of the India Act - which granted wide powers of self-government to the Indians - used all his power and prestige to oppose the Balfour Declaration. And indeed, he succeeded in having the concessions made therein to the Jews considerably watered down.

* Many of us still remember the jewish Field-Marshal Milch of the Luftwaffe, Goering's friend and Hitler's favourite.

* In most all of the countries under communist regime Jews were among the most zealous enemies and persecutors of Jews.

* Zionism - that unique jewish liberation movement - has been one of the markstones of our century. As long as history is taught, Zionism will be cited as a great and successful event in recent history. But in these our days a breed of historians, playwrights and journalists - the majority of them israeli Jews - has emerged, who eagerly compete how best to denigrate Zionism and zionist achievements. It should not surprise us, that they find an enthusiastic echo abroad.

"A man's worst enemies are those of his own house and family; and he who makes his law a curse, by his own law he shall certainly die", were William Blake's words.

Scattered all over the world, Jews have been exposed to many an extraneous cultural wave. Inevitably - and this was the case already in the earliest phases of jewish history, as I have mentioned before - Judaism had again and again, and at every stage in its development, been impacted by the ideas and ideologies dominant in its immediate surroundings. Such a steady influence from outside continued even during

the centuries, when the Jews had to live in ghettos where they were forced into a more or less total isolation and insulation. These contacts and impacts were always to have a marked influence, whether or not the Jews were allowed direct contacts with the surrounding world; or whether the impact of their hostile surrounding was excessive or not. Inevitably and always and everywhere the Jews' life in the Diaspora brought with it their acculturation to the living conditions of the other side of the ghetto wall; and induced them to absorb the customs to which they were not even directly exposed. But, however large these influences may have been; and however great the acculturation had been, these were never allowed to interfere with - or to bring about a change in - the fundamental principles of the Judaism of those who continued to cherish their Jewishness. This applies not only to the temptations the Jews experienced in Moslem Spain or in Christian Venice, but also to the life of the Jews in Yemen or in Ethiopia: these Jews' Jewishness remained intact; and - by profiting from being accepted in their cultural environment - they in turn gratefully contributed their share to the elevation of their host countries onto higher cultural levels.

In the course of these evolvments; and in the wake of such interaction, the Jews in Europe played a significant role in the decourse of the Renaissance, the time classical culture was reborn; and they greatly helped in the development of Humanism. By identifying with - and directly and actively involving themselves in - the newly born cultural currents; and thanks also to the liberal attitudes marking those centuries of cultural revolution, the Jews gratefully benefited from the new vistas which were opened to them.

From the time of the Renaissance onwards the Bible was studied under a different light and from new perspectives. Spiritual leaders emerged, who turned to the source of Jewish Gnosticism, which Jewish scholars had in the early centuries of our era neglected, because it had become associated with the Christian form of Gnosis. Religious-intellectual studies - ignoring the warnings of the Rabbis of the Talmud against "taking interest in magic, mysticism and messianism" - took a mystic approach to the divine mysteries. The Kabbala came into being.

(Kabbala - which can be translated as "what has been received" or as "tradition" - claims to be of ancient origin; claims to exist since time immemorial; claims to have been transmitted since from one generation to the next. There is no proof for all these claims. The Kabbala started most likely with the Sefer Ha'Zohar al

Ha'Torah (The Book of Splendour of the Torah), written around 1250 CE by the Spanish Jew Moses Shem-Tov de Leon. Also his assertion, that he was not the author but Rabbi Shimeon bar Yochai, can be disposed of as a myth. Kabala deals in mystic terms mainly with material taken from Genesis, the Song of Songs and Ezekiel. Later on Luria's school of kabbalistic mysticism took over, and provided a cosmological interpretation of the Creation. It has produced a rich literature, which is reverently studied to this day.)

It is of interest, that in the Kabbala - in contrast to other mysticisms, and of course also to the Tnach - God is not seen as of physical shape. Kabbala - similarly to Buddhism - teaches, that everything is God; that there is nothing but God; that all emanates from God. Kabbala does not change Judaism's direction; nor does it interfere with the foundations of Judaism. However, it has never encompassed true Jewish thought; nor was it ever accepted as an important teaching system of Judaism. It would, understandably, be impossible for strictly traditional and orthodox Judaism - which disdains even mythology - to develop any degree of sympathy for Kabbala. For the adherents to these currents in Judaism all questions appertenant to earthly and future life are answered by the Tnach and the Talmud; they do not have to resort to mysticism and myth. In case any religious Jew has a problem in life; or he encounters problems or difficulties in the comprehension of the tennets of his faith, he will turn to his rebbe for help and advice. Orthodox rabbis are not only religious leaders and spiritual guides; they are also philosophers of religion, who know the answers in all cases and every instance of theological perplexity.

The absence of a mystical side in traditional Judaism appears to have alienated a large part of today's youth, who have turned to Buddhism, Zen - and even to Hinduism - in the belief and hope to find there satisfaction and fulfillment. That they merge themselves in oriental and esoteric religions, or even in any of the actually rampant cults, indicates that they are religious individuals searching to fill a religious vacuum. Most of these, mainly young, people are lost forever to Judaism; and whereas they often represent valuable elements, Judaism is weakened. But all in all, these are trends, usually passing trends, and are not a danger to Judaism and its survival.

However, it is a great pity, that to these young people Judaism has never been presented in sufficiently interesting and acceptable terms. There have always been Jews who have searched for the mystique

apart from the Kabbala.

Judaism's survival was in the last nearly 1800 years far more threatened - and more than once - by the Church's ever more pervading power. I will paraphrase the catholic theologian Romano Guardini: "the Church is the cross on which she is endeavouring to crucify Judaism". The Church has never relented in her persecutions of the Jews. She has since her birth threatened to annihilate those who refuse to be baptised. Christian hostility to, and its persecution of, the Jews originated with the latter's adamant refusal to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth; to accept him as the Messiah; and to agree to his claim, that he is a descendent of King David. Much of what Jesus is said to have said is invented; and much of what is told about Jesus has been added later. But the messianic version of his origin has not been invented by the gospel writers: Jesus himself had made the claim that he is of davidic descendance, even though there is not the slightest evidence that his ancestors had belonged to the House of David (or even that he had said so). And, furthermore, as it is not accepted in Judaism, that anybody once dead - especially after having been dead for three days - can ever come back to life, anybody who agrees with the truth of such an episode; anybody who attempts to bring about such an event; anybody who reports only such an occurrence, would have been accused of "trafficking in spirits" - a behaviour, an undertaking, an idea even which are explicitly condemned in the Torah.

The Church maintains - and about this more or less the majority of all christian denominations are in agreement - that God's Covenant with the Jews is no more valid, because it has been replaced with the one - as the Church has decided - God has made with the Christians.

One may suppose that, in view of the Jewish People's survival in contradiction of all christian prophecies, the christian churches should have realized they have no valid explanation for their assumption that the Jews' heritage has been abrogated. The attempt to explain the Jews' survival because they have "to serve as witnesses" is a rather lame, a rather pitiful attempt at an explanation. Neither are these types of Christians likely to find consolation in Toynbee's definition of the Jews as a fossilized race; for fossils do not live; neither do they build and fight.

There is, however, a refreshing breeze passing now through the

christian world. Powerful currents exist among the bible-trusting Christians, who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; who believe in the God who had become flesh in Jesus Christ, who also believe, that God has not canceled his Covenant with the Jewish People.

In the course of its biblical and post-biblical history the Jewish People had to fight many a battle for its very existence. There had been many a time when it was in danger of complete annihilation. And Judaism and the Jewish People have always survived. I agree: in this respect I should not call the Jewish Nation's history very unusual; for in principle these were wars for independence and survival, which all through mankind's history many a nation had to fight. It should not be disputed, on the other hand, that the Jewish People had an unusual large share of such wars.

However, during the last 1900 years or so Judaism's fight for its very survival was of quite a very character and had a quite different basis: it was an ongoing war directed by its enemies exclusively against - and in reaction to - the jewishness of the Jews; against the religious background of the Jews; against the otherness of the Jews. This war is going on, fueled by a hostility sui generis: the specific antisemitic ideology.

The Church can claim exclusive authorship for this hatred of Jews. It is a specific christian prerogative. The Church had started it. In pursuing her antisemitic aims she was from the outset as hypocritical as she was determined.

Wherever Christianity had taken roots, antisemitism became a widely used and usefully applied fact of life. It was turned into a popular ego-boosting instrument. It had become a never dulled frustration-easing weapon. It was an always readily available attention-deviating analgesic of the christian world.

Why should the Church have started and thereafter maintained such a campaign ? Because Christianity searched to hide its jewish roots; because it feared "losing face", when its background came under scrutiny.

I am reminded of a speech Disraeli made in the House of Commons: "...half of Christendom worships a Jew, and the other half a Jewess...; which, do you think, be the superior race, the worshiped or the worshiper ?"

Antisemitism became so deeply ingrained; became so very much an instinctive mental short-cut; became so much an instinctive reaction

in all layers of human society, that it did not show a reduction in extent - not even a lowering of its profile - after the Church's power had become curtailed. It did not show lessening in intensity when the Church's influence had started to wane. By that time the negative attitude to Judaism had become a self-maintained and independently functioning perpetuum mobile in the psychological make-up of the entire world, whether christian or not. This applies also to the countries whose populace had never even met a Jew.

This should be an axiom for today's Jewry, with the help of which they can rid themselves of the illusion they have nourished since the Enlightenment - the time Kant called the end of man's self-imposed slavery to ignorance and superstition - that Atheists, especially of the marxist kind, have to differ in the intensity of their antisemitism from fervent church attendants. Secularists, Atheists, Agnostics, Cultists and others who have distanciated themselves from Christianity, are no less outspoken in their hatred for the Jew. Their antisemitism has not to refer to Jesus and the Gospels; nor have they to point to the crucifix. They have found in their mistaken interpretation of racism a suitable weaponry.

George Orwell said about antisemitism: "It's not something that an adult can indulge; it's not something an adult mind can conceive; it's not something that can be part of your life". But since nearly 2000 years nearly uncountable millions could and can.

Like all other forms of racism, antisemitism is liable to become more evident whenever a people is exposed to the physical effects of wars or disasters; whenever a people is under economic stress; whenever work places have become scarce; whenever job opportunities become scarce. Antisemitism, serving as the Gentile's inborn defence mechanism, is set in motion as soon as he has to face deficiencies. I better say, as soon as he begins to experience difficulties in his daily life.

And is there ever a time in average man's life when he is free of deficiencies and difficulties ?

To the Jew antisemitism has perennially and inescapably been a problem in all his life. Jean-Paul Sartre postulated somewhere, that antisemitism had always been, and continues to be, most essential for Judaism's survival. I have long pondered about this statement; and I have more by instinct than by reasoning come to the conclusion, that he was he right when he said the Jews owe - to some degree at least - their survival to their never ceasing exposure to the vicissitudes

of antisemitism.

Christian anti-jewish attitudes started from the day the Church became organized. It was the reaction to the Jews' denial of Christ's divinity; it was caused by the Jews' refusal to accept the Church's principles on blind faith; and it was the outcome of the Jews' categorical assertion, that Judaism's precepts are beyond examination and debate.

But the Church could all through its existence - from the day it became a Church and ever since - notch up at least some kind of victory in the person of the Jew who converts to Christianity; who - or his descendants - turns into paragons of antisemitism. We can start counting this species with the gospel writers of some 2000 years ago as among the first of such prototypes.

The Blood Libel has since the earliest days of the Church been a cherished ingredient in the make-up of christian antisemitism. It is responsible for the loss of hetacombs of jewish lives. Has it ever come to the attention of the writers, preachers and propagators of this primitive lie, that this very same accusation had originally been leveled by the Romans and other pagans against the early Christians ? And that it was in turn later on used by these very same early Christians against the Jews ?

Even though Jewry and Judaism over the centuries had to suffer greatly from never ceasing antisemitic persecutions, their survival was never in question. However, considering the widespread antagonism against Jewry in general - for which in our own days the "enlightened and cultured" components of humankind find in anti-zionist propaganda, and in anti-Israel activities a politically acceptable pseudonym - any instinctively felt and outwardly exhibited certainty of Judaism's continued survival is nowadays neither appropriate nor justified.

Antisemitism has gained power as a social and economic blackmail; has been turned into a military and political weapon. It is openly and brutally - at other times insidiously and openly - applied everywhere by societies and associations, by official bodies and governments, in reaction to the powerful position Israel occupies in the Middle East; and in reaction to the prominence Jews have gained in a number of countries and in many a field.

Again it is important to point out, that wherever antisemitism

has taken roots - and today it is rooted everywhere in the world - it is an outgrowth of the Church's original antisemitism; it is a weed which continues to luxuriate; which has not lost its harmful effect. Wherever this kind of antisemitism was and is found in moslem and other non-christian countries, it has invariably been introduced there by Christians. Or it has been copied, as an emblem of the superior western culture, from the christian West. Or it has been eagerly absorbed by the members of the educated society during their studies abroad, and was, full of zeal, implanted by them in their own home soil. All these channels by which the antisemitic poison can penetrate into the non-christian world, I could myself observe in Pakistan and India. Added to this are today the nefarious side-effects of TV and Internet.

Antisemitism - possibly less openly in evidence but certainly better provided with finances and even arms - is today more than ever a vital threat to the peaceful existence of the Jewish People, be it in Israel, be it in the Diaspora. It is, therefore, of importance that Jews never cease to be vigilant; that Jews never slacken their guard against this evil; that Jews never nourish utopian illusions; that Jews never forget the antisemitic excesses of the past.

I realize that entire libraries have been written about the subject of antisemitism; and for this reason alone would it be preposterous of me to write here at still greater length about this subject. It would also for many another reason be impossible for me to do so. However, I cannot forgo to bring at least a fraction of the specific material I have available. That is to say, I cannot prevent myself from citing at this stage a few rather recent instances of clearly evident, though often camouflaged, hatred for the Jews, which have impressed - and have still more depressed - me very much, especially as these have often been judged as purely political or strategic moves; and have not been understood as mostly motivated by antisemitic hatred, even by Jews usually very sensitized in such matters .

There is not a country in the world where, to some degree at least, antisemitism does not affect and influence political activities and military strategy. Whether consciously or not, it affects social life and commercial activities everywhere. Modern antisemitism may actually not threaten the physical destruction of Judaism, but it can have a deleterious and dangerous effect insofar, as it will hasten the slide of many more Jews into assimilation, and ultimately lure them into

conversion.

Herewith a set of antisemitic events in recent history, which most of us have forgotten in the euphoria of today's sloganeering:

* In the fifty years preceding the Second World War, the New York Times did not allow the publication of photos showing bearded Jews.

* After the First World War Britain had been entrusted by the League of Nations - on the basis of the Balfour Declaration - with the mandate over the greatly underpopulated, and vastly underdeveloped Palestine the Allies had conquered from the Turks. It was a clear betrayal of the Jews, when in the early twenties the British summarily detached 75% of the Mandate area, the entire part of Palestine situated east of the Jordan River; and therein created the first Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan ever in history. Britain further betrayed the Jews by severely curtailing their immigration, while Arabs from all over the Middle East - attracted by the to them unusually high salaries paid by the Jewish settlers - could immigrate freely.

* Under the British mandatory rule, lasting from 1917 to 1948, the authorities favoured Arabs over Jews in appointments for municipal government. It appointed only Arab mayors - e.g. in 1940 they refused to acknowledge the democratically elected Jewish Mayor of Jerusalem - even though the Jews were always in the majority.

* It is a proven fact, that in the '20s and '30s the British Power in Palestine encouraged Arab pogroms; that British soldiers disarmed Jewish servicemen who had fought alongside them in Europe. All this in order to court favours with the Arabs who had not only sided with the Nazis, but had often actively hindered the war effort. After WWII had ended, the British kept homeless Jews out of Palestine. They even returned shiploads of them to Germany.

* A former high-ranking Foreign Office official conceded, that during and immediately after the war the BBC did not report about the Shoah because "...we wanted to keep the Middle East quiet... and did not want to give the Arabs the impression, that we had suddenly turned into a pro-Jewish pro-Zionist organization".

* How can one explain the anti-Israel distortions of the BBC - the same applies also to the Time, the Geographic Magazine and many other leading publications - but with hatred for the Jews? The continued antisemitism of the British, it seems to me, is due to their long and painful memory of having had to give up Palestine; of having

been unable to overcome the young Zionists who went about establishing their homeland.

* The Swiss Government has confessed now, that it has signed a secret agreement with the Nazis to turn back Jews attempting to flee to safety across their border.

* There is not need to enlarge on the well-known antisemitism of Poland's catholic population. This was the reason why the Nazis placed the Concentration Camps mainly in Poland.

* Although in the late 19th century 70% of the physicians in Vienna had been Jews, none of them was ever appointed to a leading position in a medical college or a hospital. Austria, this most catholic country, provided the relatively largest number of Nazi officers. Austria has made it clear to the world - to Jews and Arabs in particular - that it recognizes the latter's claim to Jerusalem.

* The Vatican, fully aware of the Nazis' programmed extermination of the Jews, signed a Concordat with Hitler.

* In 1938 the delegates at the Evian Conference refused to open their countries to jewish refugees.

* The Allies' overwhelming indifference; and the British' outspoken hostility, towards jewish refugees from Nazi terror, have been amply documented. Unfortunately, they were no less amply known to the Nazis.

* During the Second World War Churchill gave orders, that the railroad lines leading to Auschwitz be bombed; but Anthony Eden, one of the ministers in his cabinet, saw to it that the orders were not carried out.

* We have every reason to feel happy about - and secured by - the special interest and the protective attitude of the American Administration towards the Jews in general and Israel in particular. We have, apparently already forgotten, that this has, alas, not always been the case; and we have no assurance, that it will continue thus also in future. America has, after all, primarily to look after its own people and interests. We have to be aware, that Liberalism is waning in the United States, and conservatism - which as a rule equals antisemitism - is flowing into the vacuum.

* Everywhere on college campuses - in America, Canada, Australia, Germany, France etc - anti-jewish and anti-Israel hostility is growing.

* During the Second World War, highest placed American government officials - along with their British counter-parts - conspired to prevent the birth of the Jewish state; and after it had been created, they never

ceased to plan its destruction. For the first 15 years after the birth of the State of Israel, Britain and the USA maintained a strict arms embargo on the Jewish State, while at the same time freely supplying arms to all its arab neighbours. Israel would not have survived, had France and Czechoslovakia not provided the needed weapons. "The world's major powers have repeatedly planned to bring about partial or total destruction of Israel", write Loftus and Aarns in "The Secret War against the Jews".

* The CIA is to this day hostile towards Israel. This makes the vaunted Central Intelligence Organization an unreliable custodian of Israel's military secrets. William Casey, the former head of the CIA, was an outspoken antisemite; and in addition he was very hostile towards Israel. At one stage he succeeded in recruiting Israelis to betray their country. At least four of these were caught red-handed and incarcerated.

* When Saadat of Egypt hesitated to sign the Camp David Accord, the US promised him to provide Egypt with everything that would help Egypt in a first strike against Israel: satellite photos, israeli code intercepts, exact plans of Israel's nuclear force and missile sites. At least until 1994, Egypt and Saudi Arabia continued to receive from the US information about Israel's military secrets - and the Saudis passed these on to other arab states as well as to the PLO.

* More than half of the Americans polled in 1992 said, that knowing a presidential candidate was an antisemite would not affect their vote.

* During Caspar Weinberg's term the State Department kept vital syrian military information from Israel. It was Israel's right to get this information. Israel would have been at a great disadvantage, were it not for Jonathan Pollard.

* Pollard's treatment at the hands of american justice is inhuman and a scandal. The half-Jew Caspar Weinberger is greatly responsible for the treatment given to Pollard. It is generally accepted that he is thus treated because he is a Jew. For over ten months he was kept isolated in a special ward for the criminally insane. After his arrest Pollard was advised in writing by the Justice Department to sign away his rights to a trial against the promise of a better treatment. This way much mischief by officials was covered up, e.g. the help the USA gave to Saddam Hussain. Pollard was repeatedly refused parole though it was proved that many of the sins laid at his doorstep, were committed by Aldrich Ames who had been blamed Pollard for his own misdeeds. By

the way: Ames was never placed in a ward of the insane or in solitary confinement.

* Nazi propaganda continues to have an impact, even though decades have passed since the collapse of the Nazi state. Mainly young people succumb to the seduction of rightist ideologies. They are entranced by the display of banners, uniforms and march music. In 1994 a survey of Germans showed that 25% do not like Jews; and that 22% do not want Jews as neighbours.

* Until the recent establishment of diplomatic relations, India has refused to allow Israel to participate in fairs and congresses. It refused permission to the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra to play in India under its proper name. It has even refused to host Israeli teams in international competitions.

* "Antisemitic incidents are increasing, and anti-jewish hostility by Islamic militants is rising", says the "Antisemitism World Report" for the year 1995. In this regard Canada appears to have today the doubtful honour of ranking high among the western nations. In 1994 the range and number of antisemitic incidents reached the highest level recorded since decades. Jewish schools are threatened with bombs. Jewish leaders receive hate messages. Jewish doctors are accused of poisoning their patients. Jewish cemeteries are vandalized. Swastikas are smeared on synagogue walls. And the Canadian Jews appear not too concerned; they console themselves, that conditions are worse in the USA, in Germany, in Russia and so on.

* When the Peruvian Javier Perex de Cuellar, as Secretary-General of the UN opened the 1991 Auschwitz Exhibition at UN Hqrs in New York, he never mentioned the word "Jew" in his opening speech.

* Computer networks have become a vehicle to disseminate racist material; and to maintain links between antisemitic groups world-wide.

I sincerely hope, that with this depressing list I have seeded the knowledge of an antisemitism persisting all over the world.

In the course of my researching all which has somehow an association with Judaism; while I have been delving into Jewish history in particular; and when I went about collecting the data with which I am working here, one question has remained uppermost in mind: could all which has happened to the Jewish People in the course of its history possibly have happened according to a divine plan? Can all the history of the Jewish People - the positive as well as the negative side - possibly be

associated with a divine purpose ? Is behind all this an ultimate divine scheme ? Can all this be otherwise explained than with a specific guideline ? Could not, what I have describe above of the hostile environment, very well be a factor in such a scheme ? Are there possibly also other such instances ?

With the dawning of the Enlightenment - along with the accompanying Emancipation - a new atmosphere was created. The Jews emerged from the ghettos, where they had sought and found protective isolation until then. The restrictions forced upon the Jews came to an end. The Jews, entering the world of intellectual freedom and of modern thought, could at last unfold their genius.

Emancipation did bring the Jews the far-reaching improvements which are evident today; and which are no less also very much taken for granted today. World Jewry has never had it as good; but was also never as much spiritually deprived. Every Jew, also those who had known pre-war Germany and had experienced the Shoah in person, should try to imagine and realize - and thereafter never forget - the kind of humiliations and the vastness of persecutions which the Jews had to suffer until not so long ago.

In the atmosphere created at the dawn of Enlightenment a new world was opened to Jews. They could register successes in most every field of science and culture. For instance, 27 (40%) of all Nobel Prizes in Medicine, were granted to Jews. In most democratic countries Jews are to all appearances treated as equals. As much as any other ethnic group they enjoy what the modern world has to offer. In which ever democratic host country they live today, they are economically better off than the average population. A considerable majority can even be classified as affluent. They are involved in the cultural life of the country. They dominate some of the professions; e.g. in certain medical specialities - like Psychiatry, Pediatrics, Internal Medicine - a large number of Jews are found. Jews are part of the society. They are often members of the political elite.

But antisemitism has not been abrogated. It is still alive - and waiting wherever it is not active. The Jews in Israel and in the United States should not project the actually rather low level of manifest antisemitism in their own environment on other parts of the democratic world. They should also otherwise not generalize their personal safety and freedom, their own successes and opportunities, on the Jews in other countries; not even on those living in the western-style democracies like France and Britain, Germany and Australia.

But what is good for the Jews is not always good for Judaism, as we can learn from the impact Emancipation - and in our lifetime russian-style Marxism - have had on the Jews.

Can this observation not also be applied to Israel, where the Secularists claim that religion is not essential to being a Jew? Who maintain that an Israeli does not need Judaism? Whatever the - usually aggressively brought forth - answer others may have to these specific questions, it has in my opinion to be accepted as an axiom, that a Jew cannot survive as a Jew without accepting a minimal share of Judaism. And viceversa: that Judaism cannot survive if not all conscious Jews accept their share of the responsibilities Judaism imposes on the Jew. To demand being designated as Jewish only from an ethnic angle; to be counted a Jew without being also bonded to the Jewish religion, is an a priori faulty conception, which would play into the hands of the missionaries who have not slackened their efforts. As very active among these have to be counted the so-called Messianic Jews, the "Jews for Jesus".

The danger to Judaism's survival - due to modern Jewry's lacking in firm adhesion to its Judaism - the danger of becoming an easy victim to the lures of the tireless missionaries on the look-out for prey; the danger of being seduced by the attractions offered to all those assimilating into the gentile world, are greater today than that of antisemitism. I will go even so far as to say, that these dangers are greater than that of antisemitism had ever been in Jewish history.

There is a consensus among scholars and teachers, among reformers and activists, that only a well planned and properly organized Jewish education - starting in childhood - can arrest this dangerous trend. But, alas, Jewish education is most insufficient and inefficient.

The Jewishness of a Jew, furthermore, cannot have enough vitality to resist the temptations of assimilation, if he does not recognize that the Jews are, and have always been, a "special people"; and if he does not sincerely and unequivocally identify himself as belonging to this "special people". Nevermind! If you object I shall use instead the expression "a selected people".

And let us be aware, that one of the many indications of the Jewish People's being special, is its continued existence to this day. It is true, that Israel figures today as the cement which binds together the Jewish People; but it cannot be overlooked, that the Jewish Nation has for two thousand years survived without a country of its own. It

was this knowledge of specialness, of selectiveness, of otherness, of uniqueness which contributed to this phenomenon; which continues to form the life-stream to Judaism; and which gave and gives the Jewish People the will and strength to survive. This primordial knowledge - I may call it "this gut-feeling" - had been sufficient to create and cherish the dream; to sustain and maintain the hope; to believe and trust the promise, of an eventual return to a national home.

(I shall not pursue here my conception of Israel's place in what I perceive as a divine plan. I have already described my ideas on another occasion. Perhaps I shall find it necessary to do so again at a later stage in this essay.)

It is surprising to most outside the Jewish world - but no less also to many Jews - that Judaism and Jewry have survived against all the odds they had to face in recorded history; that they have survived considering all the dangers - and no less also all the temptations - they faced in the past and continue to face. This is not one of the rare cases where a small residue is left from an once large and strong nation! The number of Jews has never been large; certainly never as high - about 18 million - as at the beginning of the 20th century. The Shoah has reduced this number by one third. Inter-marriage and assimilation will certainly reduce the number of Jews still further.

However, detrition by murder and assimilation is in no way a new experience for the Jewish People: the five million Jews who are supposed to have lived at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, were during the Middle Ages reduced by persecutions and conversions to one million at the most.

Today we observe an ever greater number of Jews becoming alienated from their religion. The flattening of Judaism's tradition and the emaciation of its religious content, affect large segments of today's Jewry. It lowers not only the cultural value and the religious meaning of Judaism in the Diaspora, but will lead also to a further reduction in the numerical strength of the Jewish People.

(This is indeed a "specific Jewish phenomenon". While all the nations in the world show a steady increase of their population, the Jewish Nation has steadily grown less in numbers. There are today already less than the 12 million or so left from the 18 millions of 1940. Following the damage the Shoah has caused, assimilation

is now ceaselessly gnawing away at this number. These statistics are still more impressive, if we relate them to the total world population: in this century the Jews have been reduced from 0.10% of the world population to 0.03%.)

I do not share the frequently heard surprise, that the Jews have survived the centuries lasting threats of extermination; that they have equally survived the temptations of conversion and assimilation. There has always and at every stage been in the history of the Jewish Nation a nucleus of Jews who - often very small in number - have defended their Jewishness against the threats and temptations of their time; who have maintained their faith and trust in God; and have kept unaltered their adherence to the tenets of Judaism, Their secret weapon was - and continues to be as I have mentioned before - their consciousness of the fact, that Jews are different from other people.

Indeed, they had every reason to feel different. And in addition they had every cause to be proud of their being different. To them being different meant being special. From the beginning of its existence as a nation the Jewish People was meant to be special people and thus also a different people. This is the meaning of "Holy". This is what Balaam meant. This is and has remained Judaism's everlasting obligation. And this is a basic cause of the ambiguity, if not hostility, shown the Jewish State by the christian world at large.

But on the other hand there is no doubt, that from the time of the Enlightenment; when - in the words of Moses Mendelsohn - they were given the means of cultivating the qualities shared by human beings of every nationality and religion; when they were carried onwards and upwards on the wave of Emancipation; when under the impact of the newly offered freedom, Judaism's position and the Jews' life in the gentile world has become more complicated. The cohesion and inner strength of the Jewish People, which - I find here a further indication to agree with Sartre - only the unrelenting pressure of antisemitism had until then kept strong if not also alive, have been steadily more and more weakened. Large numbers of Jews gave up their religion and knelt in front of the baptismal basin. In other words: assimilation has become a far greater threat to the survival of Judaism than past persecutions.

In America, more than elsewhere, has the Jews' dream of reaching equality with other Americans come true. To them the gigantic menorahs,

which are lighted in public places of over 200 towns, constitute the irrefutable evidence, that they have at last achieved the status of fully equal citizens. But the Jews' bondage to Judaism has also been weakened. Recent surveys have shown, that less than five percent of american Jews call themselves religious. Over two million american Jews declared in 1991, that they do not consider themselves jewish. Large numbers of educated Jews declare quite frankly, that were they to develop a major interest in their religion, this would turn out to be a serious obstacle in the - to them desirable, and no less also inevitable appearing - process of Judaism's development into a secular, humanistic and libertarian society.

Today marriages with only one jewish partner make up the majority of the marriages in the Diaspora communities. Only few of the non-jewish partners in mixed marriages convert to Judaism, mostly because the jewish partner himself or herself has become too much distanciated from his or her religion; and this being the case, one can hardly expect him or her to act as an example, as an adviser, as a guide in matters jewish. The old-time strong jewish family life, which was and still is the best barrier against assimilation, conversion and inter-marriage, is missing in large segments of Diaspora Jewry. The kind and quality of jewish education which is today offered in most schools and synagogues in the Diaspora, can impossibly suffice, if the life of the family life is not also built around at least a minimal degree of jewish-religious observance. Identification with a besieged Israel; and unexpected outbreaks of antisemitism anywhere in the world, have slowed down the assimilatory process among the mainly zionist-orientated Jews.

It is hardly a consolation that this is not a new phenomenon in jewish history. But it may be of some help to know, that this reaction by today's Jewry to the reduction of outside hostile pressures is not new in jewish experience; and it may be useful to learn, that such an attitude to the liberal cultures' offer of temptations, is a recurrent theme in the diaspora countries. It may make the outlook still less pessimistic to know, that already in ancient times - for instance during the reign of the Seleucids, when Judaism had to struggle with the impact of Hellenism - many of the rich and influential Israelites; and along with them many from among the intelligentsia; and along with them many members of the priestly class; and along with them many leading members of the aristocracy, turned apostates and discontinued following the

ancient religious laws and customs; and refused to submit further to the commandments of the Torah.

(Whether associated with this phenomenon or not, it was also a time when civil war raged; when hatred and murder were rampant among the people. It was also the time when the Books of Apocalypses were written to express the all pervading feeling of desolation and pessimism. It was also the time when the Book of Daniel surfaced, which proved of great therapeutic value to Judaism's survival. The spirit expressed in the Book of Daniel provided hope to the distressed people. It could bring consolation to the sagging morale of the people. It provided the assurance that just retribution will meet all evildoers. This, by the way, was also the time when the belief in the resurrection of the dead first evolved in Judaism.)

It is also important to know, that there has never been a time throughout Jewish history, when the trend to assimilate was not present. As a rule this trend tended to exuberate, whenever the Jews enjoyed a "good time". That is to say, whenever their host countries allowed them to enjoy a degree of equal rights or even full citizenship. Our generation lives through a replica of such a decourse of events. Again we observe in such environments the Jews' alienation from Judaism. Sometimes this sequence unrolls within the first generation; in other places it develops more slowly. We have to see evidence of this process - and have to perceive in this an omen - that a considerable majority of the Diaspora Jews, mainly in the USA, are not affiliated with a Jewish community; that they are not even interested in anything connected with Judaism. And this majority is, of course, not interested in, or involved with, the State of Israel.

But there are, luckily, large numbers of Jews - also mainly in the USA - who perceive in Israel at least a moral anchor. To me it is impressive, assuring and heartwarming to observe the large number of Diaspora Jews, who so strongly, actively and without any compromise identify with the purposes, the aims and the fate of Israel. On me - who has still not thrown off the burden which my childhood encounters with the vilest form of antisemitism have heaped upon me - it made a great impression to watch the American Jews uninhibitedly, freely and proudly parade their Jewishness on Remembrance Day and on Israel Day, when the Fifth Avenue in New York is closed to traffic, because thousands of Jews enthusiastically - and without the slightest thought about danger or antisemitism - are marching in parade. I am sure, that English and German Jews - and possibly others elsewhere too - would feel far too

shy and self-conscious to march in an open parade of their own. But will this enthusiasm for Israel, this identification with Israel, this belief in Israel continue; and will the oneness with Israel remain intact after this specific element among the Diaspora Jews has emigrated to Israel; and after those who have not come to Israel have died out ?

History in Israel would have taken another aspect, had more Jews - rich Jews, scientists, industrialists - felt the need to settle in Israel when Zionism was born; when the Balfour Declaration was issued; when Israel was created; when Jerusalem was again complete. Israel and Judaism would be different today. But the Jews missed this chance. Was this a test they failed ?

Fortunately nobody forced them. Fortunately they were well settled wherever they lived and had not to follow Maimonides' injunction: "If a person is forced to transgress the commandments, he is forbidden to remain in that place, but must emigrate, leave everything behind and wander day and night, until he has found a place where a person can observe the commandments".

In the course of his slide into assimilation the successful Jew strips away, as Steven Cohen says, "like an artichoke layer by layer his jewish identity". He divests himself first of Shabath observance and of Kashruth observance. This is the first obolus the Diaspora Jew offers for being permitted to feel secure and accepted. The Jew on the brink of assimilation attends a synagogue 2-3 times a year; but he will even on such rare occasions hardly keep the prayer-book - and his eyes - open, although he will as a rule find himself in a synagogue where the service is recited in english or a to him familiar language.

I read the other day of the complaint, the organizers of the Jewish Centre in the William College in the USA - who appear to be worried about the scarce attendance at prayer services - thought necessary to publicize. They sent a circular to the jewish students on the campus, with the single question: "Is there anything about the services, besides the Hebrew of course, that offends you, or makes you uncomfortable ?"

Diaspora Judaism is in a flux today. Diaspora Jews search for their roots. They are uncertain whether to let the roots wither or whether to replant them. If the latter, they wonder which soil to chose. And they wonder also, whether the replanted roots will take hold. And they wonder which kind of flower will bloom. Such Jews have not the advantage of a minimal jewish education, of a jewish family background.

Said Emile L. Fackenheim: "If....Jewish life is to have a claim to authority, then there must be a sense in which the Jewish past has authority". And Halkin (the author of "Letters to an American Jewish Friend") warned: "I am not saying that you cannot live an authentic Jewish life in the Diaspora. I am saying, that if the criterion is the future of the Jewish people, you are living in the wrong place".

There will always be a Diaspora. There should always be a Diaspora. It is wrong to preach and work for the abolishment of the Diaspora. Perhaps Ben Gurion meant this when he once said: "I am a Jew first, and an Israeli after that...", although it was his dream to abolish the Diaspora. The communities in Israel and the Diaspora should not only coexist, but should collaborate and benefit from each other. They are responsible for each other. Israel needs the Diaspora; and the Jews of the Diaspora need Israel. Judaism is - and will never cease to be - the binding element between them. As the Law of Return indicates, both Israel and the Diaspora have to recognize the fact, that they are mutually dependent; that they have a shared destiny; that they have to treat each other as members of one family; that they have to coordinate; that they have to cooperate; that they must know each other; that they must care for each other. Not only must the Diaspora Jew be well aware of Israel's problems; but Israel must also be aware of the problems Diaspora Jewry has to overcome.

Diaspora's Jewish communities have since Israel's establishment provided help to Israel, but also elsewhere to Jews in distress. In general only 33% of Jews donate to the United Jewish Appeal. These contributions tend to become less. Former big donors who have lived through the War and the Shoah; have witnessed the Birth of Israel, are dying off. Israel - and Jewry elsewhere - is to the descendants less important. The money the Diaspora sends today to Israel through the Jewish Agency or the World Zionist Organization is getting less; they are keeping more of their collections for their own needs. This is only to be welcomed, as they have indeed need not only of supporting their own poor people, but also of maintaining their educational systems. However, over-all World Jewry's financial contributions have not become less; much money is contributed directly to specific organizations and institutions in Israel and elsewhere.

However, although the Jews in the Diaspora should care for what goes on in Israel; although they may express their opinion; although they have all the right to advise and check on the use of the moneys

they donate, they cannot and should not interfere in the administration and politics of Israel. Above all they should not criticize Israel abroad. And far more important still is, that Israelis should not criticize their own country and people when they are abroad.

It is an illusion to see a remedy in a federation between Israel and the Diaspora. No doubt, although they are numerically equal, the Diaspora is financially stronger and economically better developed than Israel, will not see in the latter, who is still partly dependant on the contributions of Jews abroad - an equal partner. A partnership would not function either, as the Diaspora is ideologically too weak; and would not enjoy dependance on Israel for a continued flow of its jewish education, and the continued support of its jewish identification.

Still, Jews in the Diaspora should be cognizant, and should be appreciative, of Israel's role as the representative of all the Jews in the world. They should acknowledge, that Israel's efforts to defend, absorb and support Jews anywhere, are efforts on behalf - and in the name - of all the Jews in the world.

The Diaspora should and must take on these facets of modern jewish existence as important and significant duties; and the Diaspora can only take these tasks upon itself, as long as it remains vital and strong. Most everywhere in the Diaspora the Jews feel happy and lucky. They expect things to get even better. But the safety of the diaspora communities should not be taken for granted. Their roots show already signs of weakness. It will easily happen that social welfare and economic conditions will suffer in their host countries - somehow this must happen sooner or later - and the Jews will be made responsible for the anger and unhappiness which will shatter the coexistence. This prognosis applies to all the Diaspora, also to those jewish communities in the United States, in Australia, England and South Africa, who feel strong and indestructable in their prosperity; who feel secure and safe in their freedom of action and worship; who feel proud and happy in their acceptance by the mainstream of their host people.

Even if the Diaspora does recognise and acknowledge its tasks and duties; even if it builds its defences against outer and inner threats to its survival, the unfavourable socio-demographic trends in the jewish communities everywhere in the world have to be paid the right attention. They are a significant warning signal of which the diaspora communities should be aware: among their members the birthrate has dropped below the replacement level. Exogamy does not carry a blemish

anymore; that is to say, that "marrying out" is today - to the gentile public in America especially - an acceptable arrangement. Even in mixed marriages, where a small percentage of the gentile partners converts to Judaism, only a small part of these latter takes fully part in the practical life as a Jew or Jewess. It has, on the other hand, to be appreciated, that many among the gentiles who have become Jews, have made contributions to the advancement and enrichment of Judaism.

(I have to make a confession, however: I have no negative feelings about the Jews who give up being Jews; who assimilate; who want to forget their Jewishness; who convert. I feel sorry for them. I pity them for having - mostly without thinking and without a reason other than their comfort and their ignorance - given up a valuable and unique inheritance.

You may ask: does my attitude relate also to my own family? Don't I feel sorry about the steadily progressing distancing of my children from their Jewish inheritance? Yes, I do. In addition I feel guilty. My excuse may sound weak; and my explanation may be found poor, but during the decisive years when Kate and I should have actively engaged ourselves in imparting Jewishness to our children, these excuses were the only ones to me and Kate only acceptable; the only available; the only possible answer to the problems with which we had to wrangle: when I was called upon to give the necessary guidance - even to be only the proper example - in the education of my children, I was burdened by many grave problems. I was in addition handicapped by certain conceptions which had blinded me to the dangerous consequences which might result from putting them in effect. And then it was too late.)

And I ask myself also in this context: will the ongoing process of assimilation among diaspora Jews bring about the disappearance of the Jews in the Diaspora; or cause them at best to survive in the form of some hybrid-like pseudo-Jewish sect or cult? Is the steady and remarkable improvement, registrable in the status of the Jews all over the world, going to effect what past pogroms and genocides had been unable to achieve? Are the Jews to be classified as an endangered species?

I do not think that any of these questions merit an affirmative reply. I feel confident that the Jewish People shall survive as long as mankind survives - or better said: that mankind can only survive if Judaism survives. Why? I do not know why I feel thus.

Yes, I believe we are safe as long as mankind survives. I believe our fate is under divine guidance. I believe we are under divine

protection, I firmly believe that the biblical promise is still fully valid: "...and I shall bless those that bless you, and he who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families on earth shall be blessed".

Looking around me; and looking back into the past I can see, that this prophecy has to this day been fulfilled.

What has kept Judaism alive so far? What is going to preserve Judaism also in future? Is it rationalism? Is it Halacha? Is it mysticism? I do not know of any other force than a divine intention which has achieved this by all means one may possibly think of.

Every Jew, whether in the Diaspora or in Israel, will have to decide what kind of Jew he or she wants to be; and how Jewish they want their children to be. However, we cannot simply sit down and decide from one day to the next, that we want to become devoted Jews; or even to reason, that we want to identify only to a restricted degree with the Jewish faith. If, however, one starts to think along these lines; if one has such an idea only in the vaguest outlines floating around in one's subconscious mind, a sudden burst of enlightenment; or some kind of an upheaving experience; or some elevating or frightening emotional recall might precipitate these vague thoughts and ideas into an urgent wish; might transform them into a definite intention; might lead them to take decisive steps.

Such a wish or intention can become activated also in the process of one's education, religious or otherwise. It will make a sensitive person understand, that he can now fully comprehend what in the past he had only sensed. In an educated person learning of Jewish ethics; studying Jewish history; and coming to know Jewishness, can also create an unexpected resonance which may lead to directed creativeness. And a religiously predisposed person will realize, that religion is capable of satisfying his spiritual needs.

No educational institution, no synagogue, no Jewish school, no communal society has the strength to induce a Jew who is not fully conscious of his Jewishness, to continue his adherence to Judaism; and to maintain his contact with the Jewish People, unless his Jewishness is not also reflected within his immediate family; and if he is not in some form or other also involved in Jewish causes.

Neither can the ritualistic observances within the family; nor can the participation in synagogal worship, in and by themselves make a Jew into a proper Jew. It is the realization, the acknowledgement of one's Jewishness which are the sine qua non of being a proper Jew.

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An optimist ponders
about his people's survival
pt. 2 (p. 100-205)

AR 25045

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pt. 2 (p. 100 - 205) ch. - 6

To me Jewishness means to be a moral person, an ethical person. It means strict adherence to the ethical commandments dictated us in the Torah. It means also the acknowledgement of, and the adherence to, the history and tradition of the Jewish People. The Jew who keeps kashruth and says his prayer regularly, but is an immoral person and behaves in an ethically unacceptable way, possesses not what is required for his claim to Jewishness. He is not a true and proper Jew.

Before I continue exposing ethics central place in Judaism, I think it necessary to give a short definition of what I understand as, and want to see in, this more philosophical than religious concept. Ethics is the guideline for how man has to act in all his life's circumstance, be these good or bad, right or wrong. Though "morals" and "ethics" are often interchanged, there is a clear difference between them. The individual's ethical conduct is always directed by the accepted evaluation of the propriety and rightfulness of an action, while his morality indicates the quality of his own usual and habitual behaviour. Basically and simply it can be said, that an action is usually right and morally acceptable, if performing it gives us - though not necessarily at once - a sense of pleasure. Socrates taught that it is better to suffer injustice than to do an injustice; but the pleasure felt in such a case is only beneficial if it happens to a "good psyche". Kant said nearly the same: the only good thing is a morally good will. Man has to act in such a way, his categorical imperative says, that he never treats humanity - whether in his own person or in any other person - as a means but always and at the same time as his own good.

I too have asked myself many a time, what is good and what is bad; for what benefits man, and reflects on his character, can be good or bad. The main criterion derives from his background and is developed by his education. The social environment may have a positive or negative effect. A moral individual acts morally with the full intention to act morally. It is not necessarily a consciously directed decision. It is more often a spontaneous reaction. Moral man does not act morally to bring himself pleasure and happiness; he acts out of duty, induced by his sense of righteousness. A sense of pleasure and happiness is the reward for such an action.

Religious laws and commandments are ethical in extent and moral in content; they outline the right direction man should take. The language, the methods, the metaphysics used may become "unfashionable" in the course of time and will have to be adjusted; but the true content,

the ethical content, the moral rules and judgements of the religion will never have to be changed. They are eternal. Plato - and also Kant - taught that God's laws and commandments are not good and laudable because God has ordered man to follow them, but because the demands are ethically and morally good. This means, that not only the religious man can be a good man but also the atheist.

Religion is built around the rules of ethics. Fundamentally every religion's main precepts are fashioned to teach man how to live and act for his own spiritual wellbeing; for next man's happiness; and for the sake of contribution to the peace within the community.

To claim our place in the ranks of Judaism, we have to fulfil the duties the Covenant imposes on us. And we have, in addition, to live in accordance with the duties inherent in what we are appointed to be. We have to honour the special place our people is appointed to occupy in the scheme of things. The Jews, however, to whom Judaism does not represent the guiding force in their life; the Jews, to whom being a fulfilled Jew is not an aspiration in the value alignment of their existence; and the Jews, who do not strive to be a leading example in their immediate inter-human relations, have lost the right to claim their participation in the special assignment to which Judaism has been appointed, viz:- to foster the future and the aims of this our world.

It would be undignified to ridicule away as romantic and unreal my definition of the Jew's place in this world. It would be cheap to argue that, in view of the actual deterioration in the Jewish People's Jewishness, my optimism looks more than incongruous. Instead, I want my definition to be understood as one of the basic conditions for the Jewish People's appointment. It should be understood as the primary conditions inherent in this appointment which, regrettably, have so far not been met. And it should be valued as an integral part of the preconditions for Judaism's survival.

I have been pondering the fact, that although the sustained, bloody, ferocious onslaughts of hatred, which had been the fate of the Jews more or less throughout all the last twenty centuries; which had so many times brought about the expulsion of the entire Jewish population from one country or the other; and which had brought on in more than one instance the total annihilation of Jewish life in some communities if not even countries, these pogroms, persecutions and genocides have in reality never endangered the survival of the Jewish People as a whole.

Jews have always found somewhere a country where - even though often restricted to a single town - they were tolerated and were allowed to carry on with their life, even if mostly under inhuman and humiliating conditions. I have already mentioned on some previous page, that these persecutions had so very often the opposite effect from the one expected: that the adverse conditions and the antisemitic outrages - especially the restriction to closed-in ghettos which the Jews came in time to see as an advantage - had succeeded in reinforcing the cohesion among the Jews; had the effect to strengthen their faith, whenever they lived under adverse conditions which would have broken the morale of most other people.

We must, however, concede the truth, that we cannot expect to see now the same favourable effects, which the hostile surroundings - or even outright aggressive attitudes - had on the Jews in centuries past. In other words: we cannot expect similar favourable reactions among the Diaspora Jews to an antisemitic environment.

The gentiles' attitudes to Judaism; the popular reactions to the Jews in their environment; the views people have of Judaism in general, have not changed in the last thousand or so years. Neither can they be said to have become more sophisticated. Any world-wide economic failure; any political upheaval; even some climatic or natural disaster, is likely - in view of the actual global interaction in all political and economic spheres - to generate in the general populace a state of anxiety and uncertainty which will be turned into an uncontrollable, at first only indefinite but self-sustaining, hatred searching for an outlet and for a target to be victimized. In the state of universal sorrow, mourning and insecurity growing luxuriously in such an atmosphere, the search for a scapegoat - especially in view of the approaching millennium - may well have disastrous results for Israel and the Jews.

I may sound unduly pessimistic; and my fear may be uncalled for in view of the fact, that the majority of world Jewry lives for the first time ever in democratically ruled countries; in view of the fact, that not physical oppression but assimilation are the primary threats; and in view of the fact, that the life of the Jews qua Jews is secured; and in view of the fact, that they enjoy socially and legally full equality in the democratic world. But let us not indulge in too much optimism. This security and equality is only a thin layer upon an undrained pool of antisemitism.

I sincerely hope and pray that I shall be proved wrong.

Considering that antisemitism - since its penetration into the inter-relationship of the Jewish People with the non-jewish world - has played such an important role in Judaism's survival, I think it in place, that I expand still further on this theme in addition to what I have already written in the beginning of this chapter.

For too long antisemitism has been the bane of the Jewish People. We know that already in ancient times - in the greek environment of Alexandria, for instance - the Jews were victimized, demonized and not rarely also physically attacked as unwelcome foreign elements. But in those times the persecutions were mostly initiated and nourished by personal and economic jealousies. They were only to a lesser degree due to religious intolerance.

We must not overlook what may be called the positive factor to which I have already repeatedly drawn attention: that throughout their history also the degree to which the Jews living in western countries identified with their own history and culture - and not only their own religion and tradition - has been deepened and shaped by the intensity of the antisemitic adversity they encountered in the countries in which they lived. To this phenomenon Spinoza, Sartre, Freud and many others have already drawn attention. The latter, for instance, wrote that he never properly felt to be a Jew, until he was exposed to the vicious antisemitism which was the order of the day at the University of Vienna.

I think it safe for me to say, that antisemitism continues to be a major factor in the world-wide communion which binds together the Jewish communities of the Diaspora; and which maintains and strengthens their relationship with Israel. We may justly assume, that the rate of assimilation would be still greater than it is already today, were - as if by a miracle - antisemitism suddenly to evaporate .

The antisemitism we know today, is of the same kind which had been flourishing in the past. It is the same since it first became a part of social-cultural life of the western world. In the past it had been created and nourished by the Catholic Church; and it is still kept alive by by the christian churches and by christian culture.

(I have already dealt with this explanation. It is widely shared. It is not only an idea of mine. But in view of controversies still raging here and there; and considering the widely heard apologetics, I shall afresh outline what is to me a reality: a basic causative

element in Christianity's hostility was its incessant attempts, to replace Judaism with assumptions which have no logic nor commonsense. A helpless Jewish People was forced to cope with these assumptions. And gladly and without criticism these assumptions have been accepted by the world at large.)

Antisemitism was in the past - and thus continues to be to this day - an element of christian culture. Wherever and whenever Christians flourished, antisemitism found a fertile soil. Since nearly two thousand years this has been the case. Whenever Christianity was and is in need of a victim or a scapegoat; whenever it required a detraction whatsoever, it found these in the Jewish People. Regretfully, this same criterion begins to find application to the islamic world too. The jewish people have had to endure suffering and martyrdom in nearly every christian society with which it has come into contact. The Jew was nowhere allowed to feel safe, until he knelt before the Cross; and unless, with folded hands, he humbly acknowledged Jesus as the Saviour. Or - as the case may have been - unless he declared Muhammad to be the only true prophet; and submitted to the Qu'ran as the only valid revealed Scripture.

The Church has never ceased to decry the Jews as the killers of Christ. With equal fervour she points to the Jews as "eternal witnesses for Jesus' truth". One of the dialogues in the catholic catechism - which catholic children have to learn by heart still today - goes as follows:

- "Who killed Christ ?"
- "The wicked Jews".
- "Can Jews ever be forgiven ?"
- "Not until they accept the grace of Jesus".

It would be wise, not to take the friendly voice one occasionally hears emanating from the Vatican as an indication, that the attitude of the Church has changed. The enormity of her true motivations, is to this day reflected in her posturing in the former Concentration Camps. An uninformed visitor, who sees the huge crosses everywhere in evidence there; who sees the churches and convents established in the immediate neighbourhood of the Extermination Camps - but where hardly any specific jewish memorial is to be seen - will impossibily become aware, that most of the victims had been Jews. Nor will the visitor be told, that these crosses had nowhere been in evidence when SS troups guarded the camps; nor, that there had been no trace of an actively engaged christian church during the years the camps' gas chambers and crematoria were working overtime. Nor is the world anywhere there made conscious, that - should

Jewish history continue for many thousands of years more - the Shoah has been, and will remain, the most painful station in the Jewish Via Dolorosa.

Since a few years the Vatican tries to convey the impression, that it is moving away from its traditional hostility against the Jews. But if so, it happens - in accordance with the Church's age-old policy - only in small and hesitant steps. A sign of this trend may be seen in the jesuitically guarded show of sympathy which Pope John Paul the Second expressed in his recently published book: "Auschwitz, perhaps the most meaningful symbol of the Jewish people, shows to what lengths a system constructed on principles of racial hatred can go....." Nota bene: he did not feel the need to express a plain, heart-felt apology.

The Church has in fact and in truth not given up her long-cherished wish to see Judaism humiliated. This tendency I at least can detect in the formulation of the first diplomatic ties between Israel and the Vatican; in the statements which accompanied their introduction; and no less also in the actions resulting therefrom. Let us keep in mind, that it took nearly 50 years since the State of Israel had been established, for the Vatican to grant diplomatic recognition to the independent Jewish state; while the Vatican had established since many years a regular and complete diplomatic relationship with each of the Moslem states in existence !

It would in my opinion be wrong, to see in the Vatican's - to me rather reluctant and only partial seeming - agreement to establish some kind of diplomatic relations with Israel, more than a manoeuvre to pacify world opinion. I think I am not wrong to suspect further, that one additional factor had been the Vatican's care, that her long-standing active support for the PLO; and her efforts to establish an official diplomatic representation with Arafat's administration in Gaza, might otherwise be interfered with by Israel.

To prevent us from forgetting; and to warn us not to feel too well assured and protected, we have to enter the fact into our survival program, that throughout all the centuries of the Jewish Diaspora disdain and hatred for the Jews had been a most natural function in the life of the gentile world. And let us also well remember, that the Jews too, in their helplessness, had no alternative than to accept this state of affairs as a fact of life. The deep-seated instinctive, subconscious, inherited antagonism of the faith-bound Christians is reflected in their childish sexual fantasies about the Jews; in their

accusation that Jews drink the blood of christian children; in their demonization of the Jews.

Entire libraries have been written about the relationship of the Diaspora Jew with his host environment. It would, therefore, be futile for me to go on elaborating on this theme. But I want to contribute a few of the examples which have remained more deeply engraved on my mind, because they involve respected historic figures of supposedly moral superiority:

It was Thomas Jefferson's opinion, that "jewish theology is degrading and injurious"; and that "jewish ethics are repulsive and antisocial". John Quincy Adams went one better: in his judgement "the word 'filth' conveys an idea of spotless purity in comparison with jewish nastiness". Richard Nixon despised the "Jew Boy Kissinger" on whose advice he so much depended. No wonder then, that in the last century a certain Carson, the first american consul in Jerusalem - then under turkish rule - was promptly dismissed when he converted to Judaism and married a Jewess.

I cannot doubt, that a similar kind of negative opinions about their contemporary jewish neighbours and "friends" continue to be harboured by leading political elements; that they are rampant within the upper social circles in the US, as it is only rarely reported what american Presidents or other blue-blooded Americans think about the Jews in their environment. And we should not illusion ourselves, that such a mentality - if not even a far worse one - is not also rampant among politicians elsewhere in the world.

It can safety be assumed, that in the field of Jew-bashing the British people - of every social and economic and educational stratum - can realize their burning desire to go the Americans one better.

I could provide an unending list also of european intellectuals who would fit well into the above mentioned company, but shall instead bring only one example from that bin of abuse:

* "The Jew who is something of a nomad, has never yet created a cultural form of his own; and as far as we can see, never will, since all his instincts and talents require a more or less civilized nation to act for their development". This profound statement emanated from the swiss psychologist Karl Jung, whose own labouring psyche was so much under stress due to his inability to acknowledge Sigmund Freud's

originality; and who could not control his own oedipical impulse towards his earlier mentor.

(Jung's wise words are in quite some contrast with those - at that time unheard of, and in its friendly tone quite unusual - attempt at "explaining the Jew", by Frank Wedekind, a non-Jew: "The Jew, unproductive in the political field, only once possessed a state of his own which - if one is to accept the biblical tradition - covered only a small area and endured only for a short time. The non-Jew on the other hand, unproductive in the moral field, has depended for two millennia upon Jewish morality which he adopted with great zeal, but which is intrinsically still foreign to him. Under these circumstances every Jew appears as his own moralist and father confessor and constantly arouses by this capacity the ire of the non-Jew to the highest pitch".)

Before I close this dismal chapter of recent Jewish history; and in order to avoid the impression that such anti-Jewish attitudes are a matter of times long gone by; and in order to point out the fragility, and possibly the temporality, of the safety and security the Jews enjoy - considering that the safety of Judaism and the survival of Israel depend entirely on the goodwill, the sense of responsibility, and the adherence of the democratic West to the principles of ethics - I shall cite a few more facts which belong to my own lifetime:

* We tend to overlook the sufferings which the British Government has inflicted on the Jews, not only with its policy directed against the Jews' immigration into Palestine; not only by sinking the refugee ships; not only by not lifting a finger for the survival of Jews confined to the Concentration Camps of the Nazi Germans. We cannot accept the excuse that "there was a war on": the infamous "White Paper" restricting the immigration of Jews, e.g. was issued before the Shoah had started.

* From the first year of Israel's existence, Britain has done its utmost to undermine the Jewish State's chances to survive. It is a historic fact that Britain and its newsmedia - clearly submitting to the economic power of the Moslem states - have pursued throughout the last five decades a hostile policy against the State of Israel in the hope and with the intent, that Israel would not survive. Alas, Israel's politicians, who pursue with so much vigor intimate political, and encourage flourishing economic, relations with a persistently hostile Britain, appear to have a short memory.

* The continued pressure of the West on Israel - mostly by the so-called friends of Israel and to a great part orchestrated by Britain

- cannot be explained with commercial interests alone; nor can it be very much connected with sympathy for the Arabs. I see it purely and simply in antisemitism the motivation. I am sure were any other country involved in similar circumstances, the reaction would be different.

* The american and british governments were well informed - by their intelligence services and through the string of messages sent by partisans - about the annihilation program of the Germans. They knew quite well what was meant with their innocent sounding terms "transports" and "relocations". But they did not bomb the gas ovens nor the access railroads leading to the extermination camps. Modern-time historians have now applied the white-washing excuse, that such bombing raids would have killed more Jews than the gas ovens even !

* At no time did Allies warn the Jews in German-occupied countries - this would have been easy by means of the regular broadcasts they directed to; or by means of the leaflets they regularly showered over, the occupied countries - to seek safety or to go into hiding. This would have been especially easy and timely in the case of the Jews of Greece. But it came to pass instead, that most of the greek Jews were caught in the German' nets and annihilated. These 68000 lives, along with other hundreds of thousands of other Jews in other german-occupied countries, could have been saved. The bitter complaints of the remnants of these once blooming jewish communities about the Allies' perfidy, can be heard to this day. And they will never cease to be heard. The american and british governments had, of course, an explanation ready: they did not and could not act, because they did "not know what to do with all the Jews after the war".

* France's shield too is badly stained. Petain, his band of fascist collaborators, along with all the other traitorous Frenchmen, bear a heavy guilt for their infamous actions which, no doubt, were bred by their ingrained antisemitism. Drop by drop - it took many years - the truth has come to light, though from the end of the war until recently the french governments have been very successful in their efforts to cover up their national shame. It was only in 1995 that the French Government of Jacques Chirac officially confessed, that it had been actively involved in helping the Nazis round up the Jews of France for transport to the extermination camps.

* One would be justified to suppose, that France has by now accepted the historic fact, that the innocence of Captain Alfred Dreyfus had been fully proved; and also, that it can be taken for granted he

would not have been accused and condemned even a hundred years ago, had he not been Jew. But in 1993 the official historian of the French Army cast renewed doubts on Captain Dreyfus' innocence ! A statement to this effect was officially released. It was widely circulated in the french press. And it did not cause any significant protest. Is it any wonder, therefore, that during the last war the Nazis found so many eager followers among the French ? That they had so many collaborators to help them with such enthusiasm to round up the Jews for transport to the extermination Camps ?

* Much evidence can be produced, which will indicate to the Jews, that they cannot rely even on the US - notwithstanding all the reciprocal friendship and collaboration. During the Gulf War the US Army prevented Israel from obtaining real-time details about the iraqi missiles which the Americans had gathered with the help of their satellites. It wanted to prevent Israel from retaliating. By preventing Israel from attacking Iraq, it prevented also Israel from protecting itself.

* Any suggestion for Israel to put its faith in the United Nations; to rely on the UN for protection; to expect help from the UN, will sound like a poor joke to the Jews. Likewise the expectation, to see the arab member states change their attitude in the wake of the various "peace processes". When the UN at last revoked the "Zionism is Racism" resolution, the Saudi president of the General Assembly absented himself; and his country, along with all moslem countries, voted against the cancellation. Among these also Egypt, with whom Israel was supposed to live in peace. The UN has still not accepted Israel's 1979 peace treaty with Egypt. It still has the condemnation of Israel's bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor on its books.

* The first jewish survivors from the death camps who returned to their villages in Poland, were butchered in a pogrom.

* In Graz-Austria, a certain Walter Ochsenberger, incarcerated for neo-nazi activities, is allowed to despatch from his cell a quarterly newsletter dedicated to blacken the Jews.

May this suffice.

In our "enlightened world" the modern expressions of antisemitism are - in comparison with those in the past - more insinuating than outspoken; but they are no less soaked in the same brine of venom as of old. And on the long run they are no less threatening to the jewish nation's survival as they condition the mind of the populace - and in

response that of their leaders and of the general run of politicians - against the time when the Jews, and Israel in particular, may become vulnerable again; when they may possibly require the help, the support and the sympathy of the world.

In no decade of this century have journalists shown less restraint than today. At no time in human history have the lines of communication been so widely spread. Never has the public had such easy access to the highways of communication. Of whatever moral restraint had once been a characteristic of the journalistic profession; of whatever may have been the ethical considerations which had once motivated the editors and the commentators of the news-media, very little is left; most is today drowned in the fiercely competitive struggle for their own and their papers' survival. Decency is more than ever suffocated in the rush for a scoop. Honesty loses out in the urge to serve business interests whose support is essential for the survival of the paper or the TV station and their staffs.

The extent and audacity of negatively tainted news reports about Jews and Jewish matters are also passed through the mills of journalistic competition. These are the poison seeds which will be fully brought to flower when the very survival of the Jews in Israel is at stake.

Today's newsmedia - not only in the Moslem countries but also in the democratic world - have developed into the intellect's main poison-carriers. They have acquired particular efficiency in the propagating of anti-Israeli attitudes; and they are experts in openly formulating an insinuating antisemitic propaganda. Hardly if ever is due mention made of important achievements by Jews and of memorable feats of Israelis. Jewish suffering - bomb attentates, PLO terror etc - are rarely mentioned (or if so, in a few words or in a distorted way). But anything which relates negatively to Judaism or Israel; or which can be twisted into a biased report, is given a verbose prominence.

Alas, Israel's print and screen journalists share this moral deficit with their colleagues abroad; but the latter have the advantage, that they can always mix in here and there anti-Jewish titbits, anti-Israeli interpretations and antisemitic insinuations.

I had been told, that among the American TV stations the PBS - the nationally endowed TV information service - is in its reports and commentaries more or less always correct, honest and impartial, as it is not dependent on political or commercial interest groups like the other TV stations. But - from what I saw, heard and read - the

anchorman of the PBS is as much involved in Israel-bashing as his colleagues in most of the other TV stations in the USA.

This applies even more to all the electronic and other newsmedia in England. Most of their documentaries are presented in dishonest, distorted and malicious form. One can with justification suppose, that this is done to please the Moslem world. In particular the arab states. This kind of biased, dishonest journalism could only be carried on a flow of petrol dollars; and could only find a sympathetic resonance in the mind of editors tainted with anisemitic poison.

We have to face the fact, that not much more is left to us but the hope, that the discerning unbiased public will be less and less affected; that those, whose ideas and opinions count among the masses, will be in possession of the truth. But it is essential that the Jews themselves also realize, that the manipulation of the truth by hostile journalists and editors is only made possible by the pre-existing of their ingrained antisemitism.

What do I mean with these statements ? On what basis do I accuse the newsmedia ? There is massive material available to serve as example. I am going to cite as such the official newsmedias' reaction to the 1994 wave of bomb attacks against the Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires; and the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in London:

* The BBC mentioned the bombing only after two days had passed; and then only in one single short sentence; while the Hebron massacre had for nearly six weeks made up a large part of the daily BBC News. But many US news-casts were not better: some of them did not even mention the massacre in Buenos Aires.

* And while refering to these bombings, let me mention that the Security Council - only reluctantly and after some pressure - took notice of these Buenos Aires and London attentates; but in its resolution of condemnation it refused to mention that Jews had been the target of the terror acts.

In the shadow of these sombre notes I feel the need to point again to my firm conviction that - as has been the case throughout the last nearly 2000 years, so also now - the survival of either Judaism or of the jewish people is not put in jeopardy by the type of hostility they have to face today. On the contrary: if Providence is indeed guarding the jewish people, we have to interpret this hostility in our actual imperfect world as "beneficial". This does not mean that these attacks,

these humiliations, these hostilities do not hurt - but the hurt may have a beneficial, an educational side-effect. It may lead us Jews to a clear insight into our character; and to the true appreciation of our destiny.

Unfortunately, the most important weapons the Jewish theologians and historians can bring to their fight against the manifestations of antisemitism in whatever shapes and forms it manifests itself, are blunted by the lack of self-respect - amounting often to the kind of self-hatred I have already remarked upon - which affects so many Jews. Culprits of this nature are mainly found among the intellectuals and politicians; but also the selfish and uneducated among the Jewish populace add their by far not negligible negative contributions.

How else can it be explained, that a Jewess thinks it is a blessing for her; that it is an honour for Israel; and that it is a contribution to a better understanding between Christians and Jews, that she sings the "Ave Maria" before the very same Pope, who heads the Church which has not given up her missionary efforts ?

How else can it be explained, that Chaim Weizmann objected to a mass immigration of German and Polish Jews to Palestine ? He had an explanation ready: he did not want to sacrifice, for the safety of several thousand people in distress, the ideal image he had formed for himself of the Jewish state abuilding. "The million....will settle in the big cities. The National Home which had been intended as a paragon of pioneering based on Jewish labour, agriculture and national culture, will instead become a transplant of the ills of the past", he dared to pontificate in contrast to Ben Gurion, who saw in saving Jewish life the basis of Zionism, and had in vain petitioned the British Government to allow a million Jews to come to Palestine.

How else can it be explained that Lord Jacobovitz, a former Chief Rabbi of England, publicly labeled all non-orthodox Jews intellectual thieves; or even dishonest and disreputable Jews ?

How else can it be explained, that Graham Greene, the rabid Jew-hater, regularly receives enthusiastic reviews from Jewish writers; and was finally even given the Jerusalem Prize ? That the Israel Museum in Jerusalem has given Arnon Ben-David a prize for his "artistic" exhibit of "Jewish Art", one of which was an Uzi machinegun, and another bearing the slogan "Fuck the State" ? That Yehuda Menuhim, who refused to play his violin in Israel; who enjoys blasting Israel for the way it treats the Palestinians, was in 1992 given the Wolf Prize ?

The Jewish film industry produces films which portray everything that is negative, nasty, immoral and ugly in the life of the people. "Modern Historians" in Israel and abroad criticise, attack and mock on the stage, in the media and in their history books what they deride as the myths, legends and heroes of Israel and Zionism. It is an established truth, that a country, especially a young one, needs heroes and myths. Today the Jewish People needs heroic figures who are in line with the Macabees and the defenders of Masada. But the self-hatred expressed in the malicious, and quasi sadistic, efforts of the New Historians appear to aim at the opposite. These individuals have no place in Judaism. They describe Zionism - surely by all accounts a humane and idealistic institution - as a manifestation of European colonialism. Ben Gurion is blamed; Masada is demythologized; and the same is done to Herzl, Trumpeldor, Hanna Szenes and many more. Even the Shoah and Israel's wars are ridiculed.

It is painful to see the malicious, quasi sadistic, efforts of the likes of Shlaim and Benny Morris to destroy every vestige of respect for past and present historic figures like Herzl and Ben Gurion, Dayan and Golda Meir; or for historic events like the Exodus ship or the Israeli wars. May be that the iconoclasm of these historians is only a reflection of the political bias they are allowed to express in a democratic country; but it is undeniable that they cause great harm. It is a fact, that the history of a young nation like Israel will - for educational reasons and national purposes - have to be romanticized and favourably commented upon. It is a necessity of the Diaspora youth's education and preparation for life. This idea and program disturbs the purists among the new brand of historians, who in reaction increase still further their destructive work. They create a wrong image not only of Israel but also of Judaism. They destroy the Zionist character of the Jewish State and the ethical stature of Judaism. They harm not only the State's Zionist and Jewish character, but risk also their survival. They hurt not only Israel's ties with the Diaspora, but they drain the vitality of that very image which has fired the courage of the Jews all over the world. And it is no less condemnable, that they induce the Jewish youth to turn increasingly into cynics.

Again I wonder whether the Jewish Commonwealth of 2000 years ago had been plagued by a similar degeneration of its ethical values; and whether the Roman Empire had also experienced such a state of moral indifference before it collapsed and disappeared.

Throughout the ages Jewry has, to a very great measure, owed its strength - and ultimately its survival - to the inner cohesion of all the layers of its society; to its readiness, in times of danger, to put aside all its inner dissensions; and to forget, when threatened from the outside, to forget all its antagonisms.

Whether consciously or not, Jews knew the value of this inner cohesion, of this social compactness. From the day the Jewish People had first been exposed to oppression; from the time it had first to face an enemy, nothing was seen as a greater crime than the informer the Jew denouncing another Jew. The informer was judged a greater sinner even than the person who had been proved guilty of blackening the character of another Jew. I will go even further and say, that informing on a fellow Jew surpassed in gravity even the worst kind of physical harm - short of murder - a man could inflict on a fellow Jew. According to Hillel all sinners will ultimately be released from Sheol, but not the informer.

Alas, it is long since these ethical rules were appreciated and rigidly applied. In recent years we have not rarely been made to witness, that Jews violate these inherited tradition-graced moral principles. I have not the Jews in mind who spy on behalf of foreign powers; nor the plethora of anonymous letters which land on the desks of the police, of the tax authority, of the neighbour, of the associate. I think of the Jewish leaders, whose behaviour is expected to be the paradigm of Jewish ethics. I am writing now of the actions of Jewish politicians in whom we expect to find guardians of the nation's honour.

I am reminded of the military actions David Ben Gurion - by virtue of the power invested in him as the Prime Minister of Israel - ordered to be taken against the Lehi forces. But no less iniquitous is in my opinion the information which Chaim Weizmann sent in December 1944 to the then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, saying "...our co-operation with the Authorities in stamping out terrorism (meant is the IZL and LHY, the rightist forces fighting the oppressive British Mandate Government) is progressing satisfactorily. Five hundred names of suspects have already been supplied by the police, as the result of which 250 have already been arrested".

Miraculously, the infant State of Israel was spared a fratricidal clash among the various, then competing, patriotic factions. Had Israel not overcome this potentially very grave threat, Judaism as a whole would have been mortally wounded.

Ours has been an agitated, frustrated and dangerous century. It is a century of wars, of total wars, of brutal wars; of wars involving also the civil population of which millions have been killed.

Said Isaiah Berlin: "I have lived most of the 20th centuryand I remember it as the most terrible century in western history". Said Rene Dumont: "I see it only as a century of massacres and wars". Said William Golding: "I cannot help thinking it has been the most violent century in history".

Everywhere people feel today frustrated, alienated, angry, even if they are not economically deprived. Such people are likely to revolt, to fight their governments. It is inevitable that the Jews will be among the first victims. Social, economic and racial crises will develop and make the Jew the scapegoat. The situation is still further acutized, because we are approaching the end of this millennium. All kinds of people everywhere in the world - whatever their philosophical views or political affiliation may be - will react with fear and apprehension. They will most likely turn to religion for protection and consolation. The Church will regain much of her lost strength and influence. Christian Fundamentalists will gain in power. All over the world the half-dormant, never eradicated, old-accustomed hatred for the Jews will flare up again in its crudest form. One cannot be sure, of course, if and how the commitment of the Church to repent its past, as a prelude to her entrance into the third millennium of her existence, will work. One cannot be sure if the repentance of the Protestant Churches "for the Crusades against Moslems and Jews over 900 years ago", is sincere and effective. Neither can one be sure, how the various fundamentalist islamic movements will react; and how the peoples in the moslem world will fare in the hysteric atmosphere we may expect to dominate the turn of this century. But I have no reason to be very optimistic in all these respects.

Contrary to what Herzl had hoped, thought and predicted, the virus of antisemitism has not been eradicated by the very fact that Israel, the Jewish State, exists. Not even in the US, the recognized bastion of democracy, has this materialized. When I learned, that hotels and motels still existed in the US in the year 1994, which unabashedly told Jews that they are not welcome, I was reminded of the footnote which appeared in the advertisements hotels placed in the american newspapers of the 1920s, in which the public was informed that "either Jews or tuberculous guests are not welcome".

But it must be conceded, that the antisemitic sickness does not affect every stratum of the american society; that in the same way and for the same reasons the Puritans in the past had shown respect for the Jews - and as their descendants do to this day for Jewry and also for Israel - the strong and influential christian-evangelistic movement of the "True Believers" has likewise not incorporated any specific anti-jewish elements in its ideology, because to them the establishment of the State of Israel is a sign of divine providence; and is a renewed proof of the jewish people's election.

And it has further to be stated as an easily discernible fact, that the overbearing antisemitism which had prevailed in the western countries, including the USA, during the 19th century; and which had extended even into the decades following the Second World War, has since considerably abated. Many jewish "experts" explain this change with the guilt feeling aroused by the Shoah. And the unexpected fact, that

an independent and democratic Jewish state, the State of Israel, has come into existence, must no less also have had an impact.

More painful, more depressing and more worrisome even than the old-established Christian antisemitism is the aggressive hostility to which the Jews are today exposed in the name of Islam. The vividly surviving memory of the Jewish culture which flourished in medieval Spain - which centuries-lasting period in the diaspora history of Judaism coincided with; was associated with; was also stimulated by; and was the companion of, the contemporary flowering of Islamic culture contemporaneously evolving in Spain - continues to favourably influence and colour the Jews' attitude to Islam. This mutually beneficial interaction appears, on the other hand, to have been totally eradicated from the memory and the history books of the Moslems.

Modern politics, and apparently also a re-arrangement of Islamic ideology, have turned the Moslems against the Jews. It is no consolation to us, that no less a hostility exists also between Islam and the West; and that the Moslems' traditional hatred for the Christians is, for the time being, and only superficially, covered up. Extreme Islamism is a threat to the non-Islamic world, in which Judaism is the weakest, the most vulnerable partner.

The hostility for all and everyone of those who have not embraced Islam, has existed since Islam was born. And it has never ceased to play a dominant role in its ideology. The forces and energies which the Islamic world had in the past employed in the struggle against godless communism, are now set free. They have found an outlet in the threatening wave of Islamic fundamentalism, which is pushing Islam on a collision course with the West. Iran, Egypt, Bangladesh, Sudan and Algeria are today the focal points of this radical-extremist movement.

The State of Israel and its Jews, whom the Islamic fundamentalists appear to have targeted as their most eminent enemies, are caught in the middle of this struggle. The Islamic radicals appear not to fear so much Israel's economic progress and its military strength, as Judaism's ideology and religion; and above all the Jews' unwillingness to grant Islam the role it claims to be entitled to: to be a deciding factor in the destiny of the world.

The Moslem fundamentalists dispose of a large army of fanatics who are ready to sacrifice themselves for their religion. The reward for dying in a fight for Islam is the immediate admission to paradise. This the mullahs' promise, in the name of Allah, to those who fall in action against its enemies, i.e. who lose their lives fighting against nations, communities or individuals which refuse to accept Islam.

Iran in particular - which along with Sudan, Syria and Libya is a hotbed of Islamic terrorism - has the destruction of Israel and the

eradication of Judaism at the top of its political and religious agenda. All over the world it wages - by proxy still - a relentless war against Israel and Judaism. It could, unfortunately, register a number of successes, as for instance the many bomb attentates which occurred in various parts of the world against jewish personalities, against israeli embassies and jewish cultural centres. It is and remains the program of the Extremists - and they may soon be the dominant current in Islam - if not to eradicate at least to subdue Judaism.

But this should not be taken to mean that all other non-moslem countries are immune. They and their leaders too are targeted. America, the "Great Satan" - who is next to Israel on the list of Iran's most hated enemies - is not spared, as is shown by the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York.

It can be taken as certain, that in the course of the next few years it will become still more evident, how much the moslem-jewish hostility is basically not the war over Jerusalem, but a fight between the Qu'ran and the Bible. For the moment - and this will most likely continue for the next few years - the dispute and fight will remain within acceptable borders and manageable limits; but these are sure to become uncontrollable the moment any of the islamic nations realizes its most cherished hope: the acquisition of nuclear power. The "bomb" in their hand will not be used in a "civilized manner", i.e. it will not only be used as a powerful deterrent or as a threatening blackmail weapon. With the best of will I cannot point to any moslem state which will have any compunction to make practical use of a nuclear weapon.

However, although it has to be accepted as a fact of life that the islamic world is getting economically stronger; that the arab states are getting politically more influential; and that the moslems countries are becoming militarily more powerful, I cannot see it ever happen, that Islam will again dominate the world; and that it could possibly endanger the Jews' survival.

In the following chapter, in which I intend to deal with Israel's chances of survival, I shall have - in the context of the fate and future of the Jewish State - more to say about the jewish-moslem relationship; about its political ramifications; about its reciprocal cultural contacts

and combined activities; and about its religious inter-actions.

Having carefully considered all the dangers Judaism has to face; having weighed all the threats the Jews are encountering, I have come to conclude, that the Jews will survive. And having gained the absolute conviction that Judaism will last, there arises the fundamental question, whether Judaism will survive in the way it has existed until now; whether it can possibly survive in the form and shape it has taken since the time of the Enlightenment? Whether it will remain shrouded in its religion? Whether it will stay rooted in its ethic laws? Whether the Jewish religion, as it is practiced and manifested today, will be able to offer sufficient attraction to the youth? Whether Judaism as it is today will continue to give the kind of fulfillment the modern Jew may seek? Whether it continues to be acceptable - if ever it was truly possible - that a Jew can be a Jew without identifying with Judaism? Whether it will ever become fully acceptable, that a Jew who does not care for religion, can be counted a Jew? Whether the man in possession of Israeli nationality has the right to claim, that this legal instrument suffices to make him also a Jew?

I am posing these only apparently incongruous questions, as among the Jews of today one can find many who are uncomfortable with what Judaism has to offer in spiritual values; and who relish it to deny the religious concept of a God and Creator in control of universe and man. Among Jews one finds - more than among Christians and Moslems - dissidents and agnostics who refute all basic religious concepts; and who disregard and disrespect the spiritual values they have inherited. I have made the observation that, unlike Christians and Moslems, most Jews - even those who are called religious Jews - feel uncomfortable, and even embarrassed, when they are asked whether they believe in God.

Although Freud's star does not shine anymore as bright as before, a large number of Jewish intellectuals of the 20th century continue to agree with him and his anti-religious attitude: they like to classify themselves as atheists; or at best they agree to have themselves called secularists. They deny that man has a soul; they deny that there is a God and Creator; they deny that man can address God in prayer. They see all that the religions have to offer as nothing more than illusions.

Many of them go along with Freud and call religion "the left-overs of mankind's intellectual infancy".

But these secularists - whether they are educated individuals or not - hardly if ever can explain to us in exact terms what they truly believe. They have no satisfactory explanation for what they are; for what I am; for what nature is; for what the world is. They have - it is true - explanations ready for what goes on in nature; for mankind's evolutionary process; for the complex data of the biological, chemical and physical sciences; but they cannot form even an at least somewhat satisfying idea about man's destiny; about the purpose of his existence; and about the aim of his development.

The Secularists say they are bound to Judaism by its ethics and history. But negating any common interests with the religious content of Judaism; and denying any cultural identity with the religious elements among the Jews - not only with the orthodox elements in Jewry - they deprive themselves in truth of the great values which Jewish tradition and Jewish spirituality - and also Jewish history - have to offer. They have set foot on the road to total assimilation; and for most of them this road leads also to the ultimate abandonment of their claim to be Jews.

Significantly the Secularists are called "Hilumim" in Hebrew. This word is derived from Hilul which means desecration.

In these our days the secular Jews, especially the secular youth, find themselves in an identity crisis. They live in a vacuum. They distance themselves from the ancient values of their past; from the ancient traditions in their family background. So far those who turn to drugs and crime are only few in number. To the youth in the western countries the Jewish youth movements their parents and grandparents had cherished, are no more attractive; therefore the membership of these movements and associations is fading. In the Diaspora the Zionist youth organizations may possibly be an exception, as - due to the persisting impact of Zionist parents - they have retained a degree of attraction. They represent also still a pool from which the Zionist Movement can recruit a number of young people. But soon not many of this age group will be left.

Only a greater involvement with Judaism; and some degree at least

of involvement with Israel, can maintain this interest. Only a deeper knowledge of the essentials of Jewishness; and a fuller awareness of the meaning of Judaism, can fill this vacuum. Without a sense of identity - be it as Jews, be it as Israelis - young Jews will have difficulty to relate to their people and their society. It is not enough to provide them - as part of their school curriculum or of the home atmosphere - with a religious instruction. Even an education enriched with some Zionist indoctrination, will not be enough to keep the Jewish youth firmly rooted in Judaism, if they are not also imbued with the meaning of; the values contained in; and the demands made by, the ethics of the Jewish religion. Provided furthermore also, that at least in part the national aspirations and Zionist ideals of old are transplanted into them, we may hope for a morally sound, and an ethnically solid, Jewish generation to grow up.

A visit to Israel can effect a lasting and profound change in only marginally affiliated Diaspora youths. A survey appears to have indicated, that in the Diaspora inter-marriages occur less frequently among Zionists than among other Jews. Alas, statistics of the last decade reveal, that only few in the Diaspora show any appreciable interest in Zionism; and that only some 15% of the Diaspora's Jews have ever been on a visit to Israel.

Only if Jewish youth is made familiar with the cultural elements I have just now outlined; only if Jews are indoctrinated at a young age with the ethical values, the history and tradition of Judaism, will the survival of the Jewish People be assured. What liberal Judaism has to offer will never be sufficient unless its leaders specifically concentrate on these guidelines. Otherwise it will be impossible to stop the spread of the relentlessly ongoing assimilatory process among the Jews everywhere; and to prevent the inter-marriages at the actual rate of up to 70% among the Jews in some parts of the Diaspora. Slowly but inexorably the number of Jews in the Diaspora will be reduced.

And this process will inevitably also deeply and negatively affect the future of Israel. For within a short time the very only fountain which has been feeding the Aliya will become dried up.

Even though Judaism's modern-thinking strata may not like the extreme-religious elements which in Israel and abroad dominate the

jewish society; and even though the liberal-inclined Jews may find orthodox presentation and interpretation of Judaism unacceptable in these days; consider them inappropriate for the time in which we live, we have to acknowledge as a fact, that only Orthodox Jewry guarantees the survival of Judaism in the shape of a securely digged-in and strongly defended bullwark. This we have to acknowledge, even if the remnant is a rigidified form of Judaism. Or should I have said, because it is a rigidified form of Judaism ?

We must give the Haredim, the Ultra-Orthodox Jews, their due. On and off Judaism has in the past centuries had to face similar threats; and always it had been Jewry's orthodox elements who had kept the fires of Judaism burning. Not only is alienation by assimilation rarely if ever a threat to orthodox Jews, but also murder, inter-marriage and drug addiction are hardly known among them. Not even among the Yeshiva youth are drug addicts hardly ever found.

But, alas, the Haredim of today can hardly be presented and recommended as suitable prototypes of the Jewish Nation; and I am not sure within myself, if I would welcome them as the only such left at any future stage, because their attitudes are wrong; because their approach to the burning problems of today is counter-productive; because when exposed to the dangers I have hinted at, they will certainly become even more rigidified in their outlook, their customs, the attitudes. Already now, having all possible opportunity "to go with the times", they think it necessary - in their attempt to preserve their concept of Judaism - to continue living in a ghetto; to avoid taking cognizance of modern advancements; and above all to antagonize the non-orthodox Jews among whom they live. They have re-established their ghetto life wherever they live. Not only in Israel have they succeeded in doing so, but also in many a town in the Diaspora; i.e. not only in Mea Sharim have they preserved their ghetto way of dressing; do they follow their former ghetto customs to the minutest detail; do they live the kind and type of ghetto life they had known in Poland and Russia, but also in New York, in Antwerp and in other cities in the West.

The ultra-orthodox Haredim, and even the Modern Orthodox, think they are better Jews than all other Jews. They are wrong. They are not. And they are certainly not better Israelis. Judaism would greatly benefit, were the Haredim to realize, that times have changed; that

by not adapting their views and ideas, habits and customs to those prevailing in the modern world, they weaken - even invalidate - the true meaning of Judaism. The Haredim themselves would greatly benefit were they to gain the insight, that their intolerance is to a great part responsible for the never pacified inter-communal tension which exists everywhere among Jews.

A case in point is the relationship between sephardi and ashkenazi Jews. They have since ever lived and prayed separately. They have always looked down upon each other. There was - and most likely still is - very little social intercourse between the ashkenazi and sephardi communities as I could observe myself in Manchester and in Rome, in Israel and in New York.

The iberian Jews of Spain and Portugal are the original Sephardim. Nowadays the term is applied to all non-ashkenazi Jews and communities, including those originating from the Magreb, from Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Iran and Yemen, i.e. the countries where the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal by the Inquisition, had found refuge.

Against all hopes - and it is the hopelessness of expecting a change soon which is particularly worrismatic - is the fact, that the deep division which had separated the two communities over the many centuries, has continued beyond the founding years of Israel. Second Generation Israelis showed at first a promising trend to close the gap, but the politicians have torn wide open the closing gap and have turned it into a deep abyss. This situation makes also the future looks bleak, as over the years the social integration program has not succeeded to bridge the two camps. In Israel the wage differential between highest and the lowest income groups is the widest in the democratic West; and the highest income is earned mainly by Ashkenazis and the lowest mainly by Sephardim. For every sephardi university graduate there are four ashkenazi ones. And no change is in sight.

And still I persists in what I said a short while ago: the haredi community - whether ashkenazi or sephardi; whether polish or yemenite in origin - is our ultimate assurance, that the Jewish People will survive all threats and dangers, all persecutions and restrictions. The Haredim will whole-heartedly agree with my statement, I suppose. But, I am afraid, they have not yet realized their responsibility: they

have not yet learned and appreciated that they can only be really and truly effective in their future role, if they change their wrong approach; if they cease their attempts to impose their ways of life on all other, religiously less strict Jews; and if they force no more their own concepts of Jewishness on a reluctant conservative or liberal or secular society. They cannot prescribe what the Israeli population may or may not eat; how it dresses; how and where it prays; when and where they can drive their cars.

It is painful to see also among the secularists and agnostics the often total lack to accommodate "the other side"; to show tolerance and understanding for a sincere but different viewpoint. Even after Auschwitz and since the rebirth do they show the slightest evidence of a change of mind or heart. They depreciatingly talk of Kashruth - the dietary laws - as "tribal food taboos"; and of the Brith Mila - the circumcision - as "infant mutilation". It would be unrealistic to expect the Haredim to react forgivingly, friendly and accommodating to such a show of intolerance.

Alas, the ultra-orthodox rabbis - and even their religiously less rigid colleagues - continue to preach, that the Haredim can only press their demands on the other currents of Judaism, because the political situation is most of the time in their favour. Their voices are heard with respect even by the US Administration. The haredi leadership is apparently no more aware, that in Jewish tradition rabbinical authority depends on service and not on an office; on learning and not on politics. And it certainly does not associate with the kind of political maneuvering so much now in vogue.

Whenever the haredi rabbis feel politically powerful, they press for the strictest literal application of each and every of the halachic rules and regulations which cannot and should not be applicable today. Let me only mention the Chalitza, the Levirate. Although it has not been applied in practice during the last many centuries; although the Sages of old had already abolished this rite; although it contravenes ethics and customs; although Israel Law has unequivocally forbidden it, today's orthodox rabbis - not only in Israel but everywhere in the world - still insist, that a childless widow cannot remarry unless she has been granted the ritual permission by her brother-in-law.

(But it is wrong to say, that the Ultra-Orthodox does not adjust to modernity. Religious-scientific bodies exist, which scrutinize new discoveries and make them fit into the Halacha. Whenever the occasion may demand it, halachic rules are put onto a new halachic codex.

The Haredims' - not rarely immoral, but usually inappropriate - abuse of power is nowadays often cited by secular Jews as the main reason for their absconding from the Jewish faith.

(Recently I was asked to find another explanation of, and excuse for, one of the latest halachic rulings, viz:- that artificial insemination of a woman has to proceed under rabbinical supervision, to make sure, that the sperm of the husband is used, and not that of another man. Otherwise the resulting product would have to be stamped a "mamzer".)

Instead of attracting the non-orthodox Jews; instead of serving as the prototype of ethical Judaism; instead of striving for the respect and admiration of the younger generation; instead of looking out for the modern, religiously not yet differentiated youth, the Haredim have succeeded in antagonizing the Jewish society in Israel - and to a no lesser degree also liberal Jewry in the Diaspora - by the abuse of their political power.

Regretfully, the Haredim are not blessed with that minimum of tolerance which might have otherwise induced them to accept a pluralistic society. With all the means at their disposal - and these means grow more powerful with their growing political and financial clout - they fight all currents in Judaism which even minimally differ from theirs. An example of their mentality is the shameful official reaction of the Haredi leadership to the report and recommendation of the Shenhar Commission about religious education: "Reform Judaism is not Judaism", the official Haredi statement declared, "It has taken things from Judaism, but is not Judaism. Just as Islam and Christianity took things from Judaism. If they try to present this as Judaism, the nation will spit it out".

It has to be appreciated, that since the days of the Bal Shem Tov - whom "God sent from heaven to illuminate the darkness of the exile" - a more accommodating attitude has been shown by the Hassidic Movement he had created. One of these Hassidic groups, that of the Lubavitscher Hassidim - which is no less ultra-orthodox than the non-Hassidic Haredim - reaches out to other Jews. They think every single Jew is redeemable. They go even further and maintain, that every Jew - whatever education, background and upbringing he may have - is a potential follower of orthodox Judaism, provided he is taught the commandments; and provided he continues to fulfill them.

It may be taken for granted, that in the end the Haredim will be the losers in their conflict with the other currents in Judaism. The non-orthodox segment which will not abdicate their Jewishness, but will stop practicing the tenets of the Jewish religion, will become the majority. For this loss of a valuable part of the Jewish people the rigid orthodoxy will have to bear the blame. And as soon as the orthodox parties lose their political cudgel, they will find their return to a strict, physically confining, ghetto the only solution for their own survival.

Such a development and its final outcome would be very regrettable; for the challenges the Haredim would face in a contact and in contest with Pluralism, could also to them be of great benefit. And it would certainly also decisively test them, in how far they understand the ethics of their own Jewishness. For every branch of Judaism is in search of truth; and were the Haredim to have contact with other searchers of truth, they will come nearer to being true Jews. They would surely be helped in their striving for the Truth. They would at last come to understand, that they cannot isolate themselves from other Jews; that they have duties towards not only their own society, but have obligations to the Jewish community as a whole.

Above all they should learn not to object to their youth coming into contact with the youth of the various other Jewish backgrounds. The most opportune and effective meeting place would be serving, like all other young people, in the IDF, the Israel Defense Forces. A large percentage of the soldiers is religiously observant. The Haredim's halachic and other arguments have no standing, because Scriptures give clear and strict instructions that every healthy male has to serve his nation in times of war. To prevent an attempt to contradict this statement with a "learned" argument, I heard halachically well-sensed experts point out, that whereas soldiers without due training will risk their own lives; and whereas untrained soldiers will endanger in addition the lives of their comrades, "it has to be taken as implied, that the orthodox youth will also have to get, sufficiently in advance, the necessary military training".

But the Haredim do their utmost not to enter a dialogue with Pluralism. They are afraid, that even the slightest breeze of modernity would weaken the anchor, which is holding their halachic world in place. Their Jewishness - and their kind of Judaism in general - would greatly

benefit, were their rabbis to show the courage to correlate their rules of Halacha with the reality of today's life. Current knowledge poses questions which were unknown in biblical or even in rabbinical times. There is a great need for a new halachic codex which fits the times and the people. Contrary to what the orthodox rabbis do and say, they would not commit any sacrilege. Talmudic sages and their successors have during the last twenty centuries adapted and changed - often beyond recognition - many a biblical injunction. For instance, there is no redistribution of properties at the time of the Fifty-Year-Jubilee; in the year of the "Shmitta" things are "somehow re-arranged"; with regard to the Pewsach Hometz something is "somehow organized"; certainly no adulterous woman has since many a century been taken "outside the wall" and stoned to death, and so on.

Judaism would certainly be strengthened, were there a modernization of the halachic rules, acknowledged and accepted by all "branches" of Judaism. A modernized and adapted Judaism would become attractive to the vast number of Jews, mainly to the young Jewish people, who complain Judaism has nothing to say to them.

Were the Haredim to understand the true principles of Judaism, they would find it acceptable, that whoever feels so inclined, has the right to approach the Divinity in his own words and language. They would understand, that a person praying in Hebrew - especially if he or she does not properly understand the language - has not a more effective approach to God than the one using his accustomed language.

Were the Haredim to be cognizant of - and would they sincerely identify with - the true demands of Jewish ethics, they would feel induced to look into themselves; and doing so, they cannot but be impressed by the fact, that the Haredi world is not free from scandals and crimes; that hardly a week passes, when the international press reports - pointing out with undoubtedly great pleasure his religiosity - some misdeeds by a Jew; that it cannot be a coincidence for the majority - possibly the only - cases of fraud and dishonesty revealed among the members of the Knesseth in Jerusalem, to happen relatively often in the ranks of the Haredi parties.

I certainly do not want to say with these words, that the Haredim are more dishonest than others. I only meant to say, that they often show more than acceptable disrespect and disdain for others; and that so many of them think the profane laws do not apply to them.

Were the Haredim consciously and conscientiously to immerse themselves into the true precepts of Judaism, they would avoid hurting men, women and children with the antiquated laws which once may have been in place, but which are antagonistic today. They would change the divorce proceedings. They would permit the lege artis conversion of non-jewish children, even if these are adopted into non-observant families. They would experience a feeling of guilt whenever they decree, that a child which is adopted by a secular Jew, will not be recognized as Jewish even if properly converted; and that the adopted children, when they have grown up and apply for a marriage certificate, will not have to discover, that in the secret computerized register of the Chief Rabbinate they have been classified as "mamzerim". They will be thus branded even after 2 500 years, as I have already mentioned.

It is worth repeating, that it is not rare to hear from those who have divested themselves of their Jewishness; or from those who have gone further and have converted, that the powerful influence of the unbending form of Haredi Judaism has alienated them from their religion and their people.

In the long history of Jewish Diaspora many genuine or pretended conversions, mainly to Christianity, have occurred; but even large numbers of converts have never endangered the Jewish nation's survival. However, the prognosis is today no more as favourable as in the past; for in the long run the ongoing and accelerating process of assimilation may well undermine the strength and compactness of the Jewish People.

How much is the Ultra-Orthodoxy at fault? Were they.....Were they..... So much might have been different, were they....

Such large number of Jews would not escape into assimilation; and so many of these would not ultimately convert to Christianity, Hinduism or Buddhism,

* were the Orthodox indeed to recognize, that their's is a Judaism whose externals and formulations do not fit our time, Judaism would today have so much more content to offer;

* were they to accept, that it would not in the slightest hurt Judaism - and specifically their Jewishness - were they to face the realities of the 20th centuries; were they to do so, they would not be anymore blamed that so many Jews have become alienated from Judaism;

* were they to realize, that they deprive their wives, their sons and their daughters their rightful place in the sun, such large sectors of the Jewish People would not prefer to turn seculars.

* were they ready, if not to welcome at least to tolerate other currents of Judaism, peace and harmony would bless the badly torn Jewish people.

Intra-communal strife has in ancient times more than once brought on grave dangers for the Jewish People. And this continues to be still the case today. It is the common lack of tolerance - twinned with so much conceit - which endangers the cohesion in the Jewish community; and which imperils the future of the Jewish People more than all the hostility of the surrounding world.

In the coming century Judaism will not be anymore the same as in the past. Not even as it is today. Jewish attitudes, Jewish values and Jewish traditions will change in the next, or at least in the over-next generation. Still ! I am confident that the Jewish People will survive.

The question, however, is not whether we shall survive as a nation, but also how we shall survive. Jewish youth wants more spirituality, but does not want to be forced into the rigid formulation of orthodoxy. If the searching youth will fail in its quest, it may try to find the realization of its hopes and wishes outside the concepts in which Judaism is presented to them. The scenario developing can be predicted: the Orthodox will vehemently oppose the new direction. They will do whatever they can to make sure, that their views, forms, interpretations and presentations of Judaism will prevail without adjuncts and detractors. Internecine fighting will increase. And religious extremism is sure to win.

And it can be taken for granted, that whatever survives of Judaism, will have acquired a mechanical form of expression within a rigid form of presentation. Unless, it has to be added, the mysticism of the Hassidim will present a more attractive Judaism to the youth in search of its spiritual fulfillment.

If the actual assimilatory trend among the diaspora Jews continues, the prognosis will be grim indeed. It is of vital importance, that

the communities abroad are encouraged to cultivate their Jewishness. If they succeed, their continuity will be assured. Only communal observance of a common religious platform; along with Jewish observances within the family, can guarantee the continuation of Judaism; and can assure the survival of the Jewish People. And this is the duty of the rabbinical leadership, whether orthodox, conservative or liberal.

It is important to convey to every single Jew, that he is personally responsible for the survival of Judaism. Once this is understood, the duty to maintain Judaism on a higher level is an *eo ipso*. And for this the rabbinical leadership - whether orthodox, conservative or liberal - is responsible.

Judaism had been able to rise from its earliest primitive level, because it had been successful in making the Jews cognizant of their human duties and communal responsibilities. Judaism's survival will also in future be possible under these same conditions; i.e. provided every Jew is aware of his or her responsibility for the fellow Jew. A Jew is not a true Jew if he does not take on the responsibility for the fellow Jew. This kind of responsibility should be a genuine part of a Jew's Jewishness, even if he is not reminded of this by the antisemitic excesses in his neighbourhood or elsewhere in the world.

Let us look now at the Haredi issue from a different angle. I foresee, as I have already pointed out, that the progressing assimilation will reduce the number of Jews in the world. Liberal Judaism along with Conservative Judaism will disappear - except for those Jews who enter the orthodox stream or find intellectual life in striving for the revitalization of Zionism - and ultimately only Orthodox Judaism will survive. Will it be discovered one day, that it was after all to the advantage of the Jewish future, that a large segment of the Jewish People had erected a firm wall through which the winds of change could not pass; and which the currents of modernization did not succeed to undermine? Could it perhaps be, that the Haredim's way of thinking, living and acting is an assurance of permanency?

It is my firm conviction, that we witness today the exposure of the Jewish People in its totality, possibly in its religious leadership

in particular, to a severe - a final ? an ultimate ? - test, whose outcome will determine the survival of the Jewish People and all its institutions. Is this going to be a final, an ultimate test ? None of the outside factors; none of the changes and influences arising from the environment, will be decisive.

In conclusion I will say with confidence, that even though the dangers facing mankind can and do affect the Jewish people qua human beings, the survival of Judaism and the existence of the Jewish Nation are not jeopardized as long as this planet earth is populated by human beings.

God protects children, drunkards - and Israel, as Moshe Arens said.

Does this prognosis apply also to Israel ? To the Jewish homeland Israel ? To the State of Israel ?

I intend to investigate in vast - though rather superficial - outlines the factors, which could be registered as endangering Israel.

4.

Will Israel survive ?

My question is: whether the growing threat mankind is facing to its chances of survival - and which threat affects no less also the Jewish People - presents an even more explicit danger to the continued existence of the State of Israel. To my regret I must confess, that I am now somehow not as sanguine with regard to Israel, as I was when I tried in the previous chapters to answer a similar question with regard to Judaism. On the contrary ! After studying the material I have since collected; and while digesting the observations I have made in the years I am living in Jerusalem, I came to discover many causes and reasons; I came to imagine many scenarios and circumstances, which might precipitate into a threat to Israel's future, even if Judaism itself will survive. But at the same time I am inclined to repeat - even if I have no facts nor proof for such a conviction except what I feel within myself - that should Judaism not survive, humankind will have reached a state of such a moral devastation that it can itself not survive either. Yes, I repeat, fully convinced of the enormity of this statement: there may not be an Israel one day, but the Jewish People will survive as long as there is a mankind. Unless.....

.... unless we turn our back on Judaism's codex of ethics; unless we give up on the moral restrictions imposed on us by the commandments and principles inherent in Judaism; unless we prove ourselves a people unworthy of our appointment to a selected duty and entrusted with a specific task. But should this ever happen; should our appointment have become annulled because there is no Jewish People anymore, there will not be a people among the nations of the earth to take over the role of the Jewish People. Then all the peoples on this earth will have perished along with us. For - I will add the better to explain my words - in case the vitality of Israel should have been overwhelmed by its inner and outer enemies, and have weakened the structure of the Jewish Nation; and in case the animosity of the Jewish People's enemies should have reached such immensity of evilness that, having been blinded by what can only be an utter depredation, Judaism's strength to overcome their onslaught

will also not be anymore sufficient. And should in such a case Judaism's resistance to withstand its enemies have been totally sapped, also the moral strength of all mankind - I am absolutely certain - will have been so much reduced; and its ethical basis will have become undermined to such a degree, that mankind will not anymore be able to function as an organized, as a vital society.

This fear has induced me to study the elements which contribute to Judaism's weakness; and to scrutinize the ingredients which might ferment into a danger to Israel. I am reminded of Vaclav Harvel's words, that modern society is held together by fear, mostly by the fear of losing; and while Harvel had the accumulation of material things in mind, I am going to accumulate arguments which might contradict the danger signals I think are indications of the threats growing in extent.

Following this introductory note - which I will make to serve as the platform on which I am going to arrange my thoughts, I shall go into greater detail.

However, to make all I am going to say in the following pages easier understood; in order to prevent, as far as is in my power, that what I am about to say from being incomprehensible; and in order to ascertain, that the matter is not an invitation to endless unsubstantial debates, I want to add as a further preface the remark, that I believe in "Nezach Yisrael", by which term jewish philosophy describes the eternally resilient nature of a basically moral Jewish People. And this statement presuppose a fundamentally moral Jewish People too.

Alas, it is a proven fact, that being a highly ethical state; that being a highly moral people; and that being a highly altruistic nation, is not enough reason and justification for survival. To survive, a nation has also to be physically, economically and militarily strong. And in this presupposition I find hidden the true problem, the true test, the true danger: how can a militarily strong nation remain also morally strong when it will be faced with the temptation to abuse its power? How far is a strong people capable of controlling the abuse of its strength with the help of its inborn ethical controls? Where begins the nebulous danger zone whence whatever moral restraints are weakened?

These are the very questions which specifically in Israel's case have to be pondered and weighed not only by intellectuals and moralists but by every government whatever its political colouration.

One is likely to hear uninvolved outsiders express surprise, that

such a geographically minute state as Israel; that such a demographically small country as Israel with less than 5 million Jews, has since its creation - or even long before it had become a geographic fact - been making "such big waves". And how is it possible, the questioning continues, that a people - generally thought characterized by passivity and meekness, which in truth had been forced upon them more by their own caution than by enemy forces - which had been perennially dispersed since Bar Kochba's defeat some 1800 years ago, could have made been thinking of, and successful in, creating such a strong and vital state as the State of Israel? And is it not remarkable, the observation goes on, that even the Jewish communities in Arab lands, which too had - because of their at certain times and in certain countries humiliating and degrading, subservience and meekness - been able to survive, show now a so much greater self-assurance and self-confidence? Can this only be explained by their knowledge, that Israel occupies a respected place among the democratic world's most powerful nations? I really think that this is so.

Israel is indeed a small country. Even before the "peace process" truncated post-1967 Israel, it was only approximately 45 miles wide and 275 miles long. No wonder, first visitors invariably remark how small the country is - and how vulnerable. In 1994 Israel counted 5.46 million inhabitants of whom 81% were Jews, 14% Arabs, 3% Christians and 2% Druses. In the same year 8.71 million Jews lived in countries outside Israel.

There are about 13 000 Arab Christians in Israel. In the last 25 years a similar number of Israeli Christians has emigrated, for reasons I shall elaborate upon at a later stage. Less than fifteen years ago 70% of Bethlehem's inhabitants had been Christians; today only 21% of them are left. The Arab population of Jerusalem has greatly increased - to 15% - since the city came under Israeli authority.

From the day the State of Israel was constituted, it had to fight for its very survival. I share the opinion of those who say, that this fight for survival will continue notwithstanding all the peace treaties Israel signs with its neighbours. Such treaties can be torn up; and the history of the Middle East is filled with the shreds of peace- and friendship-treaties which have been torn up. However: the real, the gravest and the most immediate danger to Israel's continued existence will arise the moment there is a serious deterioration in the fighting qualities of its Armed Forces; when the Israelis' courage and endurance in facing all dangers is weakened; and when their will and determination to resist all inner and outer threats are dimmed. Alas, one can hear

now and then opinions voiced, and fears expressed among the general public, that early signs of such a deterioration are already noticeable.

A danger signal, greatly overlooked in my opinion, is the low birth rate of the Jews in Israel. In 1993 it was 2.61 per hundred (mainly due to the high fertility rate among the Haredim), while that of the Druses was 3.76 and that of the Moslems 4.68. The birth rate among Christians is still smaller than that of the Jews, but this is explainable by the large percentage of clerics and nuns among the Christians in Israel. Israel will have to rely on a continued Aliyah, but some day the source abroad may not be available anymore.

Knowing well that much of what I am going to say, is exaggerated; that what I paint as negative is only a sign of our times which most developed nations experience, I shall enumerate - fully aware of the restrictions I have just mentioned - some of not only to me unwelcome observations in which I see a possible deterioration of Israel's vaunted strength and specificity.

I see in the reduction in the quality of Jewish life in Israel; in the rampant materialism and secularism; and in the devaluation of the Jewish heritage the by far greatest danger to the survival of Israel. Israeli children receive less school education than children elsewhere. Their schoolday lasts $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours (from 8 to 12.30) with two breaks in between. This is certainly not enough for an even minimal education.

There are negative traits noticeable in today's Youth which cannot but lead to an unfavourable prognosis. Israel's educators have failed to transmit to their charges the right appreciation of the national ethos. The result of this failing is becoming more and more noticeable. The low degree of education of the children's parents; the generally low family background; the absence or the excess of religiosity; the missing appreciation of Judaism's ethical values, should not only not be considered a deterrent, but should challenge the teachers, the more insistently and persistently to transmit the meaning of Jewish values to their charges. It is to be taken as a danger signal, that young children are heard to ridicule religious practices; to criticise the Bible; and ostentatiously to disrespect Jewish traditions. Rabbi Shimeon ben Zakai taught: if you see Jewish towns uprooted in Erez Israel know, that it is because they did not maintain teachers for their children.

Israel is not the only country which has cause to worry about

its youth. There is not a western country which does not worry about its endangered youth. Israel witnesses the same deterioration of values among the young people; and has come to the same sad conclusion. Ten-years old smoke pot, sold to them by 13-14 years old pushers. Hospitals regularly report cases of children who have attempted suicide. Among the teen-age patients are a large number who have been sexually abused.

Another danger signal among the pupils in the High Schools of Israel is their greatly reduced sense of belonging; is their loss of pride in their country. Their former respect for, and admiration of the IDF, Israel's Armed Forces, has greatly diminished. There is now reluctance to serve in the fighting units which had in the past been an attraction for every young Israeli. There have been reports of a greater than ever number of young men employing illegitimate means to avoid serving in the army. There have been reports of deaths due to carelessness during army manoeuvres. Many reservists, called up for duty, ignore the call-up; and the officers concerned overlook this dereliction. There have been reports of soldiers having failed to engage the enemy. There have been reports of soldiers having withdrawn under fire. There have been reports of soldiers retreating before attacking arab mobs.

(However, in the latter instances the soldiers are not always to be blamed. In a recent incident in Gaza the Army's leadership had instructed the soldiers - quite evidently to the detriment of the latter's self-respect and morale - to retreat in front of attacking arab mobs, so as to avoid coming to grips with them and causing a bloodbath.)

These are danger signals. These are warning signs which have to be taken most seriously.

The jewish soldiers who fought in the early wars have - with justification - evoked the admiration of the world and the pride of the Jews. Whenever I have an opportunity to see old films taken from the archives, I am impressed by the israeli soldiers who at all times had been filled with great eagerness and unbelievable enthusiasm. It can only have been their zionist fervour which drove them to the heroic deeds of which Israel's history has much to tell. Today it is not difficult to find in every stratum of the people of Israel many instances of this kind of idealism; nor is there any evidence that such a sense of responsibility does not prevail anymore. As long as these virtues are preserved there is very little to worry.

In order to maintain its self-assurance; in order to preserve

its acceptance by the civilized world; in order to curb any and all aggressive inclination of its enemies, Israel has to continue to be militarily strong. Due to the destructive potential of advanced modern weaponry, a conflict between any of the major powers will certainly do immensurable damage to the entire civilization. Though, fortunately, there is no such tension or dangerous development today in the democratic world - a situation, as far as I know, unheard of in human history - such kind of tension exists in the Middle East and might lead at any time to an explosion. The need to be prepared is a heavy financial load on the State of Israel, at the detriment of its budget for welfare and educational provisions.

Past experiences have shown, that Israel has to rely on its own strength; and only on its own strength. The bosnian conflict has proved the suddenly revealed emptiness of western culture; the loss of western ideals; the absence of western moral values. Israel can still count on America's help when necessary. America has for decades been Israel's main, nay only, help and support. "Israel has for the US the value of an aircraft carrier", said Jesse Holmes, "without Israel promoting its and US common interests, we would be badly off indeed". Let us not forget that the relationship with the USA is strategic in the main. It was of particular importance in the 1980s, but also otherwise both sides are tightly linked still by interests and sentiments.

Of course, Israel welcomes at all times military and other help from the US; but is also well aware that times, conditions and priorities may change; and that they will one day change. Let us never forget that America has its own interest to guard, though not always is its attitude understandable - as in the case of Caspar Weinberger who cannot have been motivated but by his anti-jewishness - who refused to let Israel see pictures showing how Syria was preparing a surprise attack. It was Pollard who told Israel. And many cannot forget, that during the Gulf War Bush did not permit Israel to see vital pictures of Scud launching pads.

Israel has in fact never relied on US troupes for its security, especially in view of the evolving trend in US politics not to get militarily involved in other countries' fights. In case of an attack outside help would in any case come too late.

Neither can Israel expect help or other support from the United Nations. So far the Security Council has succeeded in passing on an average thirty anti-Israel resolutions every year. There cannot have been many in Israel who had wished the UN well on its 50th Jubilee, though it had once upon a time voted to create the State of Israel.

For more than forty years the UN Assembly had open season for Israel. In 1975 the UN condemned Zionism as a racist movement on the vote of countries like Syria, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Sudan etc !

The essence of Zionism which teaches, that Jews have to rely on themselves in a life and death crisis, is another reason for Israel's policy of self-reliance. Survival will only be possible - and justified - for the sake of the Zionist aims. It is the more incomprehensible to me, therefore, that Rabin, the former Commander-in-Chief - even though he had already received the Nobel Prize - could agree to give up the Golan Heights; to vacate the "West Bank"; and to invite American troops as "buffer forces".

But to be strong, Israel has also to be counted among the developed and progressive countries. It has to be most advanced in all technical fields. It has to be leading in agricultural innovations. It has to occupy a ranking position among the scientifically advancing nations.

Above all Israel has to be strong within itself. It has to find a solution for the challenge its society faces by those who claim, that religious observance should be strengthened by almost all means; and by those others who are anxious to create a modern state with a Western culture based on individual freedom. But we must be clear in our minds, that Israel is not - and never will be - a Western country. We must do all in our power and take every care, that Israel does not turn ethnically and culturally into a Middle-Eastern, nor a Levantine one. With these words I want to imply, that it does not turn into a country dominated by irresponsible politicians; and characterized by bribes and jealousies, intrigues and plots. Israel may aim at joining the economy and eventually the defense system of Middle Eastern countries, but culturally it will never become one of them. It will never be allowed to become a member of the Arab League. But it can assure its place as a leading Mediterranean country. It has all the qualities to be better than Italy, Spain and Greece.

In times of war and in times of peace; in times of wellbeing and in times of stress, the Jews in Israel should never forget, that their nation has been entrusted with a mission: that it has a duty towards mankind; that by its moral standards it has to become a "light to the nation"; that it has to be a showcase of morality and decency. Even though most Israelis of today will shrug off any or all of this inherited

moral duty; even if the bulk of Israelis should refuse to be bound by what they see as an imposed unrealistic command, the gentile world will not agree; the gentile world will not let the Jews forget; the gentile world will never let Israel, the Jews and Judaism shake off their inherited appointment.

I am sure about, and happy with, my conviction, that so far all the governments of Israel; and also the majority of the Israeli public, have in the last fifty years made every endeavour to act and live in accordance with the strictest ethical standards. I may be told, that in its dominance over the Westbank and the other so-called "administered territories" - and in general with regard to its dominance over the Palestinians - where Israel had the opportunity to prove itself; when and where Israel could have shown its moral mettle, it has failed more often than not. No doubt, a superficial survey may confirm this accusation. It is true, that the various parties - secularist as well as religious - on the political right have mixed their nationalism with nationalistic aspirations; that they have often erased the difference between patriotism and chauvinism; that their policy appears to be fueled by anti-Arabism. And there are certainly also many instances, where also individual Jews have over-stepped the limits of the permissible. However, this kind of criticism cannot be applied to official government policies. Israel's Governments have at all times; and in every instance, done their utmost to be fair.

But, the Arabs and other enemies of Israel have to concede, that this has not always been possible or even easy. Not only have the Arabs from the beginning shown an uncompromising hostility to the Jews; not only have they throughout the years murdered helpless Jews; not only have they indiscriminately killed women and children, but they have also otherwise - by their attitudes and actions - made a peaceful coexistence very difficult if not impossible.

There are Jewish, and even Israeli intellectuals who fault Israel for having wrongly usurped the land from the Palestinians. But these accusations have nearly never been justified from a legal point of view. And - in addition - the Jews have from an ethical, a historical, even a legal point of view, a much greater claim to the land of which they have taken possession. Arabs have only "recently" lived in what had been Palestine. For 2000 years the Jews have survived exile and dispersion; persecution and humiliation; starvation and pogroms; forced

conversion and blood libels; Crusades and Inquisition, because they knew that biblical Palestine was theirs; and because they knew that Jerusalem and Zion belong to them.

There are those who suggest, that Israel-Palestine should become a binational state shared by Jews and Arabs. But were those who propose such a solution to contemplate the realities created by the situation prevailing in Canada and Belgium - where various ethnic groups live together in anything but harmony - they will surely come to realize, that the situation and condition in these countries have amply proved, how difficult - if not impossible - it is for two diverse nations to live together in peace. In Israel's case this would be especially so, as the Jews and the Arabs in Israel are in every aspect far too much apart. There is also the Jews' further and justified fear, that they would become again a minority; that they would have to share the painful experiences of the Berber and the Khurds, the Christian Sudanese and so many other minorities in moslem lands. The Palestinians, on the other hand fear, that economically and culturally they would be dominated by the Jews.

I agree, Israel's citizens are only human beings. I accept that they have their human failings. I understand, that the israeli Jew of iraqi or moroccan, or of some oriental origin - who had lived under most humiliating conditions in arab countries - will feel less inclined to befriend an Arab; that he would also otherwise not make an effort to accommodate an Arab. But these failings would surely have surfaced less strongly, had this ethnic segment of Israel's society been provided with the appropriate education; had it been taught from the beginning the respect they owe to the roots from which the jewish nation has grown; had it been made aware already in childhood, that as Jews they occupy a special status among the nations.

Among the Jews in Israel are to be found a large number of ethnic groups of different cultural standards and religions conceptions. There have been times - and these are not passed - when it proved difficult for Jews of different ethnic backgrounds to live together in harmony. The Jewish Agency had at first thought, that preserving the ethnic cultures should be its aim; that ethnic neighbour-hoods would be ideal for the future israeli society. But it did not take long before it was found necessary to concentrate on erasing all ethnic differences in the hope of creating a common israeli identity. However, this plan too proved a failure. The differences still persist, and more or less all the ethnic groups insist that they continue to exist. This is,

in my personal view, a welcome institution.

Along most lines and most aspects, there is no nation in the world, that would have succeeded as well and as much as Israel; that would have been as successful all along under similar circumstances; that would have had even partially such successes as those to which Israel can point.

My first disappointment after I had come on aliya was - I do not mind to confess - the discovery, that on an average only few Israelis are imbued with the highly developed ethical sense I had expected. And I had also to discover, that Israel was not populated by people who are very conscious of their historic past and of the duties arising therefrom. I have on some occasion already pointed out what I see is negative in Israel; and I shall certainly have other occasions to do so again.

The year 1948, when the State of Israel has come into being, was a milestone not only in Jewish history, but also in that of mankind. After nearly two thousand years the Jewish Nation has regained its ancient homeland ! Herzl's Zionism, which postulated a refuge for the persecuted Jews, has been realized. Ahad Ha'am's dream of Israel as the spiritual centre of Judaism, has to a great extent come true.

It is not well remembered, that Zionism has been created in the 19th century mainly also to counter-act the threatening assimilative process rampant among the Jews. And it is also a fact, that the yearning for a return to Zion is even older. It is as old as the Jewish diaspora. "Come let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh.... Awake, awake, clothe yourself in strength, o Zion ! Put on your richest garments, holy city Jerusalem", are only a few of the references in the Jewish prayer services which reflect the never ceased yearning.

History books tell us of great men who caused events in history to happen. I am not ready to apply this dictum to the State of Israel. It may be taken for granted, that Zionism would have come to life; and that Israel would have been created, without the admirable efforts of Herzl, Ahad Ha'am and the other spiritual leaders. It is the will of the people; it is the proper moment; it is some inexplicable factor or constellation of factors - and one cannot avoid sensing also a divine intervention manifesting as a miracle - which have caused unusual events to happen. The French Revolution would have broken out even if there had not been a Louis XIV. The United States of America would have been

founded even if there had not been a George Washington. And also, as Mario Vargas Llosa says "...history is written and rewritten by men and women....history can be as we would have wanted it to be, and that it's being so, depends on us".

I will go even further ! It is widely maintained, that Israel is the outcome of the Shoah, the Holocaust. It is not. Zionism was not born during or after the Shoah; nor has Israel's birth been the outcome of the Nazi persecutions. Israel would have come into being even if there had not been a Shoah. And the State of Israel would have been proclaimed even if there had not been a David Ben-Gurion.

However, it is well to realize, that the Jewish Nation was not "reborn in 1948". The Jewish Nation has never ceased to exist. It has survived throughout all the centuries of the Diaspora. This statement may appear to contradict the generally accepted definition of a nation as "a people in possession of its own country". But, as in many other things, the Jews are also in this respect an exception. They have since the dawn of their existence been an exception: they became a nation already at Mount Sinai on the basis of the promise that they are going to have their own land. That is to say, they were a nation long before they owned or occupied a country. And also by dreaming - throughout its Diaspora - of an eventual return to its former homeland, has the Jewish People remained an unusual nation.

Israel is also otherwise a unique phenomenon: there is no other instance in history, where a fully functioning state has been created in such a short time; by such diverse elements; by people coming from such different cultures. Unique are also the great changes the establishment of Israel has made in Jewry's history and destiny: a formerly powerless and apolitical people has returned to an active involvement in the ongoing history process.

The State of Israel is the realization, in its ancient homeland, of the never extinguished Jewish national aspirations. It was created to solve the specific Jewish affliction of homelessness for which there was no better solution. Israel is today accepted and supported by all Jews everywhere - except by the Ultra-Orthodox and the advocates of total assimilation. To the secular Jew abroad the return to Israel is not a theological solution of the Jewish fate, but the re-entry of the Jewish people into the political world.

Again the question can be brought up, whether Israel and its people have the opportunity to continue on this path, at this level and with these expectations. Can an appropriate answer be found without having recourse to metaphysical ingredients? Let us not forget, that in an attempt at prognostication it would in any case be difficult to predict all and any future developments in Israel, because - from whatever social, political or religious starting point we may set out - the issue is a global one; is a priori mired by the unreliability of the political future anywhere in today's world, and especially so in the Middle East; and is shaped by the political leadership everywhere catering for its own interests, particularly in the Middle East.

It is difficult for many Jews - and no less also for non-Jews - to understand, that today's State of Israel is a nation state in whose make-up religion is not an essential element. This state of affairs has characterized Israel since its inception. It refers back to the philosophy and the programing, the spirit and the politics of the Zionist founders of Israel. Not much has changed since. Religious indifference has remained a predominant feature of the majority in Israel, notwithstanding the - only apparently profound - changes which political exigencies had again and again made undergo the ideological attitude of the nation.

Understandably, to the world at large - whether Jewish or non-Jewish - it appears more than incongruent, that religion does not play the primary role in the Jewish State. It is not rare to hear at times even a religious Diaspora Jew express disappointment about this fact. Whenever it is pointed out, that Zionism had not apportioned religion a major role in the new Zion, this is as much resented as the recall, that in Zionist ideology the Diaspora is viewed as non-essential for Judaism; and that in the classical Zionist view of the Jewish future, the Diaspora will in the end have to disappear.

Diaspora Jewry resents these pseudo-prophecies. It perceives them as hurtful evidence of Israelis' disregard for the valuable contributions the Diaspora Jews - whether they designate themselves Zionists or not - have made to Judaism's standing and to Israel's wellbeing.

The ingrained perception of the Diaspora's non-essentiality still surviving in the ideology of many Zionists, has often, and this to a large extent, poisoned the long-standing relationship between Israel and the Jewish leadership abroad. I have never heard an Israeli politician concede, that Israel has not sufficient financial, political and cultural

resources of its own to do without the Diaspora. But I have, on the contrary, often heard repeated - at for a harmonious collaboration mostly inopportune moments - the dictum of Ben-Gurion injected into even the the most harmonious discussion, that he saw no difference between a "so-called Zionist in the Diaspora who has no intention to make aliya, and a mere friend of Israel". And his proposal is no less often brought forth, that the title of the World **Zionist** Organization be changed to World **Jewish** Organization; that membership in this organization should not be restricted to those who confess to believe in Zionism, but "should embrace all those who are ready to support the Jewish State from outside".

The WZO, the World Zionist Organization, is one of the two partners of the Jewish Agency. The latter has done good work since its inception; or better said it started out with good ideas and intentions, but has over the years turned into a showcase of bureaucray, which has in addition been lately affected by financial scandals. It has been given the by-name of a Travel Agency. Fortunately reforms have been taken in hand. Its yearly Assemy could become the Jewish Parliament embracing the interests of all Jews in the world. This would make Jews all over the world aware, that aliyah and absorption are their responsibility. The Agency's program to help to Jews in lands of distress; and to encourage them to come on voluntary Aliyah, has been a blessing. By fostering ties between Israel and the Diaspora, the Agency has raised the standard of jewish education among Diaspora Jews; and has enhanced the consciousness of their jewish identity.

The old zionist slogan "Shlilath Hagola"; the negation of the Diaspora; the abolishment of the Diaspora; the belief that Jews living outside Israel have no future. It has no justification anymore.

The relationship of Israel to the Diaspora Jews continues to be the object of heated discussions. Likewise the question, whether the zionist ideal to bring to Israel every Jew living in the Diaspora, is still valid. Or whether it would be better to strengthen the Diaspora as much as possible. Or whether the time has finally come, to discourage the Diaspora's further expansion if not existence.

The tendency is developing, to write off all kinds of zionist organizations in the Diaspora. This should be seen as an indication of the views the Jews of Israel and those of the Diaspora have of each other: the Israeli is mainly interested in his own country's affairs, and the Jew in the Diaspora, conscious of his Jewishness, is mainly bothered by the problem inherent in diaspora life, viz:- the Jews' survival; the Jews' education; the Jews' assimilation.

Education, jewish education should be the proper bridge between these two interests. And in this respect Israel has to take upon itself the main share. Dr. Joseph Burg, one of Zionisms' original leaders, outlined his solution: "The heroic age of Zionism with its powerful ingathering of the exiles has to be replaced in the 21st century. For years our task was to import Jews; now we must export Judaism".

Israel has started out as a Zionist country, conscious of its duties to Judaism, its responsibilities for Jewry. But it never forgot its smallness and vulnerability, and has protected itself accordingly. However, it has not been able to avoid the pitfalls of pettiness and selfishness. It has not been able to free itself from the cynicism and criticism developed and spread by its post-Zionist ideologues.

Israel is today the focus of Jewish identity, not only for the Israeli but also for the Diaspora Jew. If the latter gives up his Jewish identification - though this has in no instance ever in any way improved his relationship to his host country - he is inevitably about to slide into assimilation.

And finally, it is my considered opinion that it is of the greatest importance for Israel to go on strengthening its bonds with the Jews everywhere in the Diaspora, but especially with those in America who have proved of great help not only when it comes to the contributions flowing from there. Their selflessly active political, economic and social leaders form today an invaluable bridge between Israel and the leading American political, cultural and economic circles.

One reads not rarely of the fear that, because each successive diaspora generation shows less and less interest in Israel, the Jewish communities abroad may one day cease to function, if not to exist. I cannot avoid the impression, that financial matters, more than the problems of religion and tradition, nourish in many circles in Israel the apprehension about the survival of Diaspora Jewry. For more than other negative features in the endangered survival of Diaspora Jewry the fear is underlined, that Israel would in such a case have to forgo the quite considerable financial support it regularly receives from the Jews abroad. This support is indeed quite substantial: in 1994 the Jews in the Diaspora have - according to the Jewish Agency - donated 1½ billion dollars to non-profit organizations in Israel. The Israelis' contributions amounted to only \$70 million.

And so the discussion goes on and on. However, we cannot but

realize - and we should not take it lightly - that there is a growing alienation of Diaspora Jewry from Israel. I will go even further and say, that Israel has become a dilemma for the average Diaspora Jew: he worries - and apparently cannot come to a conclusion nor a decision - whether to end his exile-status and come on aliya; or whether to prefer the material comforts the Diaspora has to offer, to a far more strenuous life he has to expect in Israel.

And I will go still further even and maintain, that another factor contributes to the worry many Diaspora Jews have about their attitude to Israel: their statements not rarely indicate how embarrassed they are by Israel's politicians; by Israel's politics; and by Israeli visitors.

Perhaps their attitude will change, because Israel has changed in the last decade. A younger generation of leaders is emerging. The Intifada has brought home to the Israelis that it is not worth keeping the territories at the risk of endangering the life of the soldiers; and at the risk of alienating the world. The new generation of Israelis, on the other hand, is less motivated by idealisms, and more attracted by the benefits of capitalism. However, with the exception of the New Left, the patriotic sentiments of the new generation is no less than before, when it comes to defending - or relinquishing - the land.

All the above discussions are out of place. Of course, Israel has not ceased, and will never cease, to be a home for all Jews. Israel should continue to encourage those in need to see in Israel a refuge. Israel should make it easy for those, who seek to live a Jewish life free of interference, to come to Israel. To come home to Israel. All talks to the contrary are irresponsible and dangerous, irrelevant and beyond the point. This is likewise the often heard proposal, that all aliya should henceforth be suspended, because the country is "becoming crowded"; or that aliya should be restricted; the rights better defined, because unsuited elements claim the right to "come home".

Above all Israel should regard it as its most important task - nay, as its sacred duty - to raise the level of Jewish education among the youth abroad. Thereby the Jewish consciousness among the Jews in the Diaspora will be raised. Jewish education of the Diaspora youth is today the only effective remedy to stop the gradual dissolution, and ultimately the total disappearance, of the Jewish communities abroad.

And the Jews - Israelis as well as the Jews abroad - who cherish their Jewishness, should incessantly be made aware, that otherwise Diaspora Jewry will - without fail - have disappeared in the course of a few generations. And the responsibility will be exclusively theirs.

Again and again I hear another question aired today by religiously inclined intellectuals: whether, in case the specific zionist program of ingathering all the Jews of the Diaspora into the State of Israel has been realized, the biblically clearly stated purpose of the purpose of the Diaspora would have come to nil? That the divinely pronounced reason why the Jewish People has survived so far, would not have come to nothing were the Jews not dispersed all over the world? In other words: whether the aim and purpose of the Jewish Nation as defined at Sinai and recorded in the Tnach - to be the moral guiding star to the world - cannot be fulfilled in their essence, unless the Jews live dispersed among the nations of the world? Should not, therefore, the Diaspora alone for this reason - since ever ingrained in the jewish conscience - be strengthened to the utmost?

I do not think that such a question - even though it may have some substance - is relevant in these our times. Modern Israel, the state and the people, can very well continue in its allotted task. Israel is not hidden away in some inapproachable part of Asia. Modern technology has made it possible for the world to see and observe whatever goes on anywhere in the world - including in Israel. And does not Israel indeed continue to be under the scrutiny of the world? Is it not tested without a let-up regarding its moral standards? Can one avoid the impression, that all and everything which goes on in Israel is carefully observed and thoroughly scrutinized by the whole world? And it is a not always sympathetic world, an honestly judging world.

In the world of today cultural trends, intellectual developments and ethical evolutions do not remain isolated; they do not remain hidden; they are liable to influence all the receptive world. I will go even further and say, that all the Jews do and do not do in Israel - or or that matter elsewhere in the world - is more watched and scrutinized, registered and criticized than what other peoples do. And, in my opinion, the Jewish People can within its own independent state - better than they could elsewhere - perfectly live in accordance with Judaism's precepts; can there better fulfill its duty than elsewhere; can there better than ever practice what its ethics presuppose; and can there

best prove itself, its values and its destiny, by living in accordance with what its election demands.

Having thus, in these few sentences, simply and unequivocally stated my convictions, I want to repeat that it is Israel's task to grant Diaspora Jewry every possible help; and that viceversa it is World Jewry's duty to help Israel to the utmost of its capacity. This mutual collaboration and reciprocal help are vital for the survival of both wings of Jewry. It grants a sense of security to Israel; and it fortifies the Jewishness in the Jews of the Diaspora.

More than anything else, it is as much in the Diaspora's interest as it is essential for Israel, to help and ease the absorption of the Olim, the new immigrants. The UJA, the United Jewish Appeal, is very active and effective along these lines. It represents, in addition, one of Israel's important links with the Jews of the Diaspora. It is also the instrument by which the donors can identify with Israel; and through which Israel can convey its views, its ideas, its achievements to the Jewish world. I am not a hypocrite when saying, that collections of money among the Diaspora Jews for Israel are important not only for the material benefit they bring to Israel, but also as the means for the Jew abroad to identify with the Jewish Homeland. On the other hand, I think it is also most important, that a major part of the money collected abroad remains in the Diaspora; that it be spent in the Diaspora; that it be used for the Jewish education of the Jewish youth abroad, so that the Jew in the Diaspora is from childhood on made aware of his Jewish identity.

Zionistically this Jewish identity is compacted in the right of every Jew to come to Israel, where immediately on landing he can claim Israeli nationality; and thereupon he can immediately receive Israeli citizenship. It is this inalienable right of every Jew on which the State of Israel has been built and remains secured, said Ben-Gurion.

But within the framework of this essay - that is, while I am airing the question whether Judaism and Israel can survive, given the actual state of affairs - I cannot with absoluteness refute the Zionist concept - although for ideological and practical reasons I do not agree with it - that the "ingathering of all the Jews" would answer affirmatively the question of Jewish survival. I agree, that it would not be difficult to tackle the technicalities of this process. The Israeli society would

have no difficulty to "digest" such a large number of immigrants, even though one is wont to hear today the warning of many an apprehensive demographer, sociologist and politician, that some care is necessary; that there should not be a precipitous immigration; that Israel should not become over-populated; that Israel is already far too diversified; that all the currents of Judaism, already represented in the colourful tapestry of Israel's society, have not yet worked out a harmonious co-existence; and that the apparently incompatible camps - ranging from the secular-nationalistic to the ultra-orthodox anti-nationalistic - should be given the time and the opportunity, the education and the impetus, to learn their way to a harmonious coexistence.

It is Zionism's ideal - and should be Israel's too - to eliminate the borders which separate certain minority groups from the body of the Jewish society. Until now this has not been one of Israel's success stories.

The absorption of Ethiopians is a blatant failure of Zionism. They have been formed into an "underclass" by the Government's and the Jewish Agency's educational arrangements. Ethiopians complain, that their youths are as clever as their Israeli counterparts, but are not offered the same opportunities. Juvenile delinquency, formerly unknown among Ethiopians, is growing.

The experiences of the Russian Olim are not better. It is depressing to note the indifference, amounting often to hostility, Olim from Russia encounter. It is painful to hear the negative rumours circulating about them: that 33% of them are Gentiles; that 66% are either social cases or handicapped; that the women are whores or potential ones; that the men are mafia operatives.

Also the large number of Olim from the Caucasus - who have a background of 1500 years' proud and unique Jewish traditions - are treated with contempt. The experiences of Moroccans in the 1950s, and of the Georgians in the 1970s, come to mind.

But there is reason to hope for the Zionist ideal to be achieved in the next or over-next generation, provided the many deeply rooted social differences - which so far have made it democratically impossible to build a socially integrated community; and to create an economically equally advantaged society - are eliminated. But I dare to ask, whether such an equalitarian society would be truly desirable in our actual realistic, uniform, culture-starved world? Whether one should strive for such a society to be created before the dawning of the messianic age? Abroad - in the western countries which have also to "digest"

large numbers of immigrants - multi-culturalism may be seen as the ideal solution; and may have proved to be the best way to achieve a harmonious co-existence; but - if I may be allowed to venture an opinion - the melting of Israel's many cultures into one single, more or less uniform israeli cultural typus, would be the preferred, the truly only, solution for Israel. However, I will add the proviso, that each of the "melted together ethnic entities" continues to preserve its ancestral folklore; and that it never ceases to nurse and cultivate its traditional arts.

On the other hand it will be unavoidable; and I do not see any harm in this - on the contrary, it would be preferable - that along with the concessions about art and folklore, also the actually existing differences in the way the basics of jewish religion are interpreted, are preserved; and the way the variety of ritualistics are performed, will also survive. Again the precondition is, that they will have to be accepted and tolerated by all the other ethnic groups in Israel.

There is, fortunately, a general consensus in Israel, that ethnic communities should have the opportunity - that they should be encouraged even - to preserve their cultural heritage. This should in no way be considered a condescending gracious concession to these communities, but their absolute inborn right. The atmosphere of fraternal coexistence is thereby made easy, because the various ethnic groups in Israel have not brought along with them - nor do they identify with - the more exotic, generally unacceptable and so often also disagreeable, customs of their countries of origine, e.g. exotic cults; initiation rites, polygamy, tattoing, self-mutilations etc, which in other countries have made the integration of a number of groups so very difficult.

In Israel, as is the case everywhere in the world, an immigrant's adjustment to his new environment is usually difficult, even under the best of circumstances. But in Israel an immigrant's lot is further aggravated by the typical israeli bureaucrat, who is rarely noted for his or her logic and reasoning, for his or her courtesy and intelligence. And the difficulties facing today's Olim are further compounded by the unfriendliness, the rudeness and the selfishness of the majority of the israeli public into whose midst they have landed.

The difficulties resulting from the Immigrants' cultural background are in many instances still more aggravated by the political affiliations

- if not orientation - which most immigrants, surprisingly, establish very soon after their arrival. The result is, that at least the first generation of immigrants adopts the apparently specific israeli phenomenon of an unrestrained negative attitude to the local politics, the national politicians and the machinery of government administration. The handicap immigrants acquire therewith is in most instances due, more than anything else, to their lack of comprehension for the intricacies so specific for the country's politics, politicians and administration.

Israel is a country of immigrants. It has always been a country of immigrants. It exists only because it is a country of immigrants. The general public has apparently forgotten - and if not, it does not accept the conclusions - that they, or their parents, too had once been immigrants. They point out only the negative facts of the various waves of immigration. The immigrants are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Israel. In the 1992 elections the russian Olim formed their own party, the DA, but it failed to gain even a single seat in the Knesseth, because most of their votes went to the Labour Party, in protest against the Likud then in the government. But soon they were disappointed with the Labour Party too. They will most likely present their own list in the coming elections. They may succeed in mustering 10-15% of the seats - and thereby contribute to the disharmony in the country.

In principle immigrants should not complain about the reception they receive. Israel absorbs enormous numbers of immigrants. Everyone of them is provided with accommodation, health insurance and financial support for a reasonable period of time. In the first half of the '90' more than 630 000 people have immigrated to Israel. Of these 545 000 are from the former soviet empire, and 56 000 from Ethiopia. The "Russians" have got adjusted to the local conditions. Most of them have found employment in their own professions; others have been retrained. On an average their unemployment rate is similar to that of the resident Israelis.

It is regrettable that Israel has acquired the reputation of being "soft": a branch of the Russian Mafia has established itself in Israel and is in steady contact with its Headquarters in Russia for dealings in drugs and for "money laundering". It is no less regrettable, that the russian Aliyah has had to pay its local obolus to terrorism: from 1990 till 1995 24 of them have been killed, and 25 injured.

The Russians have, all in all, not experienced the same culture shock as the Ethiopians, whose community bonds have deteriorated; whose

suicide rate is high; whose number of wife murders is great; whose divorce rate is increasing; whose juvenile delinquency is growing. The early image of the Ethiopians as a model community has disappeared. Among the latest arrivals - who had to spend months and years in Adis Abeba waiting for their transport to Israel - the number of Aids cases is high.

The sephardic communities - more even than the ethiopian and russian societies - try to turn, generally without much success, their isolation into a merit if not an advantage. While multi-culturalism has elsewhere the meaning of cultural diversity, in Israel it is perceived as a threat to co-existence - if not a danger to a continued cultural existence - because the originally cultural issue is easily extended into that of ethnicity: that is to say, into the interplay of language and idiom, of religious ritualistic values and of everyday conventions. The resulting tension is likely to change direction and intensity, whenever a new aliya wave - independent from whichever country it originates - takes over the advantageous place of the "latest aliyah". Fortunately, this tension is not an inter-ethnic hostility; and should one such does erupt at certain rare times; in certain restricted areas; and in certain limited respects, it never degenerates into anything worse than a silent, or at most in a muted adversity.

Israel should not take it lightly, that it has lost part of that power; that it has neglected that unusual ingredient, which had initially attracted all those dedicated and altruistic men and women of higher than average intellectual standards. Most of the zeal; and much of the fervour, the early Zionist brought with them, have disappeared. Whatever still exists today of this dedication and fervour, can be nearly exclusively found among the products of the religious educational system.

Israel is no more the zionist collective, that had made it its task to fight the threat of assimilation which is endangering the Jewish People's survival in the Diaspora. The country has since long turned more pluralistic, more democratic, more bourgeois - and more selfish. In post-zionist Israe politicians give up lands, which - by virtue of biblically established owner rights - had been claimed by early pioneers; and which had already been occupied and cultivated by today's Israelis; And which the still surviving Zionists among the Israelis consider the eternal heritage of the Jewish Nation. This politically explained, but morally difficult to digest fact, has discouraged many potential olims to make Israel their home !

If I am criticised for tending to enlarge far too much on the deficiencies in Israel's educational system, I have the explanation and the excuse, that the future of Israel - and therefore the wellbeing of Jewry in general - depend on the human and educational qualities of its youth.

Endlessly one hears this statement repeated, i.e. that a country's strength and future depends on its children. Nowhere is this more true than in Israel, where the disappearance of entire generations of Jews in the Shoah; and the loss of large numbers of Jewish youth in the many wars Israel had to fight, are greatly felt. And nowhere is it possibly as important as in Israel that the children receive a proper education and the youth the right guidance, so that they become decent human beings; that they develop into ethical Jews; that they become integrated into their society.

Why is it that so many - indeed a large part - of new and not so new Israelis never feel real Israelis? Why is that they have not become integrated? Why is it that they do not feel proud to be Israelis? I have looked for an answer; and the only one I can find to satisfy me is that the other Israelis, those behind the desks; those who spend most of their time in the coffeehouses; those whose dealings are not straight; and those who believe themselves better-class people, are at fault. With regard to the latter it is indeed a fact that Israel has developed a "High Society". How much this reminds me of the degenerative stage of Jewry in Germany not so long ago!

However, there is no real conflict between these wealthy society people and the other, the majority of the Israelis. The wealthy have no noticeable influence on politics and economy in Israel. They are not the ruling class, nor do they want to be counted as such. They prefer to live within their own closed circle. They like to stay in the shadow. They feel well only if away from the limelight. The average socialites Doran and Aliza have no contact with average Chaim or Rivka. They ignore them. And in response average Chaim and Rivka as a rule ignore socialites Doran and Aliza. I do not even believe that the financially less endowed Chaim and Rivka envy the ostentatiousness of the make-believe socialites who, on the other hand envy the other Dorans and Alizas of their society.

Since the immigration of the Ethiopians and Russians had set in - which coincided with the waning impact of Zionism - the Israeli people have given up on aspiring to an egalitarian society. The oneness of Jewish

society is a matter of the past. Israel has become a moneyed, an egocentric society. It has become a society divided by mostly minor diversities, which notwithstanding their often irrational significance, do not fail to irritate and hurt: Labour is at war with Likud; Jews with Arabs; Immigrants with the Old Established; men with women; Liberals with Conservatives; the young with the old; the Orthodox with the Progressives; heterosexuals with homosexuals; the Settlers with the Army; the clever ones who acquire more and more wealth with the paupers; and the privileged few with the discontented many.

In every stratum of Israel's human material great changes going on with regard to the attitudes, the interests and the priorities. The number of enthusiastic Zionists is steadily getting less. And - as is more than abundantly reflected in their children's behaviour, interests and aspirations - not only the educational and intellectual, but also the moral and spiritual qualities of even the dedicated Zionists is lessened.

These qualitative changes are easily detectable in the changes which have over the years occurred in the aims and hopes, in the interests and cares, of Israel's youth. To the early Zionist immigrants nothing was of greater importance than the defense of their homesteads from marauding Arabs; than to feed their families; than to erect a roof over their heads; than to provide them with clothing and schooling. Religion was of no interest to them. Religion occupied, therefore, no place in their value scale. In the course of the following years the attitudes and interests of the Israelis had hardly changed. Most of the first generation's time and energy was invested in the struggle for their and their new homeland's survival. The early settlers had not the means - nor in truth did they care - to afford more than a minimal degree of luxuries.

Also the second generation had to work hard to provide for the basic needs of their families; but they made it also one their principal tasks, to have their own children enjoy at least a carefree life; and to grant them at least a few luxuries.

A far greater - and in itself not very remarkable - change has become evident in the children of the third generation. In many aspects they present a totally different species of Israeli. They make great demands on life. They expect their parents to provide them with all the amenities and luxuries which are enjoyed - as they can see on their TV screens - by children in western countries, especially in the US. This trend has been increasing year by year; and has led President Weizman - to the horror of the political and diplomatic establishment - to call it "americanization

of Israel's youth". It is mostly the youth of the third generation which makes up the major number of the "Yordim", the emigrants, who leave Israel in search of greater opportunities and fortunes abroad. They never return.

I have on the other hand to point out, that these children of often self-made parents are in a certain, a more welcome, aspect different from their seniors: they are as a rule more optimistic and often also more generous. They may show more sensitivity, and often more tolerance. But most of them are also less careful and less judicious in their actions; and they are less provident and often less self-controlled in their decisions. It is impressive - and also a consolation - to see them so very keen on raising their educational level and on improving social status. When they have completed their military service and have to come a decision regarding their future, they will, as far as they it is in their power, avoid taking up a manual job - for instanc in construction or agriculture or in the crafts - but will aspire to study for one of the professions; or what see perceive as better still, will strive to enter government service. Nobody can blame the young people for wanting to reach a higher status, but the continued diaspora-originated disrepute of manual work in Israel is regrettable, as by the necessary reliance on arab or other guest workers a loop-sided and unhealthy economy is created. I am reminded of Ben Gurion's saying: "Only because a large number of immigrants from the West - i.e. from the european countries - had made an effort to cast off the kind of occupation they had practiced in the Diaspora, did the State of Israel come into being".

As is only too natural, today's social standing and religious involvement of the parents - but more so their pecuniary means - are distinctly reflected in their children. A spectator, seeing the "look alike" of the schoolchildren in their casual uniform-like clothing; seeing their shabby schoolbags and their worn shoes, may believe he is faced with the welcome evidence that Israel is a truly equalitarian society. He will soon change his mind, when he observes these same children separate after leaving school into those who visit a coffehouse or a hamburger place or a cinema; and those, whose parents' less florid financial situation makes it impossible for them to join their comrades in such kind of entertainment.

In one aspect the children of Israel certainly do not differ from those elsewhere: most of their time outside school is spent in front of the television set. Neither are the reasons different, which induce isreali parents to grant their children unlimited access to the TV screen;

and why, like the parents elsewhere, they do not censor the programs with which their children spend their free time. One of the least convincing reasons, however, which Israeli parents are wont to offer, is the illusion that the TV screen can provide some additional education. In Israel the TV programs provide anything but education. On the contrary: they are unbelievably appalling in content, low-grade in intellect and unpleasant in presentation. I have discovered, that not even this is a prerogative of Israel's educational system. Many of the TV programs I watched in the US are even worse than those in Israel.

It cannot be said often enough, that television has greatly harmed the cultural and educational, the ethical and esthetic levels in Israel. In particular it has harmed the youth. The same negative judgement applies to the value of a certain class of magazines and newspapers. Even the yellow press abroad will have difficulty to compete with the ways the newsmedia in Israel report the sensational and the gruesome. Notwithstanding their, at best average, intellectual and cultural standards, only the military reports of the pretentious journalists have to be submitted to a censor. But when a murder occurs; or whenever a terrorist attack has taken place; or whenever even a commonplace accident happens, pictures of as many as possible exposures of blooded, mutilated victims are added to the generally low level of reporting on the TV screen. The newspapers - greatly harmed by the severe competition of the TV and among themselves - try to compete with each for days, who can show ever more gruesome photos.

I honestly do not understand the pretentious argument of a certain section of our politically affected educators, that through their endeavours they succeed - or at least they endeavour - to bind Diaspora Jewry to Israel; and that they are, in addition, instrumental in bringing about the messianic age. From what I have observed the contrary is true: they are so very often the cause, why the significance Israel has for the Diaspora, is being eaten away. And eo ipso this implies, that also the important role the Diaspora has to play in the survival of Israel is jeopardised .

Sixty-five percent of Israel's Jewish population is made up of schoolchildren. Of Israel's 1 900 000 children 400 000 - of whom over a quarter are recent immigrants - live below the poverty line. The children are enrolled in various types of schools, which differ mainly by the degree of their curricula's religious content.

Israeli children receive a totally insufficient education. In the secular state schools - which make up the vast majority of Israel's educational institutions - they receive only a very limited education

in jewish studies. The haredi school system is the best. In contrast to the secular schools they not only provide a thorough religious education, but they have also long school hours; and they provide hot meals; and they raise their own capital.

Without a religious element in the education of children - even if it contains only the transmission of some of the specific jewish history; if it contains only a presentation of some of the singular jewish traditions - there can impossibly be a specific israeli education. Religious education should not, however, mean single sex schools, less secular literature and less social studies. The former Chief Rabbi of England, Sir Immanuel Jacobovits, bemoaned the fact, that in the Diaspora a far greater proportion of jewish children receive a true jewish education; and enjoy a far greater amount of religious instruction, than do children in Israel's schools.

This statement of the Chief Rabbi is the more remarkable, as what I have seen or heard of the kind and character of teaching of jewish materia in a large number of schools abroad, is not at all impressive. E.g. the product of this kind of religious education, a young immigrant student from England, asked in a literary class of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, when the Tnach had been first translated into hebrew.

Not even in talmudic studies and jewish history do israeli students always top diaspora youth, as the annual quiz competitions have shown. But criticism of the education the children receive in israeli schools should not be restricted to the jewish and religious curriculum. In comparisons of the achievements of israeli students with those in other countries, israeli youths occupy at best the middle range in mathematics and the sciences; and in literacy and reading they are placed low down on the scale. Very few israeli students reach the standard which would put them into the world class of achievement. To mention an instance: in a recent International Mathematical Olympiade in Moscow, in which youth from all over the world took part, the israeli contingent came in the 17th place - just behind Iran. Even though the school-leaving examinations; and even though the psychological - along with the intellectual - tests qualifying for university entrance are described as very difficult, many students have to spend their first university year in acquiring simple intellectual skills they should have learned in school. And there is not the explanation of "affirmative action" for this deficiency ! There is no Affirmative Action in Israel. At least not yet.

And year by year many more illiterate youth are discovered among the army recruits.

Have I to point out the great responsibility the educational authorities of Israel have ? And have I to point out, how ironic it is that, even though an incredible number of children never learn to speak or read proper hebrew, the Minister of Education had the brilliant idea to establish in every school district in Israel at least two schools in which at all levels the medium of teaching is to be english ? And how ironic it is that the Minister plans to greatly extend later on the number of this type of schools ? To my knowledge such a system is usually found necessary in Third World countries, where it has proved quite useful. But in Israel.....!?

The arab children's state of education is less lamentable. Their school curriculum has not changed from the time they came under israeli administration. Though the schools are financially and administratively Israel's responsibility, the curriculum in use continues to be that of the jordanian school system. Also the examinations for admission to universities abroad are done by Jordan. This may be a blessing for the arab children.

(One hears so often - and people like to repeat it at every suitable or unsuitable occasion - that jewish brain power is the greatest; that israeli scientists are the best in the world. That medicine in Israel tops all other countries. That israeli hospitals are better than any. But there has never been a Nobel prize winner, not even a nominee for the Prize, from among Israel's scientists and physicians, while abroad there are an abundance of Jews among the Nobel Prize winners. I am happy, that in electronic technology Israel has reached a respectable place among the leading countries; that many innovations are made in this field by Israelis. But Israel does not take sufficient care to keep its leading experts in this speciality satisfied; for many are easily lured abroad by better working conditions and more attractive salaries).

Nobody needs to be told, that Israel's right and strength to survive depend on the cultivation of its cultural heritage; on the teaching of its traditional values; on the preservation and transmission of its moral values; on the submission to its ethical commandments; on the knowledge of the religious and ritual practices; on the creation of interest in jewish history; and on the awareness of the miraculous survival of the Jewish People since it first was formed.

Can I possibly be wrong to attribute all the defects and deficiencies that are evident in Israel's educational system, to the lack of "yiddishkeit" in the education of the children ? Can I possibly be wrong to call it a grave sin of the parents, not to introduce their children to the Jewishness which has kept Judaism alive until this day ? These thoughts came to me, whenever

I observe on Kol Nidre Evening - and this I observe every year - scores of children riding their bicycles through the empty streets of Jerusalem; when I pass on that same evening the groups of singing youth on their way to or from their improvised pubs or discotheques; when I watch the groups picknicking in public parks.

Economic progress and prosperity are not enough to sustain Israel as a Jewish state. Nor are they guarantors of our Jewish and cultural continuity.

No ! What I see of modern Israeli youth gives me hardly a hope for a continued awareness of Jewishness in Israel's next generations. A large number of young people come together on Friday Night in Tel-Aviv for their regular "acid parties". In the magazine "Hello Israel", supported by the Ministry of Tourism, advertisements for "Boys for gay escort" have appeared. All this points to something; but I do not know yet all it points to.

I know it certainly points out, that young boys and girls "from good families" have not acquired from their parents the kind of education which would instinctively inhibit asocial behaviour; which would keep them from committing felonies or even murder. Which would instill in them a sense of belonging. Which would give them the sense and pride of being Jewish. On completion of their military service very many fly to India and Nepal, there to learn about Hinduism and Buddhism; but they have never shown the slightest interest to learn first about Judaism. How can they know, therefore, whether their own religion has not a better fare to offer them ?

It is worrisome, that so many soldiers commit suicide. The number reaches forty in some years. The worry and pain this causes is not alleviated by the assurance of the Authorities, that the percentage of suicides among soldiers is not higher than that in the civil population. And it is still more worrisome, that new immigrants make up a large percentage of these suicides.

No less worrisome is the drug problem. There are 4000 drug addicts in Jerusalem alone ! I know that Israel considers itself a western country; and I know also that drug addiction is a universal problem. But "belonging to the West" should mean belonging to that complex civilization which started in Europe; and of which America is now the leader and defender. And it should also mean, that Israel is compelled - and no less also be willing - to share these nations' basic values concerning freedom, decency and human rights. But this should not mean, that Israel has also to absorb these countries' and their peoples' faults

and weaknesses. And finally it should not come to mean, that by copying the West's negative aspects and faults, Israel is far more handicaped than any other country in the world.

These facts - associated with the usual kind of excuses - certainly do apply to, and are reflected in, the selfish and aggressive behaviour the Israeli exhibits in his daily life, be it at home or, unfortunately, also abroad. Visitors are unpleasantly impressed by the Israeli's reluctance to queue. This reveals not only a lack of discipline, but on occasion - as at the Arad Festival of 1955 when three young people were killed - may cause an uncontrolled stampede.

Jewish drivers are well aware of the unacceptably great number of road accidents; but they still continue their wild driving. This problem is enhanced by the increase in alcohol consumption among young people.

Visitors are surprised; and new immigrants are disturbed by the lack of "Derech Ertez", of decent behaviour, they encounter among the Israelis. Its values are not generally known anymore.

All these and more newly developing negative characteristics of the Israeli are generally blamed as the main reason, why Israel is ahead of all the other countries in the world with regard to road accidents: since the foundation of the State 20 000 persons have been killed on Israel's highways, and about 700 000 have been severely injured. This is more than the 17 500 casualties Israel has suffered in all its wars, including all the other incidences of enemy actions. The danger is compounded - and is cited in defense of the israeli driver - by the statistic, that the number of vehicles in Israel per kilometer-lane of roadway is the highest in the world; and that this ratio is year by year increasing. But this should not be an excuse !

I may have pointed out too many negative sides; and I may sound at times pessimistic, but I cannot hide that I have moments and times when I am worried.

5.

How will Israel survive ?

Can Zionism really claim, that it has more or less fulfilled its program with the creation of a viable democratic State in Israel ? Can it really be said, that Zionism has become a chapter of Jewish history since it had reached the aim with which it had set out ? I do not think so; and I am not alone with this conclusion.

In Zionism's view Jewish history is an ongoing process. Every one of the chapters in Jewish history - with its ups and downs, its triumphs and its defeats, its joys and sufferings - is part of an ongoing process.

Israel was not a priori created to harbour the masses of Jews the Nazis and their sympathizers, their helpers and imitators, had rendered homeless. And neither was it created by a miracle. But it came into existence just in time and not an hour too late. I will at this stage not go as far as to say that the unexpected historic developments in Germany leading to the Shoah were planned by the Great Organizer, but within my conception of Judaism's place in the evolution of the world - and with the timely availability of Israel at the right moment as evidence, that the Great Healer had readied the necessary facilities for the foreseeable threatening disaster; or - to use another metaphor - that the Great Fire Chief had his outfit ready, in expectation of the tornado which was approaching.

The fact, that the Jews have survived despite what has happened to them in the past; despite the harm they have been doing to themselves, should not be seen as having a bearing on what will happen to them in the future. Israel's actual predicaments have to be seen in the context of the centuries lasting wanderings and persecutions - and finally of the Shoah - may raise concern, even alarm, but not cause despair.

(As I have already outlined somewhere, I see the salvation of the Jews in the Nazi and Stalin era as the final chance, and Israel as the ultimate test. For in the lamentations one hears today about the shrinking Jewish communities in the western world; about the rapidly

proceeding process of assimilation by intermarriages and conversions, it seems forgotten, that in century before WWI the intermarriage and conversion rate of the Jews in Western Europe exceeded 45%; and that the rate of their assimilation was even still higher.)

Nobody can refute Israel the right to see itself as the centre of the Jewish People's being. Nobody can overlook, that Israel is today the determining factor in the views the world at large forms about Judaism; that it is the focal point for the transmission of Jewish culture; that it carries the responsibility for the physical security and the spiritual nourishment of the future generations of Jews.

But it is also a fact, that Israel's claim to represent today the cultural as well as the religious and spiritual centre for the entire Jewish People, is not acceptable to all the Jews on our planet. Not only the ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel and the Diaspora; not only the assimilating Jews everywhere, deny Israel this right, but there are also movements - like e.g. the Cananites - which deny any association with, any allegiance too, any responsibility for the Jewish State.

Although one hears nowadays very rarely from and about the Canaanites, it would be a mistake to believe their movement, which originated in the 1930s, to be extinct. Their voices are still heard. They proclaim, that the Jewish People has more affinity with the peoples of the Middle East; that it has more in common with the descendants of the Phoenicians and the remnants of the Sumerians in the countries surrounding Israel; that it has a greater relationship with the Arabs, than with the Jews in the Diaspora. Were this statement allowed to be turned into political activism, they would postulate that Israel is part of the East; that it is one of the nations of the Middle East; that it should have no special interest in the Jews of the Diaspora; and that it should give up any and all internationally directed and globally projected programs, which will not bring benefit exclusively to the State of Israel, its inhabitants and the region around Israel.

It is fortunate indeed, that the protagonists of this type of a more negative than hostile ideology - though it may count on the support of many of Israel's detractors and enemies - has hardly a chance to be generally accepted, and certainly not ever to be realized. For were this the case, it would bring about the end of Israel and of all it is meant to be.

Zionism has brought about the rebirth of Israel, and has given

the Jewish people a new life. There had been a time when religion had no place in Zionist ideology; when Zionism was not faced with the insistence to define its eventual religious aspect. In the past it was possible to postpone a solution to these problems, because the bitter struggle for the physical securing of the state had absolute and overall priority; and because the fight for the survival of the young State had not left time or place for all and every discussion about a possible religious identification of the country. But this is no more the case.

Israel's Secularists argue, that some two generations ago such ideological discussions would in any case have had no sense, as it was of vital necessity that a Jewish State was available to the homeless Jews; that is to say when -- in the words of Winston Churchill about the Balfour Declaration "...this pledge of a home of refuge, of an asylum, was not made to the Jews of Palestine, but to the Jews outside Palestine, to that vast unhappy mass of scattered, persecuted, wandering Jews, whose intense, unchanging, unconquerable desire has been for a national home" -- priority had to be given to securing the State first of all; and to postpone to a later date all ideological formulations.

Today, however, the Secularists argue, all striving and struggling is a matter of the past, because the Zionist goal has been accomplished; because Israel is a democratic state with all the problems and faults of a modern state; because it has, like all other modern democratic states, to face its problems and faults; and because there is no room nor sense anymore in all the Zionist-redemptory ideas of the past.

The consequence of this -- rather leftist-politically overshadowed -- concept is, that there has set in an alienation from Judaism in Israel; that large sectors of Israelis do not see themselves as part of the Jewish People. This development is reflected also in the Diaspora in the large number of Jews who are opting out of being Jews.

Jews are losing interest in Judaism due to their waning dedication to Jewishness, and not due to the influence of environmental forces or influences. Missionary work is a relic of times past, although many Missionaries are still active among Jews, even in Israel. It is the growing cynicism among the Israelis to which much of the distancing from their religion -- and even culture -- is due.

This is very marked among today's youth, most of whom is secular. In this respect it is not different from its counterpart elsewhere. Like the latter it exists without a spiritual basis. It faces life

without a spiritual aim, and often goes through life also without an ideal. Their belief is in the ideals and promises, the advice and the future, which the television screen pretends to transmit.

Whoever watches the TV programs with an analytical-critical mind will notice with sorrow, that the pretentious dispensers of culture really believe they can fill Israeli youth's intellectual and spiritual vacuum with the pop culture of a Madonna or a Michael Jackson, with animated cartoons and with rock music.

When I came on aliyah I had in my optimism expected, that Israel's religious and educational leaders had in sufficient time become aware of the threat this display posing as culture presents to Israel's youth; that they had seen it as their burning duty, to fill this intellectual vacuum by providing the youth with some degree -- even if not very deep and detailed -- of knowledge of Jewish tradition, of Jewish history and of Jewish ethics. Unfortunately I cannot detect anything which I could call a sincere effort by those who carry the responsibility. This is not only a great pity but also a great sin. For were the young men and women provided with such an education, it might plant into them the actually often missing sense of belonging to the Jewish Nation; might instill in them the pride of being nationals of Israel.

Neither do I see an effort made anywhere or anyhow, to convey to these young people even the least appreciation of Jewish duties and religious values. Only such a knowledge and such an appreciation can awaken in the youth of Israel that degree of faith in their country; give the youth that kind of confidence in their people; can help them gain that amount of trust in themselves, which are vital for making it see itself as valuable partners in forming the future of their country. For such knowledge and faith, such confidence and trust are essential, to make the young people feel as Israelis responsible for the future of the entire Jewish People.

I found the youth bored by religion; bored by rituals; bored by synagogal services; bored by prayers. They do not vibrate with the prayers which to them contain too many songs in praise of God who does not need man's praises. They miss the spiritual leaders' teaching the application of the ancient Jewish ethics and commands to everyday life; to the problems of today; to the ongoing political developments.

Modern Jewish youth is very sophisticated, analytical, questioning. It wants to see a purpose in life, and a future. It looks for ideals. Nowhere in the world will 90% of the boys and 50% of the girls serve

in the army without protest.

If Judaism wants to recapture the interest of its thinking and reasoning youth; if it wants the synagogues to be filled, it will have to adapt itself to the young people's demands; will have to associate Judaism to modern times' problems; will have to adapt to today's ethical demands.

Such a directed and comprehensive educational program would not only preserve this young generation for the Jewish nation; would not only create a valuable Jewish and Israeli human material, but it would also assure the survival of the State of Israel; and its ranking as a strong and proud nation among all nations. And such a directed Jewish education would help the youth grow into a generation, which is going to serve as the backbone which the Jewish Diaspora so badly needs.

I see it as an axiom, especially for those who like myself have experienced this in person - although I will accept that my personal experiences have greatly influenced my judgement - that only in Israel can a Jew live the values of Judaism in their truest sense; that only in Israel can a Jew enjoy in full the pride of being Jewish; that only in Israel can a Jew experience in the fullest sense a feeling of security and safety; that only in Israel can a Jew have his self-respect sustained and his honour retained; that only in Israel can a Jew have his human rights maintained; that only in Israel can a Jew be a self-assured and proud Jew.

And ultimately and finally only in Israel can a Jew realize, that by being aware of, and obedient to, the demands of the eternal codex of Jewish ethics, he will know himself a fulfilled Jew. It is an instinctive, more than reasoned, knowledge in the Jew, that by first of all fulfilling this basic precondition, Israel is turned into the spiritual homeland of the Jews; and is made the assuring and comforting lighthouse for all the Jews in the world. And among those who can, should and will enjoy this benefit I include also the non-Zionists.

Israel has with impressive rapidity climbed the ladder of economic success. Though Israel's economy is booming; though Israel is counted among the leading technically endowed nations, the country is painfully aware, that the difficulties it has to face are not getting smaller; that the expenses it has to bear are not getting less; that it has to

maintain a large army; that it has to provide for large numbers of immigrants; that its people have to pay heavy taxes; that its health insurance and social services absorb a large part of the budget; that one in every eight persons - that is 640 000 individuals - lives in poverty; that one in every five elderly persons is poor; that 400 000 of its 1,900 000 children live below the poverty line.

Israel has also turned itself into a consumer society to a degree never thought of, never wished for. It is also now the country in the western world with the second greatest differential between the highest and lowest income groups. Even some of the bosses of the Histadruth, the socialist-minded and -directed Trade Union Organization, receive 25 times the average old-age pension.

But it has also to be pointed out - and is evident, no less - that the very actively involved social program of the State is nurtured by the deeply ingrained Faith - which Moses had already introduced - that poverty and physical needs have no place in Jewish society. From its beginning, all of Israel's government had the unshakeable aspiration that the provision of all necessary help and assistance to the needed had to be their guideline.

Israel can also point out with pride, that it has achieved a respected position in the area of world politics. The country can point out a number of - at times impressive - political successes; but these have led many among the leadership to succumb to the assumption, that the original Zionist ideals, values and aspirations are today no more of primary importance. For this there is only one explanation: these leaders lack proper comprehension of Israel's true needs; they have neither the right understanding of the duties which their position and influence require from them. Leaders - be they religious, political or intellectual leaders - who think, live and act under this wrong impression, have failed in their most sacred duty, which is first of all to shape the future of the people; to carry forward the destiny of the country; and to guard the safety of the nation.

And it is no less unfortunate, that the populace in Israel is induced to think - influenced by the conduct of their leaders - it has no more to make sacrifices for the country's survival; that it is made to think, the rules of ethical conduct have no more the veto power which they may once have had under similar conditions. This comfortable

escapist way of thinking makes many Israelis feel inclined to argue, that they are now liberated from all former unpleasant responsibilities; that they are now free of all former uncomfortable duties; that they have now the right to enjoy without restraint the benefits offered by the country's prosperity; and that they have not to control themselves in their urge to reap as many of the advantages accruing from the improved image the country has acquired in the wake of the years-long "ongoing peace processes".

And, of course, all these benefits and advantages are sweetened with the luxuries modern life has to offer. Israel has become a consumer society worthy of a military, economic and political superpower. But Israel is by far no such superpower. More Israelis than ever travel abroad. They spend more money than ever on cable TV, luxury clothing, motorcars, jewelry, portable phones. They spend more money than ever before on gambling, not only in casinos but also on the Stock Exchange. To enable them to finance their extravaganzas, a large number of Israelis indulge in the advantages offered by the "overdraft culture". The banks eagerly persuade their customers to make use of this offer. On the advice of their bankers, the trusting, eager, unthinking, greedy ones among the Israelis are induced - and seduced - to use this loaned money to speculate in shares. Sooner than later - and inevitably - comes the unpleasant awakening, when the banks' willing customers have to face the real demands of life - and of their banks.

And with all these successes and advancements, the Israelis suffer from an inferiority complex, especially visavis America. They immitate american customs and habits. They have copied ever trend, every fashion. Israeli youth has become "ammericanized", as President Weizman said. It has turned sloppy; dresses sloppily, because they see american youth dresas in this way. They import even its deviations like the satanic cults. Every TV show, however empty or silly, is imported from the USA. It is to me unbelievable that a literate and intelligent people, dares to screen all those childish idiotic cartoons.

Israel's most valuable asset is its manpower. Its people provide Israel with a source of great physical strength and economic power. Most of all, and to the greatest degree, Israel's advantage is due to the above average intelligence of its people. And to the eternal urge of the Jews to get a good education. Israel has an unusual large pool of intellectuals. On an average about 120 000 students are enrolled every year in the institutions of higher learning.

It is a pity that most of them are registered in the faculties of law and business management. The main reason the students give for their selection is an easier access to the job market in Israel which a diploma in these professions promises. This is the more regrettable, because Israel will ultimately be internationally and economically only competitive in the fields of scientific research and application. It is, therefore, a pity that only few of the young people study in the faculties of science: and that a scarcity is building up in scientifically trained manpower.

It should ring an alarm bell in university circles, that Israel's standing in the scientific world is steadily eroding. For a very short time only will this vacuum be filled by the large number of scientists who have immigrated from the former Soviet Union; but a shamefully large number of these, often highly qualified scientists and engineers, cleans the streets or washes dishes in the restaurants.

No ! Let us not lose our sense of proportion ! Let us be clear in our minds, that all its economic strength does not turn Israel into a "Wirtschaftswunder"; and that all its military prowess does not give Israel the status of a superpower, even though in the Middle East it is militarily stronger than any of its neighbours; though it is stronger even - under the protection of a benevolent America - than the combined armies of all of the neighbouring arab states. Israelis should realize instead, that they are being tested, whether they will allow the Zionist ideals - which have in the first place made their country reach its actual position; and which have driven them to gain its many material advantages - to remain effective. Israelis should be aware, that not only they, but the deeds of all mankind is tested.

This Abraham Lincoln understood; he saw, for instance, in war a divine testing scheme; a "...great testing of the nation by an ordeal of blood, showing the way to charity and rebirth". And what Lincoln said on another occasion might also with great advantage guide our people: "I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to the light I have".

And the Israelis should take to heart, that only the outcome of these testing processes will provide the answer, whether Israel has a right to survive, so that it can revive and pursue the primordial task and ultimate destiny of the Jewish people.

Also the presence or absence of self-sustained and uncritical

ethical comportment; or - on the opposite end - the repression of an ingrained moral sense, represent a test by which it will be determined, whether the individual's and nation's karma have been positively or negatively affected; and whether their genes and their genius have the right to survive.

I am reminded of a passage I read in the Art Scroll Prayer Book: "Before going to sleep, Master of the Universe, I herewith forgive everyone who sinned against me, my body, my property, my honour.....whether he did this in this transmigration or any past transmigration".

Israel is judged by the outcome of such tests; by the way it behaves towards the minorities; by the way it treats its foreign workers; by the way its people behave themselves. How often are we reminded not only that we were slaves in Egypt, but also that we were for so long suppressed wherever we lived ! Israelis should never forget, that their country as a whole is judged by the way they behave at home; by the way they behave when abroad.

Israel has inherited an unerring guideline how to behave to minorities and foreigners in its midst. Jews have much expertise as a persecuted - as an at best tolerated - minority group. Israelis cannot and should not have forgotten, how they and their parents would have fared, had they misbehaved while they were living as strangers in a hostile environment. They cannot have already forgotten, what it means to have been a minority in all those host countries they or their forefathers have lived in the past. And they should never forget, what it meant to be a stranger in every single one of these - never welcoming - host countries.

Rereading what I have just now written, I realize that I have been carried away by my own memories; that the above words may still apply to a country here and there - but not generally; not even to the Arab countries, in a few of whom residues of formerly flourishing communities still exist; not even to Germany anymore. I realize, that the Jews in most all western democracies have little to complain about nowadays. And the dreadful thought came to me, that the one of the greatest defects of the Jews which feed the never extinguished hatred for Jews in the world, is not only the Jewish often evident self-hatred, but also by the enmity of so many Jews towards their fellow-Jews, along with the disrespect, and even hatred for each other. And I understood that this fault is to a great kept hidden in the Diaspora "for the goyim's sake", but comes unhindered to the foreground in Israel.

This is the first time since nearly 2000 years that the Jews are a majority in a country which hosts a large minority group. To all appearances the Jews have not yet got used to this new experience. Or - in other words - they have not yet "digested" this fact. The Jews like to dwell on their people's past history, and it would be well to benefit from the recall of their past; for such a recall will clearly, automatically and instinctively dictate to the Jews in Israel - whether Government or individuals - how to treat the minorities living in Israel as best and as equally as possible.

With "minorities" I mean, of course, the Arabs. And in particular the Palestinians. It is a fact, that the over-all treatment of these by Israel and the Israelis can justly be criticized. But it is also a fact that the blame cannot be entirely laid at the feet of the Jews. The early Jewish settlers had come to Palestine with the firm intention to treat the local Arabs as friends, as genetically related even; and to grant them - once the Jewish State is born - the status of absolute equality with the Jews.

This had in the main been the program of the Zionist Movement; had been the original intention of the early pioneers' leaders, especially that of the intellectuals among them; and in particular of those who had immigrated from the countries in Eastern Europe, where they had been imbued with socialist ideals.

But it must also be conceded, that the Jews who had immigrated from Arab countries - where they had constituted a humiliated and legally restricted minority - have transplanted into Israel, along with their families and themselves, also bitter and painful memories and a long-standing resentment, which so very often erupted already early on into manifestations of a burning hatred against all the Arabs they met in their new homeland.

Having granted all this, it has no less also to be conceded, that the Arabs bear a far greater responsibility for their at times unfriendly and unpleasant, but mostly - and by all and every definition hateful - attitude to Judaism in general and to Israel in particular. By their antagonistic behaviour; by their hostile attitudes; by their acts of open, unrestrained terrorism, murder and sabotage which does not spare civilians, women and children; by their mistaken belief that by their

acts of terror they could make the Jews give in to the demands of arab nationionalism - this means not the grant of their demands for equal rights with the Jews, but the total dismantling of the Jewish State - the Arabs in and around Israel have made any full integration and peaceful co-existence for a very long time very difficult, if not totally impossible.

Islamists - and this nationalist-fundamentalist appellation of an unrestrained radicalism applies to all Arabs in Israel and in the outside world - want an arab state in all of what is the State of Israel. They base their claim on declaring the entire country as an islamic "waqf"; that is as the inalienable property of Islam.

The theory is in circulation - and is, apparently, in full accepted by the Government of Israel - that the Palestinians' enmity towards the Jews is due to economic reasons; that a peaceful atmosphere would automatically set in no sooner the living conditions of the arab people have improved.

This theory has, since the 1993 handshake on the lawn of the White House in Washington, had a remarkable impact on Rabin's policy: he began to pass around his hat among the wealthy nations to collect money for the PA in Gaza, the so-called Palestine Authority. And for Peres it was an invitation to travel from one foreign capitals to the other to solicit financial support for Arafat. Regretfully this policy has created a crisis of confidence among the Jews in the Diaspora. They have Israel very much at heart; but the Israeli leadership's conduct hurts them greatly. Many of the Diaspora Jews who have every year donated considerable sums to Israel, have in consequence cancelled their contributions.

We are told, however, by experts, that even though depressed economic conditions have not created extremists, they do increase the resentment of the unemployed, and the envy of the underprivileged. These groups will fill the ponds from which the extremists recruit their followers. But even if these radicals were no more unemployed or not anymore underprivileged, they would still remain fired by their religious fanaticism and their anti-jewish sentiments to sacrifice themselves for the islamic cause. Not enough is realized - and taken care of - how much the vital political decisions of the Arabs are influenced by religious, psychological - if not psycho-pathological - traits and interferences.

The real basis for the clash of the two cultures; the true cause which makes a real settlement unlikely or even impossible, are not so much the economic dependency of the Palestinians, nor the military superiority of the Jews, but the absence of a democratic understanding in the Arabs' education; is their submission to traditional conceptions of the Jews; is their religious-fatalistic attitude to their destiny.

The two million Arabs in Gaza and the West Bank share no common experiences, nor dreams for the future, with the Jews in the areas where Israel is or was sovereign. There are no common interests between them. Nor is or was there ever a harmonious co-existence between the two sides. And without common interests there will never be peace; and without peace there will never be co-existence.

To reach this stage generations will have to pass. Israel will not be able to live in harmony with its arab citizens if they do not imbibe the principles of democracy; and will not live in peace with the neighbouring arab states as long as these are no true democracies. Only democracies can solve their disputes by peaceful means. And peace will become permanent and inviolable, when all nations in the Middle East accept the axiom, that each nation's wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of all other nations.

How far away is this state of peaceful co-existence still ! The Arabs in Israel have no kind of sentimental adherence to the State of Israel; instead they try to build up their palestinian identity. They do not like the Jews. They do not recognize the right of the Jews to be in Israel. They do not want to be called "Israel Arabs"; they want to be called Palestinians; that is "Palestinians who happen to be israeli citizens".

There has been arab violence against Jews for over a century; war after war since Independence; and continuous attacks in between. This has forced Israel to become a military power, and not the mainly agricultural country the jewish pioneers had initially hoped and planned for.

Until this century the national entity the Arabs call "Palestine" had not been used. While the Jews lived the Land of Judaea the country was never called Palestine. This name was imposed on the country in the 1st century CE by the Romans after they had destroyed the Jewish

Commonwealth. To the Jews it was thereafter a misinformed and unwarranted name and entity, imposed on them by an outside power. An entity giving itself today the name "Palestinians" came into being only after the Jewish State was formed in 1948. Until then the designation referred exclusively to the Jews living in Mandatory Palestine. Thus, for instance, were the Jews called who had enlisted during WWII in the British Army, while at that time the Arabs refused even to be called Palestinians. And at that time arab leaders told the Peel Commission: "Palestine is a term the Zionists have invented".

Regretfully, the Government of Israel too prefers to describe the inhabitants of Gaza and the "West Bank" as "Palestinians", thereby granting these Arabs a historic legitimacy going back to roman times. This fully justifies the Arabs' - and the fooled world's - claim that they are entitled to an independent state named "Palestine" which in the past had been explicitly associated with jewish history and in the present with jewish aspirations.

There is also the by no means minor fact, that the country's safety may be endangered, and the security of the state undermined, should the Jews show the Arabs that magnanimity which would conform to the demands of jewish ethics; and were they to extend to the Arabs the full equality for which the latter clamour.

There is no denying the fundamental truth that Israel's survival depends on its collaboration with, and the goodwill of, the moslem world. Jews have made every effort to befriend the Arabs. Moslems have been invited to preach in synagogues, but no Jew has ever been invited to a mosque. The chances for a friendship to grow up, or even for a collaboration to come about, is still far away, all the peace treaties notwithstanding. A peace treaty does not necessarily mean peace. Israel will realize this when it is holding a few torn pieces of paper in its hands.

"They dress my people's wounds
without concern: Peace ! Peace ! they say,
but there is no peace".

(Jeremiah 8:11)

The first sign that the Palestinians have changed their attitude towards Israel would be their showing due appreciation of the advances they have made in every one of their living conditions since they have come into contact with the first jewish settlers.

Before the zionist era the Palestinians' methods of agriculture were so primitive, that the country could never sustain more than 200 000 people. Life expectancy before Israel's rule was 50 years. Under jordanian rule - i.e. from 1948 to 1967 - a third of the population of Judaea-Samaria, and half that of Jerusalem left the country. There were no modern schools and not even one single university. Nor were there to be seen any of the hundreds of sumptuous palace-like arab habitats it is possible to admire today.

The Palestinians grown up, schooled and trained in Israel, are the most educated class of people in the arab world. Their higher qualifications ensure them a superior type of employment in many of the arab countries. Today these advantages are slowly slipping away, mainly because the palestinian schools and universities are dedicating more time to political indoctrination than to proper studies.

We have to confess to ourselves - and openly so - that for Israelis and Palestinians, for Jews and Arabs alike, there is no future worth looking for unless each side learns to live in peace with the other; and unless they agree to exist together in harmony. Palestinians, and all Arabs in general, will have to rid themselves of the fear, they may be dominated by Israelis not only militarily but - it is especially this one hears now all over the arab world - that also Israel's powerful economy might come dominate the Middle East. This fear is anything but reduced by Peres' repeated ex-cathedra announcements, that the day is not far away, when Israel will organize a "Common Middle East Market", and will - in addition - become a member of the Arab League.

What Peres and other dreamers project will remain a dream, no sooner the Arabs have come to realize, that by peaceful collaboration with Israel they too can advance economically and socially. And this ideal stage can become a reality even before the Meshiach arrives, when the Israelis make their contribution by finally realizing that Arabs have rights too; and when the psychological situation has so far improved, that Jews can also give up seeing in every Arab a terrorist.

A main hurdle on the path to a possible coexistence of Arabs and Jews is the assertion of the Arabs in the Middle East, that no jewish state - and for that matter neither a christian one - can exist within the "arab world". The Arabs will have to concede in all honesty, that the Jews have the right to their own homeland; and that Islam's division

of the world into countries which are islamic, and those which are **not yet** islamic, is unacceptable in our time and in our world.

Surprisingly - and sadly it is indeed still a surprise - one hears now and then the suggestion from a leading Arab here and there, that a genuine state of peace with the Jews is not such an impossibility. But these daring voices are soon stilled. When e.g. the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdel Aziz Bin-Baz, issued a Fatewah to the effect that islamic law does not rule out peace with Israel, Egypt protested. In all haste the Sheikh withdrew his ruling with the explanation, he had of course meant that peace with Israel was allowed "until the time the arab armies are strong enough to expell Israel from Palestine".

Until that true peace, still lingering in Utopia, comes over the Middle East, the hostile arab world will continue to protest whenever a Third World country re-establishes diplomatic relations with Israel; whenever the UN makes a friendly move towards Israel; whenever a western statesman makes a favourable remark about Israel; or whenever anywhere a government expressses sympathy for the Jews of Israel - though rarely spontaneously, but more often on pressure from Washington or for economic reasons - on the occasion of a terrorist attack.

This century has not known war between democratic countries. Wars have only been fought between a democratic country and a dictatorship. In each of these wars the totalitarian country has been the aggressor. Considering that in the entire Middle East Israel is the only democracy; Israel has to expect - notwithstanding all the peace talks, all the peace treaties, and all the handshakes - to be involved in wars in the not too distant future. None of the arab states, with which Israel has signed peace treaties, has given up the hope of defeating Israel in a war. And this includes Arafat's "State of Palestine". For with the establishment of his state the ground was laid for the next stage: the extension of his domain in Jaffa, Nazareth and in the Gallil, where about 50% of the inhabitants are Arabs. This next stage in his special kind of "diplomacy" Arafat has repeatedly and untiringly promised his restless and impatient people.

Arafat has never clearly and unequivocally promised what the civilized world understands as "peace". Not even in his speech following the famous handshake on the White House lawn in Washington on September 13, 1993, has Arafat has said a word about peace with Israel or about cessation

of terror; but he made it clear, that the paper he had signed along with Rabin was the first step in the PLO's "plan of phases" of 1974. This plan proposes to "establish a national, independent and fighting government **over every part** of the soil of Palestine to be freed....."; and it makes clear that "...after its establishment the national palestinian government will fight...to complete the liberation of all palestinian land".

Arafat has also consistently assured his followers that the Oslo Agreement is like Muhammad's peace with the tribe of Koreish, which he annulled after two years; and he never fails to mention also, that he has for every objection of his listeners a hundred of his own. And when he addresses his followers - i.e. when he speaks to them in arabic - he will never omit to promise the continuation of the "jihad". The israeli people are not to be fooled - as its leaders appear to be - about the meaning of this word: it means war against Israel, as Munir Sa'id, the Hamas chief in Sudan explained in the London Daily Telegraph: "...our jihad is aimed at liberating Palestine from the Israelis. This is not a matter of terrorism. This is holy war".

The scenario I see develop soon after the Palestine State had been finally constituted, is a civil war erupting between its various political factions. Syria, which has never given up considering Palestine one of the syrian provinces, will certainly intervene. Inevitably Israel will have to get involved. Egypt will make use of this long awaited opportunity and attack Israel on a wide front; and Iraq and Iran - in this case all their old rivalry and enmity forgotten - will unite their forces and rain their missiles on Israel. The western world will, as usual, supply massive amounts of arms to both sides. The USA will look on; will "watch and stay aside"; and will remain still less involved than in Bosnia. Only Jordan, still licking its wounds from its former misadventures, may stay out of the fray; unless, that is, its monarchy has been overthrown, in which case it will hasten to offer, and grab, what it believes its share.

Once the effect of the "peace process" has come to full fruition, the jewish settlements and villages, kibbutzim and moshavim will find themselves adjacent to large arab concentrations. It is an illusion to think, that the Jews in these places can ever be safe. It is illogical to believe, that the IDF can provide full protection. It is naive to suppose, that the Arabs will ever allow these Jews to be safe. To think thus - and not to take precautions - would reveal one more facet of a well-known jewish tendency to self-destruction.

Whatever their grievances and sentiments about the Israelis; whatever their their plans and strategy against Israel, the arab populace cannot but wish to benefit - to the degree and extent the people of Israel have in such a great measure - from the advances the world has made in the second half of this century. They cannot but wish to enjoy the same life style as the Israelis. They have all the justifications and rights to harbour such aspirations. All the opportunities to achieve these advantages and blessings are open to them. However, to translate their wishes into reality they will have to cease translating their frustrations into acts of hatred for the Jews. They will have to give up believing, that terrorism will solve their problems.

Hatred against Jews; and Allah's supposed blessing of acts of terrorism, are preached in every arab school and mosque in the world. Such kind of explicit indoctrination is in particular an integral part of the Qu'ran lessons children learn in their schools; and these lessons are continued in the conversations they hear in their homes. It has been well realized by the Palestinians - but not by those elements in Israel's government who should be aware of this - that arab children are educated to see Israel as an only temporary, illegitimate occupant of Arab land; and that the occupiers will soon be eliminated.

This is certainly not an education leading to peace ! Even today no official school map anywhere in the arab world - including Egypt and at the moment of my writing even Jordan - contains the name "Israel". Sadly the same is the case in the arab schools of Judaea, Samaria and Jerusalem - financially maintained by Israel's tax-payers - which are allowed to continue with the jordanian curriculum ! There has not been an israeli government which has thought it necessary to interfere. No israeli government did and does mind that Arafat appointed the teachers of these schools under israeli sovereignty; that the arab children in Israel see only the maps of 1948 which show no village or town with a jewish name ! This is certainly not the way to bring up children for a peaceful coexistence !

The results of this kind of education are evident everywhere. What more horrifying example can I cite than the reaction of the brother of a suicide bomber: ".....I cried a little at first; but later I stopped. And when I saw the flesh and blood of the Jews, I was happy".

I want to repeat what I said a short while ago: contrary to what the PLO and Hamas leaders preach, there is very little support for their assumption, that the frustration of the arab masses, their islamic fanaticism and their anti-Israel terror acts - especially that of the Palestinians - will be eliminated by a betterment in their economy; by provision of employment for them; by allowing them a higher standard of living. The greatest hostility for Israel; and the most enthusiastic support for the "armed struggle", are not found among the inmates of refugee camps or among the indigent masses, but among the palestinian professionals and the middle classes. Many a suicidal bomber had a good education and came from a socially higher placed family.

The arab world has since the last 200 years been struggling to adjust its society to the demands made - and to the possibilities offered - by the western world. But so far it has failed in its efforts. Moslem try to prevent the unpleasant fall-out from this failure by giving their religion a direction of fanaticism and fundamentalism; and by maintaining, that even their past backwardness had been a better period in Islam, because it had been filled with higher ideals.

A change in the Arabs' attitude to Israel - and in general to the Jews - will only be possible, if a new generation of Arabs grows up which realizes, that islamic extremism is not an expression of true religiosity. A change will only be possible, if the new generation of Arabs will understand, that because of this radicalization of Islam it has not advanced along with other civilizations. A change can only come about, if the arab masses will cease to be radicalized. A change is certain, when the arab leadership and masses acquire sufficient insight to realize, that Israel and World Jewry can help them to enjoy too all the benefits that are available in the modern western world.

In addition - and already now - it may be in their own interest for the intellectual and educated Moslems to be aware, that the rage of the Islamic Fundamentalists is not directed only against Jews, and not only against the non-islamic world, but to a possibly even greater degree also against any modern progress among the Moslems. Modern and progressive thinking Moslems should be aware of the danger, that they themselves may become the next target --and victims - of Islamic Fundamentalism.

But in view of the maldirected education; and in view of the hate-

filled religious teaching to which the past and actual generations of Arabs have been exposed, such hopes and expectations belong still in the land of fantasy.

The Palestinians must concede - to themselves at least - that as israeli citizens they are now economically better off than ever before. And they must confess - to themselves at least - that their existence is more secure now than ever before. They cannot have forgotten, that a hundred years ago they were an undernourished farming people; that under jordanian rule the vast majority of the Arabs in Jerusalem had no basic municipal services like water, sewage etc; that their egyptian and jordanian masters ensured the populace's servility by depriving it of even a minimal education. Today the arab population of Israel enjoys the very same blessings of modern civilization as their jewish neighbours, along with an unprecedented prosperity.

Considering the great benefits the Palestinians have allround gained; considering the impressive rise in their standard of life and economy; and considering the readiness of most Israelis to cultivate friendship and comradeship with the Arabs, the Israeli Arabs should from their side - without having thereby to forego the preservation of their national identity; without thereby having to fear interference in the maintenance of their cultural heritage; and without having to expect being hurt in their national pride and their social aspirations - have been far more forthcoming and accommodating to Israel's needs of security; and should sympathetically have catered to the israeli Jews' fears for their safety.

As long as the Palestinians and their brethren in the arab states continue to believe they can destroy Israel - or at least create a binational non-zionist state - they cannot and will not improve their deplorable economic and social conditions.

This basic understanding should motivate the Palestinians and the arab states to live in peace with Israel. They should not expect, that the concessions they have until now succeeded to obtain - with the help of pressure on Israel by America and Europe - will continue indefinitely. Nor should it be necessary for the american and european governments to bribe the Arabs to make now and then a few peaceful gestures.

In principle and by law the moslem and christian minorities in Israel enjoy the same rights as the Jews. Without interference by Israel or Israelis they can observe all the facets of their religion; cultivate their culture; maintain their language; and observe their own customs. Were the minorities making at least the proper effort to otherwise fit into the ways of the majority in the country; were they at least making an effort to accommodate the sensibilities of the Jews; were they at least to show the intent to ease the suspicions of the jewish majority, they would undoubtedly be assured of a more dignified and prideful existence.

But whatever the reasons, explanations and excuses may be for the prevailing state of affairs, it is a fact - and a regrettable fact in addition - that the israeli Jews have their share of guilt to bear. It has to be acknowledged, that for legitimate security reasons - though these are usually combined with a measure of prejudice and intolerance - Israel has never, whatever the Declaration of Independence may say, granted the israeli Arabs full equality with the Jews; nor has it provided them with the same rights and advantages which the Israelis enjoy. Israel has failed to integrate its Arabs into the israeli society with their full rights and human dignity preserved. I fear, we shall one day have to regret our failings even more than many of us do already now.

But on the other hand I have to concede, that although it would have satisfied the nation's ethical principles; and although it would have conformed with my own personal moral demands, the full achievement of even an ideal integration would not at all have improved - at least not to an appreciable degree - the security and the chance of survival of Israel and its Jews. This is not entirely the fault of the Jews, who have - mostly even without being conscious of it - a strongly developed moral sense, which makes them feel guilty towards the Arabs in their midst. Unfortunately, in compensation of the shame he feels, the Israeli reacts very often with arrogance.

The arab population should accept the fact, that it lives in a jewish state. The palestinian leadership should make its people realize, that they can live in harmony and peace with the Jews, were they to give up their unrealistic nationalistic dreams; and were they in all honesty to decide to live in peace with the Jews.

(This, by the way, applies in great measure equally to the religious minorities among the Jews - in particular to those of the ultra-orthodox tinge - who appear to sympathize with the Arabs; who do not call Israel their fatherland; who are themselves not exposed to the slightest restrictions, but who want to impose their own antiquated rites, beliefs and customs on the other sectors of the Jewish public. Neither should a Haredi Minister of Education have the right to impose his beliefs on the curricula of secular schools. One cannot expect peace from the side of the Palestinians, if there is none among all layers of the Israeli population.)

These simple conditions I have outlined, will also be the valid and basic pre-conditions at the time, when the independent Palestinian state, created alongside Israel, comes into full bloom. But, alas, even if a majority of Israeli Arabs knows they will get an honest deal from Israel, a whole generation of those who had been jailed; of those who have lost a parent or a brother or a friend in the struggle with Israel, will continue finding it difficult to agree to Israel's existence.

(Though I have already pointed this out, I am going to repeat here, that Israel has regularly expressed its goodwill to the Arabs, its willingness to collaborate in forming a harmonious co-existence with the Palestinians. For instance: it has shown restraint at the time the Intifada youngsters hurled their stones. Israel could with ease have suppressed the unrest by force; but its soldiers and policemen restrained from doing so. I do not mind conceding, that many Israelis reacted with restraint more in fear of the threat the nation may be world-wide accused of suppressing human rights, than by pangs of conscience.)

Will things within Israel - where such large sectors harbour resentment-born hatred for the Arabs - change for the better once a true and real peace exists with the neighbours? This vital question is only a part of the vaster one: whether Israel can survive, even under the best of circumstances, with so many sworn enemies lurking within and without its borders. Is it a blessed omen, that there is actually a mood among Israel's Palestinians and neighbouring Arab states to make peace? Should this actual mood in Israel and in the countries near and far to agree to a "solid peace", be basically and predominantly interpreted as a psychological readiness to "start a new life", similar to the kind of a mood which in these years appears to pervade nearly all the nations in the world? Can this mood indicate an honest trend, a moral yearning, a spiritual readiness to make peace with one's hostile

neighbours ?

The Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama apologizes for the evils his country has done. The Pope has not yet got on his knees to ask the Jews' forgiveness for the immense crimes committed in his Church's name, but at least he asks his flock to repent its other historical transgressions; and he apologizes to the Africans for the complicity of the Church in the slave trade; and he openly laments the Catholic exploitation of the peoples of Latin America. Also the leaders of the Evangelic Lutheran Church in America added their share: in April 1994 they confessed that Luther's "anti-judaic tribes are still used to bolster the teaching of hatred toward Jews. French protestant and Catholic pilgrims will, along the route to Jerusalem, say prayers of remorse for the thousands of Jews and Moslems the Crusaders have killed in the name of Jesus Christ. In New Zealand thousands have asked the Maories for forgiveness for the misdeeds done to them. We read of a "rush" of peace-making in the Middle East, in Ireland, in South America, in Africa, in Korea and in many more places. And so on and so forth. Does this herald a new era ? Is all these chest beatings only happening at the eve of the new millennium ?

I have the faint impression that all these movements have "started from Zion" - but I may be wrong.

Again I want to repeat, that Israel's and Judaism's survival depend primarily on a good Jewish education; on the child's exposure to the family observing the religious rituals at home and in the synagogue; in the youth's finding sense and enjoyment in being Jewish; and in the experience from one or more visits to Israel.

Professor Neusner, the famous, rather provocative and iconoclastic Jewish scholar, sees the hope for Jewish survival in the quality of Jewish family life. William Safire, the philosopher, thinks it wrong to make those who intermarry into outcasts. Religious studies should be given more emphasis instead; symbols should be more fully explained; and rituals should be made more attractive. This gives a sense of belonging; satisfied spiritual longing; and binds together the family, he thinks. (I have been told, that the Reform Movement, having understood modern Jewry's need of such an attractive approach, has been induced to introduce more of Jewish traditions.)

Regretfully, to the younger generation in Israel - and no less also to that in the Diaspora - Zionism and Israel do not play anymore

the role they did for their parents. The same applies also to the value religion has for this generation. It is a mistake to think, that in the world of today, and in that of the up-coming generation, there is no need of a religious orientation. This applies not only to the political life, especially with regard to human rights.

Many young religious Zionists, inspired and led by the late Rabbi Zvi Yizhak Kook, interpreted the miraculous victory of 1967, the liberation of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and the conquest of the Machpela Cave in Hebron, as signs of divine protection; and as the indication that the time of Redemption was at last approaching. The disappointed settlers of Judaea and Samaria who had been fighting the Government's withdrawal from what they see as a divinely foreseen time and arranged situation, are from the stock of these fervent Zionists.

And still ! When Israel has properly signed and sealed all the peace treaties it has on its hands and those it anticipates, the question remains unanswered - or better expressed: the fear and suspicion have not evaporated - whether it is true, that the Arab might sign whatever contract and agreement with the Jewish infidels without the inner reservation, that he will renege what he has signed the moment it suits him ? Is it true, that he is not obliged to keep his word, even his solemn oath, if these are given to an infidel party ? Is this suspicion not justified by Arafat's continued call for "Jihad", and his repeated mention of the "peace" Muhammad had made - and broken when he found it opportune - with the Kuarish tribe ?

Whether all this is true or not, I am bothered by the question whether Israel's leadership has taken all such possibilities properly and carefully into account when signing these peace treaties ? Often I cannot avoid the impression, that our leaders are carried away by what looks like an innocent optimism, but is in reality more a calculated gamble to gain a momentary political advantage on the home front; as well as to gain advantage points in the never ceasing bitter intra-party struggles; and applause and medals abroad. And, of course, there was also in the background - and behind many of the Israeli ministers' otherwise incomprehensible moves - the hope of a possible and eventual nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. It is incomprehensible to me - and to other people of more experience and greater intelligence than I -- how Israel could cede in its peace treaties with the Palestinians, with Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon stretches of land which, according to its own, as well as to American and other military experts, are

essential for its defence.

I am certain, many Israelis are -- as I personally am -- offended by the incredibly hypocritic explanations the Government regularly dishes out for its moves; and by Israel's politicized military command's inexplorable omission to express its honest opinion. Is it out of fear, that this may contradict the policy of ruling Government -- and imperil their career ?

Again I will ask: what can be done to bring about the solid and true state of peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs which is so vital for Israel's survival ? I fully agree with those who state, that there is no other solution than the one, where both sides invest all their available energies and opportunities in developing goodwill for each other; than in learning to accommodate each other; than in sincerely wishing to live in peace with each other. Yizhak Rabin, in one of his uncontrolled utterances, said in the aftermath of one of the autobus bombings in Tel Aviv, "...we cannot have this mixture of Jews and Arabs. There has to be a separation, not just a technical closure (of the territories)". He will have known well enough, that such a separation is nowadays not possible; that it had from the beginning of the State not been possible; that it had proved an impossible solution when this same idea was considered by the British Royal Commission in 1937; that it proved impossible when the United Nations attempted in 1947 the division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab parts; that it was the last time effectively possible only in biblical times, when Abraham, with the same idea in mind, separated from his nephew Lot.

Again I will ask: can we be certain, that the peace talks, which in recent years have been going on between Israel and certain Arab states and have led to the signing of peace treaties, will truly lead to a real peace ?

The world may take it as the absolute truth, that Israel's and the Israelis' greatest desire is to establish peace with its Arab neighbours within and around Israel. The Jews have since ever had the fervent desire to live in peace. It is the mainstay of their hopes for survival. Rabbi Shimeon ben Gamliel's statement, that "Three things sustain the world: justice, truth and peace" has always been Judaism's prayer.

And again I will ask: Are the Arabs ready to make peace? Do they crave as much for peace as the Jews? Is it a foundation stone of their religion as it is in Judaism? "Peace" is mentioned some 250 times in the Tnach. The Qu'ran, on the other hand, mentions peace only once: only in the instance when it preached peace and harmony between Moslems: "Make peace between your brothers", the Qu'ran says. Nothing is said in the Qu'ran about peace as an universal ideal and value.

Peace dealings with Arabs; and no less also with the Palestinians, are made difficult by their conviction, that Israel's making concessions at every step of the negotiations - whenever the other side hesitates or threatens to walk out - is clear evidence that Israel has been defeated, and is now at a disadvantage. This has been most blatantly shown in the negotiations with Syria, which behaved, talked and demanded as if it had been Israel who had been defeated in 1948, 1967 and 1973. The "Intifada" - the five years lasting armed resistance of the palestinian youth - had undoubtedly induced the Government of Israel to start on the Oslo peace talks with Arafat's Palestinians. Undoubtedly it has reinforced also the Arabs' way of dealing with Israel's peace negotiators; has the arab world celebrate the Intifada now as a great military, national and so on victory; and has the world at large express a great measure of admiration and a lot of congratulations for the Palestinians. But Israel's critics should sit back and contemplate the naked truth: that it would have been easy for Israel's armed forces to put down the revolt, though at the cost of a bloodbath; that most of the democracies in the world would themselves certainly have done so; and that the Jews did not take this step, because it would impossibly have been compatible with their inborn sense of morals.

6.

Will Israel be allowed to survive ?

Today the entire world is affected in one way or other by Islam's clamorous, uncontrolled - and totally unjustified - aspiration to regain the dominant position it had once upon a time - no more than for a century or two - as the leading power in the then civilized world. As if this does not concern them; as if they are not threatened, the non-moslem nations of the world look on and do not react. They go on hiding their global head in the sand. And this makes them overlook that Israel has become a main bullwark against these islamic aspirations.

The nations of the world take in with equal unconcern the assertion of Islam's spiritual and political leadership; that the Moslems are forced to behave belligerently, because Israel makes them react with terror; because Israel has grown into a far too great threat to the wellbeing of Islam's world; because Israel threatens Islam's social fabric; because Israel undermines the Arabs economy; because Israel imperils the economic subsistence of the Palestinians.

We are witnessing a political resurgence in the world of Islam. More than elsewhere is this case in the Middle East. Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini has decreed that Islam must once again rule supreme as it did in the 7th to the 9th centuries. Iran's rulers - and also those of Saudia, Pakistan and other moslem states - provide the financing of this extremist movement; and the training of the Fundamentalists in the "art" of terrorism. Iran has also worked out a definite plan for the future: first the northern part of Africa has to be radicalized; and starting from there all Europe.

Today islamic fanaticism is to be found all over the world, including the large populated centres of Europe and the Americas. Also the Moslems of Pakistan, whom I had known as balanced and self-critical in all their sincere religiosity, have begun - I learn with regret - to indulge in the Fundamentalists' horrors.

Let us be clear at least about one thing in our minds: islamic radicalism will not be tamed by eliminating Iran's khomenism; nor will it be controlled by feeding of the starving masses in Baangla Desh and Sudan; by overcoming the economic distress of the Palestinians in Gaza, Judaea and Samaria. Islamic extremism is still only limited though luxuriatingly growing movement, but it shows already all the indications that it is about to cause a change in the coming history. The threat of the 200 million Arabs living in a landmass bigger than the United States of America will not grow less. It may one day even lead to a war between Islam and the West - for the first time since the clash at Poitiers in 732.

Clear thinking observers should not have the slightest doubt that, although Islamic Fundamentalism proclaims Israel and all Jewry as its foremost target, the entire western non-moslem world too will ultimately be their target. There are here and there already indications, it seems, that the Western World is becoming aware of this menace, as islamic terror has begun to flow over into the West, and has affected there not only Jews and jewish institutions, but also non-jewish individuals and public structures. The pessimists' long-standing worry about the West's inertia is getting somewhat eased, because all over the non-islamic world the comprehension begins to dawn of the danger the islamic extremists represent to western values and properties. It requires no great acumen to predict, that with this comprehension aroused the non-islamic West cannot anymore look on idly. In the near future it may expect an ever stronger onslaught of Islamic Fundamentalism in no less a total engagement than the democratic powers, who had until not long ago to fight against Communism and Nazism.

Neither does it require of us a great intellectual or political percipience to conclude, that Israel's survival is intimately involved with the success or failure of the Islamists' ambitions. And - this is my firm personal view - it requires neither a specific historic knowledge nor any prophetic qualifications to predict, that neither Islam qua religion; nor its murderous, nihilistic, militaristic fundamentalistic arm will succeed in eliminating either Israel or Judaism..... provided Judaism preserves its inner cohesion and moral strength; and provided, an ethics-imbued Israel will retain the sympathy and help of its friends and protectors.

What is going on now and in the near future are important and decisive

tests to which Israel and Judaism - and possibly the world too - are exposed.

Without a thorough study of the essentials of Islam; without a knowledge of Islam's teachings - and no less also an appreciation of its intrinsic values - it is impossible to understand what is going on in the islamic world. Islam was born in Arabia. It is a predominantly arab religion. It has remained the same religion which once had suited a desert people. Tolerance as we understand does not play a role in Islam. Neither has Islam a word for "democracy"; it substitutes it with "shoora", which means something like consensus or tradition. Islam means "submission". It regulates, more than any other religion, every facet in the believer's life. It offers guidelines for every moment of the day. It is Allah's decision whether one is rich or poor. This makes social conflicts unknown among Moslems.

Many of Islam's rules and regulations cry out for reform; but no reform has ever been tried. I will even say: has never been risked. No reform can ever be proposed, as this would mean changes in what the Qu'ran has prescribed - and such changes would represent a blasphemy.

But some of the islamic rules and regulations go even beyond what the Qu'ran prescribes, as e.g. the rule by which moslem women have to be veiled when in the presence of strangers. This is a residue of a desert custom and is not ordered in the Qu'ran. However, in Israel and surrounding countries moslem women have started now to assert their rights, as they see the israeli women have done; and there is also otherwise an inroad into the palestinian society of the democratic conceptions observed among the Israelis. But, regretfully, one sees an intrusion also of many of the bad habits rampant in israeli society.

It is worth the effort of every observer in the political arena - as it is imperative for every Jew in the world - to follow the sayings and statements of Islam's Prophet Muhammad about the Jews in the early stages of Islam's development, because whatever Islam's Prophet said, did or decided is considered god-inspired; is of utmost holiness; and is to the letter applicable not only to this day, but for eternity. It is important also to study the ups and downs in the relationship of the Moslems of the various countries with the Jewish People over the centuries; to analyse the arguments the Moslems used throughout the ages to underline their complaints about the Jews; and, above all, to shift through the religious interpretations of history with which the Palestinians argue their pseudo-historic claims against today's Israel.

The Palestinians' all and every claim; their all and every

argument; their all and every presumptive warrant - with which they explain their terrorist activities against the Jews; and on which they base their right to eliminate Israel - is associated with, and based on, the assertion that Palestine has since ever been an arab possession; and that the Jews have usurped the Arabs' country. This is by far not only the argument of the militant and extremist Palestinians, but also that of the entire Moslem World. It was thus from the moment the State of Israel was founded. And the witnessed signatures on solemnly sealed peace treaties have not removed nor eased the claims. The late Anwar Sadaat - who came to Jerusalem when he was ready to sign a peace treaty with Israel - made it clear in his address to the Knesseth, that "...to be explicit..... complete withdrawal from arab land captured in 1967 goes without sayingall of it, including Jerusalem".

Sadly these claims on Israel and its lands find support among the ultra-leftist politicians, the neo-historians and their followers - whom I have named jewish self-haters - who see in the entire zionist enterprise a tragic blunder if not a tragic felony. They find ever new arguments to undermine Israel's interests. They like to point out, that the government of Golda Meir had accepted UN Resolution 242 which states, that (in exchange for peace) - except for small border corrections here and there - "Israel must retreat from **all** occupied territories". I will charitably assume that these people's memory for historic facts is defective, for the word "**all**" is absent in this resolution, as its authors specifically declared it did not mean all the territories. Eugene Rostov, a leading american statesman and one of the authors, has maintained that "...the conditions of this resolution could be met without Israel relinquishing any of Judaea and Samaria. Territories can only be said to be "occupied" if taken from a legal sovereign. The only such sovereign in Judaea and Samaria before Israel was Britain".

But all arguments to the contrary the Jews may present, have proved ineffective. The Palestiniens are not willing to change their minds. They claim as their own every inch of the lands which constitute the State of Israel. They are not willing to agree to the slightest compromise about what they they see as the "Arabs' homeland usurped by the Jews". It sounds unbelievable, but is regrettably true that even the democratic world is unwilling to judge objectively the jewish claim; that they accept the Palestinians' distortion of facts; that they agree with the Arabs' travesty of justice; that they consider the PLO's offer - described in article 22 of their Palestine Charter - more than generous: to grant the "zionist invaders now ensconced in their racist but transitory state", the privilege of being an autonomous religious community in a future liberated Palestine. It is no less

also unbelievable, that a number of nations - led by the European Union on the instigation of Britain and Holland, and of course the Vatican - refused their participation in the festivities arranged for Jerusalem's 3000th year of existence as Judaism's holy city.

I am not going to enumerate in detail the old-established historic facts in proof that Judaea, the Land of the Jews - which the Roman conquerors had renamed "Syria Palestina" - has in the past which counts the country had never been an arab country; that before Islam's conquest of the country in the 7th century no Arab had ever lived in Palestine; that today's Arabs are not - as they claim with a straight face - descendants of the Phoenicians who had been the original inhabitants. I am going to add, however - in order to disprove one of the Palestinians' often heard complaints, that the western Jews, who came as zionist settlers, had displaced them from their lands - that in the 1920s and 1930s the jewish pioneers, when they first arrived in greater numbers from Poland and Russia, found only a small number of Arabs living in the geographic unit then called Palestine. Only after the first jewish villages, kibbuzim and other settlements had become established, did large numbers of Arabs flood in, attracted by the expectation of the better economy and the greater opportunities the early jewish settlers had to offer. They arrived from Egypt and Syria, Arabia and Iraq and other arab neighbouring countries, even though the Jews themselves had in those early years to live under very primitive conditions.

Equally unjustified is the Arabs' often heard claim, that in 1967 the Westbank had been illegally occupied; and that since then Israel's continued occupation of the Arabs' land had been illegal. Israel, on the other hand claims, it had acted in accordance with international law. Its claim is based on the - according to international law - undeniable fact, that its victorious army had conquered the "Westbank" from Jordan, which had no legal right to it, as it had after 1948 illegally occupied that part of the country.

Similar incompatible and irreconcilable claims of the Arabs - and counter-claims by the Jews - have emerged about the ownership of the Machpela Caves in Hebron. The Arabs base their claim and the prior claim on their Qu'ran-guaranteed belief that Abraham, the original owner of the caves, had been a forfather of their and not of the Jews. But the Arabs - and apparently their fervent supporters in the West - have apparently forgotten, that Abraham was **the** jewish Patriarch; that he was the **first** Jew; that he was **the** quintessential Jew; that **he** had bought these caves against cash payment from a local merchant.

Jews, all Jews, are the main enemies to those who adhere to the

teachings of extremist Islam Fundamentalism. Next on their list of enemies come the Secularists in moslem society. And following these in rank are those Moslems - independant of their religious or social status - who are willing to live in peace alongside the Jews of Israel.

Wherever islamic nationalism flourishes - in Gaza, Judaea, Samaria and in the Hamas strongholds abroad - Children are already at Kindergarten age indoctrinated with hatred for Jews. They are taught as their duty to take part in the "Jihad", the holy war against the Jews. "If all our children will get this indoctrination, I am sure it will not take ten years for all Jews to be annihilated and Palestine to be liberated", volunteered one of the Hamas teachers.

These moslems teaching in the schools; and the Mullahs preaching in the mosques are certainly well aware, that in the Qu'ran and in the life of the Prophet Muhammad the meaning of "Jihad" is not the conquering of land or the defeat of other people, but liberating higher instincts and nourish higher aspirations in man. They certainly know that it is explicetely said in the writings holy to them, that the killing of women, children and unarmed men is a sin.

Both sides, the israeli and the arab, agree that nothing will ever induce the Palestinians to give up their demands. None of them expects that the Arabs will ever change their mind about the Jews. It is important, vitally important, that the Palestinians' large list of arguments; and the Jews' no less large list of counter-arguments are - nay, should be - the common knowledge of every Jew of every age, of every nationality, of every political shading, and of every religious persuasion. Again I shall not indulge in a full recital of the entire complex of arguments; but it is very necessary, that whoever is interested or engaged or otherwise involved in the jewish-arabic conflict - be he a Jew or a Moslem or a Gentile - is well aware of the fact - a priori undisputable - that it is not so much the small piece of estate which Israel occupies; as the presence, the very existence of Israel; as Israel's having established itself in the "arab-owned Middle-East", which fuels the anti-Israel hatred of the local Palestinians; which nourishes the enmity of the arab states nearby; which fires the hostility of the entire moslem world; and which is responsible for the anti-Israel posture of so many countries in the world.

In proof of my above statement I will submit only a few of those relevant arguments which, alas, one hardly ever hears brought forth by Israel: why do the Moslems only reclaim that piece of land which is occupied today by the State of Israel? Why do they only claim

this small part of the former Palestine, and not the entire, far larger geographic complex of Palestine which for many centuries had been a province of the Ottoman Empire? Why do we never hear the Palestinians claim as their "homeland" also the other, the far greater portion which the British have cut off from Palestine after World War I, i.e. that portion which is now the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan? Why have the Palestinians started to claim their "lost homeland" only after Israel had taken possession of it in the victorious war of 1967? Why have the Palestinians never felt deprived of their "homeland" during the nineteen years Jordan had occupied the West Bank and Egypt the Gaza Strip? Israel makes up only 25% of the original pre-1948 Mandate area; the other 75% were given to Jordan which - let us not forget - is mainly made up of Palestinians.

It is, unfortunately, very difficult to argue with the people of the arab world - their sophisticated, educated and intellectual members included - because they are obtused by their blind nationalism; because they are carried forward by their senseless slogans; because they feel encouraged by their oil-born riches; and because they are inspired by their powerful islamic militarism. When in the 20th century the arab states gained independence and became rich from their oil, Israel became the centre of their hatred because it was perceived now as an obstacle to the establishment of a strong islamic empire.

We should not nourish any illusions of the kind Rabin, Peres and like-minded members of the Labour Government of 1992/96 tried to suggest to themselves and us, but should take it as an absolute fact, that all Palestinians - whether they live in Israel or abroad; whether within or outside the "territories" - agree more or less only on one thing: an abiding hatred for Jews in general and for Israelis in particular. Their uncompromising hatred not only represents today an unsurmountable barrier between Jews and Arabs, but will also in future prevent any truly peaceful coexistence.

This sweeping hatred of the Moslems for the Jews - of the Arabs in particular; and especially among their youth - is something of a novelty in islamic culture. It had never before been known in the moslem world. The main and true reason, why hatred of such an intensity had never existed - had never even been considered appropriate or had even been thought possible - is the fact, that this is the first time in history that the Arabs do not find themselves in a dominant position

vis-a-vis the Jews; that this is the first time they cannot look down, as in years past, on the Jews as a second-class people; that this is the first time they can only find consolation in nursing an impotent hatred; that this is the first time they can find only in attacking Jews directly or by proxy an outlet for their impotent rage; that this is the first time they feel being emasculated unless they can cowardly kill helpless people, women and children.

But it has to be clearly and unequivocally stated as a fact, that this is not a specific feature of Islam; that the Qu'ran - like all other holy books - does not incite to kill, but endeavours to enable man to subdue his unethical impulses.

When Prophet Muhammad first set out on his mission, he expressed great sympathy for the Jews. "Israel received from Allah many more graces than the angels", says the Qu'ran. And in another place it is written: "Believers, Jews, Sabareans and Christians - whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right - shall have nothing to fear or to regret". The Moslems' Holy Book contains more verses dealing with Moses (some 560) than with Muhammad (some 502). But Muhammad's early welcome to the Jews was not to last long. It evaporated, when the Jewish tribes of the Arab peninsula refused to accept the new religion. This was the turning point in the former totally harmonious coexistence of Jews and Arabs. Of the three Jewish desert tribes in Muhammad's time two could choose between conversion or exile; but the third, the Quraiza tribe, had to choose between conversion or death. From that stage in the Arab-Jewish relationship dates most likely the Qu'ranic saying about the Jews: "They were consigned to humiliation and wretchedness; they brought upon themselves the wrath of God; and this because they used to deny God's signs and kill his prophets unjustly; and because they disobeyed and were transgressors".

It is a great pity, that in Moslem schools the relationship between Muhammad and the Jews is without exception described in negative terms; that Moslem education has always been guided by the intent to convince the young people, that all Jews have always been Islam's worst enemies; that in support of this policy teachers and preachers usually point only to the Qu'ran's hostile statements about the Jews.

This way of behaving towards the Jews has, however, not always been Islam's policy. In the early Middle Ages the attitude toward Jews was - changing of course according to the circumstances - rather friendly. In those centuries the majority of Jews lived in Moslem countries. While a minority of them lived under miserable conditions in Christian Europe, the Sephardi Jews in Islamic countries

could without major restrictions follow their religious

life. They could freely expand their culture under Islam. The jewish education of the ashkenazi Jews in Europe stayed behind; they had to ask for cultural and spiritual guidance from their sephardi brethren in the islamic countries. However, in the later Middle Ages, when the status of the Jews deteriorated in moslem countries and they were turned into a despised minority, the roles were reversed.

At the dawn of Islam the great persian and moghul rulers encouraged art, poetry, architecture and literature. They absorbed what was best in earlier persian, hindu and assyrian cultures. They were tolerant to the peoples over which they ruled. They were tolerant also to the Jews living their lands. Of course, there were also very cruel rulers among them - but we must not forget that those were very cruel times; and that tolerance to "non-believers", especially to "infidels" is not a part of islamic ideology nor theology, even though Moslems have no right to range Jews and Christians among the infidels, as these have faith in the same God as the Moslems.

No jewish history book fails to point out - nor should a jewish scholar of history ever omit to do so - that there were often centuries lasting periods in the Middle Ages, when the Jews enjoyed acceptance - and to a degree even integration - in the culture and economy of some of the islamic countries. This was the case mainly in the 11th and 12th centuries, i.e. at the time when islamic culture flourished; and when jewish culture was allowed to flourish in its company. Jewish historians like to call this "the period of Judaeo-islamic culture".

Such a collaboration - nor such a relationship, by the way - has never been known between Judaism and Christianity.

But such enlightened moslem rulers and such favourable times, when the Jews lived in tolerant moslem countries and formed such kind of brilliant symbiosis with Islam, were very rare.

With the exception of one such - in truth very unusual - above mentioned period in jewish-islamic history, the Jews in moslem lands had to live under often most deplorable conditions. Even Maimonides,

who was highly respected by the Moslems at that time; and who occupied privileged positions under a number of moslem rulers, appears not to have felt as free and as equal as we have been made to think.

In one of his letters, addressed to the Jews of Yemen, he wrote: "You know, my brethren, that on account of our sins God has cast us into the hands of these people, the nations of Ishmail, who persecute us severely, and who devise ways to harm us, to debase us.....no nation has done more harm to Israel". And Yehuda Halevi, the poet and philosopher, who too lived and taught in the later Middle Ages, wrote in his Kuzari Book: ".....prominent men amongst us could escape this degradation by a word spoken slightly, become a free man and turn against their oppressors, but not out of devotion to that faith".

In the Middle Ages the jewish Diaspora flourished not only in moslem countries but also in certain christian ones, though there they were always under hostile pressure and never fully accepted.

It is interesting to note, that in the first millennium the jewish communities in China and India never showed any exceptional cultural developments. The cause is thought to have been not only their isolation but also the fact that they were accepted by their environment. This peaceful coexistence changed in India, when that sub-continent was conquered by the Moslems: anti-jewish pressured set in - and with it began also a jewish cultural development.

During the Middle Ages the majority of jewish people lived in islamic countries; and the Jews in western countries took direction in jewish-cultural and -religious matters from those in moslem countries. Slowly the roles were reversed, when the number of Jews in the West became greater; and when the cultural and social status of the eastern Jews deteriorated. E.g. in the pogroms at the end of the 14th century over 100 000 sephardi Jews converted to Islam while the ashkenazi Jews in the Rhineland preferred to die as martyrs.

The "Golden Age" of jewish-arab coexistence I have just now described in a few sentences, had lasted only a relatively short time - at the most only two hundred years - and with the best of will one cannot consider this period characteristic for the usual relationship between Judaism and Islam. That time on which jewish history looks back with such nostalgia was, alas, nothing more than a short interruption in a long series of persecutions, humiliations and massacres of Jews by Moslems.

Let us not overlook, that the period to which Jews like to refer with so much nostalgia, was only a break in the long-lasting, bitter

and more typical times, when the Jew was made aware that he could only exist as the dhimma within the Dar-al-Islam; that is, as a despised, inferior, underprivileged being in the realm of the Half Moon.

Although all non-Moslems are infidels in the eye of Islam, not all infidels were and are viewed and treated alike. Traditional Islam sees in Jews and Christians "Ahl-al-Kitab", People of the Book. Jewish and christian "non-believers" were accorded a more favorable choice. They were offered either conversion or the status of dhimma. Other conquered non-Moslems were "infidels" who had to chose between conversion or death. Dhimmis were granted a slightly more privileged place in the infidels' pecking order. For instance: Moslems may marry jewish and christian women even though these have not converted; but their children have to become Moslems. No Jew nor a Christian, on the other hand, can marry a moslem woman; and if she converts she is liable to be killed. Moslems will not eat meat prepared in a christian house or restaurant; while Sunni Moslems - in contrast to the Shias - can eat food prepared by a Jew.

From the religious point of view Islam does not see a difference between the various religions. All of these - whether it is Judaism or Christianity, whether Hinduism or Taoism - are in the eyes of the Moslem religions of unbelievers. There is no difference in this respect between Jew and Christian, although the Qu'ran does at times show a marked preference for Christians. This is understandable: the few christian desert tribes facing the Prophet's demands for conversion, were meek and agreeable; while the Jews had - as Muhammad himself says in the Qu'ran - actively dared to oppose his religion.

In contrast to conditions in Christendom, Jews - and Christians also - were during the Middle Ages part of the islamic society, even if only marginally so. While Christianity continued to reinforce and deepen the roots of its hatred for Jews by demonizing them, this was never the case in Islam. Pogroms were therefore rare.

These "privileges" did not change the fact, that also the People of the Book were classified as dhimmis; as people without the civil rights granted to believers. To be fully accepted as a Moslem, one had to be a male and free; the dhimmis were ranked with women and slaves, i.e. as those who have no rights under traditional moslem law. But conversion to Islam could at once change the dhimma's social and religious status. To live as dhimmis meant a very dehumanized existence. But if these dhimma communities, by their conduct and demeanour recognized without equivocation the primacy of Islam and the supremacy of the Moslems, they could be accorded a certain limited social status. This recognition, however, had its limits:

the dhimmis were not dispensed from paying a heavy poll tax; and they had to obey certain explicit laws and rules of conduct: they had to wear distinguishing clothes; they could not ride on horses, only on donkeys - and on these they had to sit sideward like women and not astride. No synagogue could be built higher than any mosque in town. In the 9th century a Bagdad Caliph introduced the Yellow Badge as marking out the Jews. This "emblem" was in medieval times eagerly introduced in the western countries.

One has, on the other hand, to acknowledge that pogroms like those of 1066 in Granada, occurred during those centuries very rarely in moslem countries. Whenever a moslem ruler was fortunate to live in peaceful times; and whenever the Jews and Christians behaved in accordance with the rules and laws imposed on them, the dhimmis were given the opportunity to practice their religion and to follow their professions or crafts. Also foreign Jews, that is those who lived in foreign countries - they were called "Kafir Yehudisi" = The Infidels' Jews - and came as traders or visitors were accorded a relatively great freedom of movement for the time of their sojourn in islamic countries.

Though the life as dhimmis was difficult most of the times; and though the lures of conversion were great, the Jewish People's continued existence was not endangered because very few of them abandoned their faith. Also the at times occurring eradication of entire jewish centres - prominently in christian countries - did not represent such a danger, as Judaism could survive by emigration into other countries showing - temporarily at least - less hostility to the Jews.

During most of the Middle Ages the majority of Jews lived in islamic countries. In cultural and religious matters the western Jews took instructions and guidance from their brethren in the East. Slowly the roles were reversed. At the time the the Jews in the West increased in numbers, the cultural status of the Jews in the moslem world began to deteriorate. It is worth mentioning, that when the Jews in the East and the West came under antisemitic pressure, sephardi Jews were more likely to prefer life as moslems, while the ashkenazi remained more steadfast. It is said that in 1390 alone some 100 000 of them converted and that at that period the ashkenazi Jews in the Rhineland preferred to die as martyrs.

It is interesting that during the Middle Ages, when the jewish diaspora flourished even in some of the christian

countries, this was not the case in the then existing jewish communities of China and India. This is explained by the peaceful existence these indigenous jewish communities enjoyed, and the total absence of antisemitism. However, when Islam invaded India and the indian Jews came under pressure, their communities and culture started to flourish too.

After the Sephardi Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1496, large numbers of them - attracted by the reports of the greater tolerance under the Ottomans; and intrigued by the rumours of better opportunities offered by the turkish rulers - immigrated into the lands of the Ottoman Empire. They were not to be disappointed. Throughout the centuries the Ottoman Empire lasted, Jews were granted more freedom and far greater civil rights than ever before and than anywhere else.

However, in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries conditions deteriorated in the peripheral provinces of the Empire. Travelers reported they saw in those moslem countries children throw stones and spit on jewish men and women; saw the moslem elders never admonish these children; and saw the Jews not defend themselves, because it would have meant death for a Jew were he to strike a Moslem.

And the persecutions were now spreading:

In 1770 Jews were expelled from Jedda.

In 1790 pogroms occurred in Tatan-Morocco.

In 1828 pogroms occurred in Safed.

In 1829 pogroms occurred in Meshed-Iran.

In 1840 began the blood-libel pogroms in Damascus.

Things improved somewhat, when a direct ottoman administration replaced the previous autonomous regimen and endeavoured to protect the Jews.

Still all in all, with the exception of Iran, and in comparison with christian countries, the Jews in moslem countries lived a free and enviable life.

Even though the dhimma-system has to this day not been officially abrogated, it nowhere is - and can hardly be again - applied in the world of today. But there are large numbers of Moslems in our modern times, who nurse the hope that these to them beautiful and gratifying dhimma rules will again become the law in the Islamic Empire they expect to arise in the near future; that in all moslem countries special administrators will supervise the strict observance of the dhimma system again; and that there will be specific legislations demanding from the dhimmi, in particular from the jewish dhimmis, the right demeanour; the proper abject comportment; and the expected lowly behaviour.

One hears so often that, whereas Judaism and Islam have a common root; that, whereas the Bible and the Qu'ran have so much in common, the demands and commands, the laws and the ethics common to both the religions should form the basis, if not of a brotherhood at least of mutual tolerance, between Jews and Moslems, between Israelis and Arabs.

But religious issues have in the past never been a cause of dissension or discussion among Moslems and Jews, mainly so, because there cannot be any discussion, as to the Moslem Judaism is a priori not only antiquated but also inferior; has not only been overtaken but is also no more valid.

The Moslem will never allow the question to arise, that the Qu'ran might possibly indicate some jewish or christian influence. To the Moslem Muhammad is the Prophet of God who could not have been influenced but by God; and the Qu'ran is of divine origin and the Bible can hardly be credited of having had an influence. Sunni teaching - which much resembles the system the Rabbis of old applied to the exegesis of the Bible - is that the Qu'ran is holy; that humans have not been involved in the creation of the Qu'ran; that Islam's Holy Book has not been composed by man, but has existed with God since eternity. It could not, therefore, have borrowed from either the jewish nor the christian Testaments.

To maintain this is not only absurd but even blasphemous. Whenever some ruling in Shari'a - the religious law which corresponds to Halacha and means the same as the latter, viz:- "the way"-; and whenever a fable in the Hadith is recognized as of jewish-midrashic origin, they are rejected and despised, with disdain, as "Israiliyat"; but in those cases when they are accepted as truly islamic, they can "logically" not have been jewish because in this case they are of divine origin, and had been received by the Jews while they had still been favoured by God. With this kind of logic is not only any serious research work, but also all sincere discussion along these lines once for ever silenced.

Both Sunnis and Shi'ites consider the Qu'ran - the word of God revealed to his messenger Muhamma - as the supreme and unviolable standard of life; but a sunni state allows for a diplomatic distinction between religious and political life, whereas a shi'ite state is as a rule extremely theocratic, centred on an Imam, an inspired man who is as inspired as Muhammad once was.

Shi'ism dates from the 12th century. This powerful sectarian subdivision of Islam awaits the return of the 12th Imam - who had disappeared as a child two centuries before - who is going to restore Islam to its former glory. The Mahdi claimed to have been the true Imam and promised to lead Islam to a new future. Ismaili Shi'ites - one of whose Imams was the "Old Man of the Mountain", founded the Fatimide dynasty in Tunis. With al-Hakim, one of the Fatimide Caliphs, started Islam's intolerance for Judaism and Christianity. In 1009 he destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

There is anything but harmony or brotherly love between Shi'a Moslems and Sunni Moslems. Wherever they live within reach of each other - as I could observe in Pakistan - it may come to frequent clashes during religious holidays or in political disputes. However, with regard to their attitudes towards Jews there is, nor ever was, no difference of opinion between these two currents of Islam. It came, therefore, as a surprise to me to learn, that the Shi'ites of Azerbaijan have an unusual tradition of friendship for Jews.

It is true, islamic teaching goes, that jewish and christian Scriptures had once upon a time also been revealed by God to their respective prophets; but the Christians and the Jews have neglected and spoiled their heritage; had corrupted and falsified the sacral texts, whereupon Allah replaced them with Moslems as heirs; and their texts with the Qu'ran, the latest and last prophecy which is perfect in every sense. Of course, it is quite possible - the Moslem will not mind to concede - that the Qu'ran has things in common with the other Scriptures; but this is so, because the Scriptures of all the monotheistic faiths derive from the same divine source. Wherever they differ - as in the biblical stories - this can only be due to their having been corrupted and distorted by Jews and Christians alike.

However, the Moslems cannot deny that Judaism's Halacha, which had been formulated centuries before Islam came into being; and that Shari'a, Islam's religious-legal system - both of them mean "The Path" - have similar legalistic reasoning and social directions. But still, Islam - no less than Christianity - continues to make great efforts to prove it had not "taken" anything from jewish doctrine or practice.

The jewish student of Islam's religious teaching; and the researcher in the Qu'ran's social laws, will also otherwise be impressed, how much more affinity and semblance these have to Judaism; even more than to Christianity. On the other hand, the jewish student will also have to recognize, that from the time Jews have lived in arab lands Islam had an equally great influence on the theological configuration; on the ritualistic performance; on the lithurgic poetry; and on the mystic philosophy of the Jews. Evidence of this influence persists until today.

It is mainly with regard to Jerusalem that the difficulties, the controversies and the problems between Judaism and Islam; between the

jewish and arab worlds; between Israel and the Palestinians, come to the foreground. The right to the possession of Jerusalem; and Israel's right to exist, are the "black hole" into which are compacted all the problems of today's jewish-arab inter-relationship. No other place in the world appears to awaken all over the world so much interest - and cause so much fury - as the goings-on in Jerusalem. It is by far not a christian-religious interest in Jerusalem. The Holy City is only a holy city to Christianity because Jesus spent there the last three days of his life; and because he regularly visited the city on Pilgrimage Festivals. The Gallil, Bethlehem and Nazareth are no less holy places in Christianity. To the Moslems Mecca and Medina are far more holy. But to Judaism only and exclusively Jerusalem is holy.

Every culture and every national history has its symbols which transcend everything. For Jews - and through jewish influence to the world at large - Jerusalem is such a symbol. The Jewish People's longing for a home; its search for security from persecutions; its striving for survival; its prayer for redemption, have always concentrated on the restoration of Jerusalem. "One who prays in Jerusalem is as one praying before the Throne of Glory, for the Gate of Heaven is there", said Rabbi Elieser. "No city in the world, neither Athens nor Rome, ever played as great a role in the life of a nation for so long a time as Jerusalem has done in the life of the Jewish People", said Ben Gurion.

Jerusalem has a long and glorious, but also painful and blood-soaked history in the annals of the Jewish People. David conquered Jerusalem in 1004 BCE; King Sennacherab of Assyria attacked Jerusalem but could not conquer it; King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon succeeded to do so in 549 BCE. Median King Cyrus allowed Jews to restore the town, but King Ahasverus stoppued its rebuilding. Syrian-Greek King Antiochus conquered Jerusalem around 167 BCE, followed by the Roman Pompei in 63 BCE. Vespasian and Titus captured the Holy City in 70 CE. After the Bar Kochba Revolt failed; and Hadrian had recaptured and destroyed Jerusalem; had killed 600 000 Jews; had sold the survivors into slavery; had "for all future banned all Jews from ever returning to Jerusalem", the Holy City, now renamed it "Aela Capitolina" ceased to be the physical centre of the Jewish People. But it never ceased to be the holy symbol and aspiration of its nationhood.

Jerusalem is today the most important symbol for Israel's rebirth. The restoration of Jerusalem as its capital has given final legitimacy to Israel. No Government, no politician, no poet will ever fail to

pronounce to the world, and their listeners at home, that Jerusalem will never be given up; that it is the "eternal undivided Capital of the Jewish People". It has built - with some trepidation - a chain of suburbs on the hills around Jerusalem from where in the past the coalition of arab armies, with the enthusiastic support of the local palestinian population, had fired on the helpless jewish population. But the Governments of Israel have not succeeded in overcoming their galuth mentality in dealing with the free world, and no less also with the arab world: they fear "what the Goyim may say". It has always been Israel's dream to see Jerusalem acknowledged by all the world as the capital of the state; to see all embassies concentrated in Jerusalem. But the spectacle of the Labour Prime Minister and his colleagues trying to dissuade the United States from shifting its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; to call it "an internal matter of the US"; to call it a "provocative step", will never figure as a glorious page in Israel's history.

Contrary to what the arab Moslems so stridently clamor, Jerusalem has not always been a holy city to Islam. The first shift in emphasis had already happened, when Muhammad wanted to distanciate himself from Judaism and Christianity; when, in form of a purposeful statement, he replaced the jewish Shabath and the christian Sunday with Friday as the Moslem's weekly day of rest.

One began hearing of Jerusalem's aura of sanctity for Islam only since a few years. There have even been times, when moslem theologians and jurists strongly objected to such a notion; and when they placed the blame for the grant of holiness to Jerusalem on the influence of jewish converts; and on the tendency of these to infiltrate their ideas and practices into Islam.

Also politically Jerusalem had only since a few recent years been an arab capital. Ramle had for the hundreds of years after 716 been their capital. Until the 10th century the Arabs called Jerusalem "Ilya", a corruption or Aelia Capitolina, the name Emperror Hadrian had give the City after he had crushed the Bar Kochba Rebellion. Thereafter they called it "Beit al Makdis", arabic for Beth Hamikdash; or "Ursalin", a corruption of Yerushalayim; or "Siyyun", arabic for Zion; and later "Al Quds", an arabic version of Hakodesh.

There is no reference to Jerusalem in the Qu'ran. In Muhammad's time it was a christian city of the Byzantine Empire. The Al Aqsa Mosque

on the Temple Mount was then the St. Mary's Church, and the Prophet could impossibly have referred to it.

Nearly 500 years ago - after the Ottoman Empire had defeated the cruel Mameluke rulers, as I mentioned already - Jews were allowed to develop their own culture; and to engage freely in their professions and in their commercial activities. Later on, under the umbrella of the Enlightenment; and in the following era of Emancipation, the Jews living under ottoman rule could progressively gain sti l greater degrees of freedom and equality. In a Ferman of the Holy See dated 1856 the Jews, along with the christian dhimmis, were declared full citizens; and were granted the enjoyment of all civil rights. Their professional work; their commercial activities; and their cultural life in general, did indeed flourish more than ever. During the last hundred and fifty or so years of the Turks reign over the Middle East, Jews could more than ever enjoy a greater freedom and a much better quality of life.

But during that same period no such enlightened decrees benefited the Jews who lived in the other moslem lands. During the 18th and 19th centuries the Jews continued to suffer severe humiliation, and often murderous persecution, in most all the other moslem countries, ranging from Persia to Morocco, whether the countries were arab or not. In the moslem world, mainly in the moslem-ruled countries of North Africa, but no less also in Iran and Central Asia, the Jews continued to be poor, downtrodden and persecuted even after the Middle Ages had come to an end. In the arab world the Jews continued to be affected by more cruel, and progressively more restrictive rules than they had ever been even exposed to in Europe during the darkest Middle Ages.

The fateof the Jews was worst of all in Iran, even though it was a non-arab country. As late as 1892 the mullahs of Iran issued the following instructions: a Jew must never overtake a Moslem on a public street. He is forbidden to talk loudly to a Moslem. A Moslem's jewish creditor may claim his debt in a quavering and respectful manner. If a Moslem insults a Jew, the latter must drop his head and remain silent.

The tolerance Islam showed to the Jews in times past; and the mutually beneficial effects accrued in times past by the cohabitation of Islam and Judaism, are since long forgotten. From the day it was created Israel has made peace with all countries - mainly those in its

neighbourhood - one of its major programs. But always and everywhere it has met with extraordinary difficulties. The arab states, the former russian empire and the PLO have for long refused to deal with Israel directly, as - they supposed - this would have implied recognition of Israel as a legal state. In this cold-shouldering of Israel the Arabs had the support of the majority of european countries, like they have had with regard to Jerusalem's 3000-years Jubilee.

Since some years peace talks have been going on between Israel and arab states. Some of these talks have led to the signing of a peace treaty. But nobody is sure that a true and permanent peace has thereby been established. Egypt - the first arab country to make peace with Israel - was expected to serve as a paradigm and prototype. But it would be better not make it serve as such. What Egypt signed was at best an armistice, but never a peace treaty.

Egypt and the arab states have definitely not given up their plan to destroy Israel. Whenever a Gulf State shows willingness to open diplomatic or commercial lines with Israel, Egypt intervenes - and often succeeds in sabotaging the ongoing process. If on occasion Egypt lowers the decibles of its aggressive diatribes, it does so only out of fear it may displease the Americans and lead to reduction of the huge subsidies it receives from Washington.

Is the so-called "Peace Process" more than Orwellian Newspeak ? Is it acceptable that the rulers of the new Palestine enforce the jordanian law which prescribes the death penalty for thos who sell land to Jews ? Have the planners of Israel's diplomacy not shown their lack of acumen when they evaluate Saudi Arabia as a possible diplomatic partner ? Is it not clear to Israel's diplomats that the Wahabi rulers of Saudi Arabia would be the last to recognize Israel even if hard pressed by the US ? Has Israel forgotten, that the relations it had with the Shah for twenty years until 1979 though very warm, had always to be kept on a very low level; that the Embassy in Teheran had to be hidden behind a high wall and that no plaque indicated that the building served as an embassy ? Is it not inconceivable that the supposedly clear-headed political leadership gives up the only guaranteed defense to sworn enemies ? Don't they know that Arafat has never directly and certainly never in arabic - denounced the terrorist attacks against Jews ? Will the peace with Jordan last ? Can we forget what Jordan did after it had occupied the Old City ? That it destroyed the Huvra

Synagogues built in 1267 ? That no trace is left of the other sixteen synagogues ? That it desecrated the cemetery on Mount Scopus ?

Can we all forget that the survival of Israel is in danger unless we never forget and are always prepared ?

Do the Israelis handle the "peace process" appropriately and also intelligently ? Have not the Israeli politicians - many of them of a shallow intelligence in general, and of a poor perception at best - not precipitated themselves into a peace process which may lead to a future disaster ?

Although I have generally a rather poor opinion of Aba Eban and his political opinions, it would serve the Government well to harken to his advice: "...the road...is likely to be strewn with obstacles; Israel's rhetoric about the new Middle East should be more low-key and less rhapsodical. It takes time for deep-rooted hostility to be transcended by regional interests; and the agreements with the Palestinians and Jordanians will have to be economically more beneficial than they have been, for the peace process to flourish".

Whatever happens in the Middle East - whether a war is brewing or whether peace will come about - whenever the past is reviewed, the present discussed or the future planned, it will always be the religious interpretation of the Mullahs which will indicate the strategy to be applied. It is imperative, therefore for Islam's religious precepts along with the religion-based precedents to be studied, in order to somehow divine all the possible direction events might take. The tragic quotient never to be omitted from this formula is the one, that since 1300 years no change has occurred in Islam's interpretation of the past, the present and the future. A change should in any case not be expected, as no changes are permitted. Although the Moslems would greatly benefit from a reform, any change whatsoever in the interpretation even of some interpretation is absolutely and totally unthinkable. The rules, laws and notions which were suited for the Desert Bedouins at the time the Qu'ran was handed down - and when the Hadith was recorded - are to the most minute point still valid today. They can impossibly be changed or reformed, as they have been passed down by Allah. Therefore - since in Islam religion and politics are inseparable - all which goes on in the political sphere; and all the statements the Arab politicians make; and all the unrealistic demands the Palestinians raise, are sanctioned

by Allah and are being put forward with divine consent. Thus it is divinely confirmed, that Jerusalem has since ever been populated by the very same ethnic Arabs who call themselves now Palestinians. It is equally a divinely proved fact, that Abraham had been a Moslem and not a Jew - and so on.

These last remarks have been necessary, because the arab-israeli conflict is fundamentally a religious war. However with the difference, that the inter-confessional wars which are reported in the history books, had without exception been fought with theological as well as with secular arms; while in the actual conflict, which has been going on since two generations between Arabs and Israelis, religious-ideological issues play no, or at the most only a minimal role. We must take in consideration also the other distinguishing aspect: today's Moslems have extended their antagonism also all over the world wherever Jews are to be found. And whenever possible, this antagonism will mostly be manifested in the form of a murderous attack.

The greatest obstacle to an eventual reconciliation between the parties in this conflict - the Jews and the Moslems - is the radical religious inflexibility preached by the extremists on both sides. The ultimate acceptance of Israel as member of the middle-eastern family of nations - and thus also the threat to its survival - is intimately involved in these developments. I will go even further and maintain, that the future of the Middle East will be to a great extent, if not determined certainly influenced, by the outcome of this struggle, which in practical terms is a struggle between democracy and feudalism, between enlightenment and retrogression.

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Hermann H. SELZER coll.

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An optimist ponders
about his people's survival
pt. 3 (p. 206 - 309) d. 7-13

AR 25045

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3.

Another look at jewish-moslem and
israeli-palestinian relationships.

I have often heard it predicted, that the Palestinians' - and in particular their youth's - murderous hatred of the Jews is only due to the difficult economic conditions under which they have to live; is due to their large number of unemployed; is due to their understandable envy of the Israelis' standard of life. And in the same breath it is promised, that the Palestinians' hatred of the Jews will evaporate as soon as they - especially their youth - can enjoy the same economic advantages and social privileges as the Jews in Israel. This theory, mostly advanced by Jews who belong to the left of Israel's political spectrum, one hears eagerly and everywhere repeated. It is true, that while there is a wide difference between the way poor and rich Jews live in Israel, there is a wide gap between the kind of amenities the young Israelis enjoy and those which are available to their palestinian counter-parts. It is even an understatement to call it a "gap"; it is a deep and wide abyss.

But the Palestinians' complaint are not only material ones. They consider the Jews overbearing; behaving socially, economically, culturally as an elite group; and unwilling to treat others, especially the Arabs in their midst, as their equals. The prediction, however, that the equalization of the financial conditions and professional chances of the two groups of young people would at once, and without fail, remove the Palestinians' deeply rooted antagonism, is widely disputed and by most experts refuted. Were this indeed the right diagnosis, it would provide a favourable prognosis. It would offer a welcome prognosis. It would provide an effective remedy.

Alas, from what I have observed I too cannot agree either with this diagnosis nor with the proposed therapy. I am fully convinced, that the dawning of an era of economic wellbeing for all strata of Palestinians; and that the opening of large-scale professional opportunities for their

younger age groups, will not eradicate - not even reduce - their deeply ingrained hatred for the Jews. For not only has the Arabs', and especially the Palestinian's, hatred for the Jew become a habitual and reflex-like reaction, but deep down and in a final analysis their hatred is in addition mostly irrational and not amenable to reasoning. And we must not forget, that their politicians - and more than these even the arab rulers - have no interest in a peaceful coexistence with Israel. All arab governments are undemocratic. And in addition most of them are also shaky. By flexing their anti-jewish muscles, and keeping their armies ever ready for a war against Israel, they hope to strengthen their position and to deviate the discontent of the masses in their countries. And indeed; so far they have been successful in deviating in this way and by such means their unhappy peoples' ever ready trend to rebel.

Again and again we have only too well been made aware, how little one can count on the palestinian Arabs' capability to think independently; to decide on their own; and to realize how much they have always been pawns in the hands of their politicians.

Judaism grants honour and respect to all religions, and to the monotheistic religions in particular. Among these Islam is to Judaism a sister religion; and is acceptable and accepted as such to Israelis and Jews alike. I learned somewhere of wise rabbis in the past, who have taught that in case of "pikuach nefesh", i.e. in a life-threatening situation, the conversion of a Jew to Islam would not figure as the "Hilul Hashem", as "a serious and abysmal defamation of the Holy Name", like a conversion to Christianity would be under the very same circumstances. Unfortunately, the Islam represented by the fanatical and politicised fundamentalist movement we witness today, makes our acceptance and respect difficult, as it represents an existential threat to Israel and all Jews alike.

It is difficult to fight - and still more to eradicate - a fundamentalist-terrorist organization. When one branch is cut off, or one cell taken out, their regeneration is

inevitable. Fundamentalism's ideological foundations are such that, motivated by relentless religious fanaticism; and strengthened by the political power backing it, there will never be a shortage of activists and a scarcity of suicide volunteers.

A fundamentalist movement, I am ready to concede, has not a priori to be a threat to others ! Some large and very active christian fundamentalist movements, for instance, live in an acceptable and peaceful arrangement with other ideological and theological currents and do not indulge in violent or terrorist activities. And the jewish fundamentalists in Mea She'arim may be a bother to their less religious co-citizens, but they will never turn to terrorism. It is the unbending fanatic ingredient the radical Islamists add to their religious ideology which ferments fundamentalism into a terroristic one.

The Intifada has presented Arab society with a serious problem: by their revolt against Israel young Arabs youth have gained the impression they are an important factor now in the political arena; and that, therefore, they can rightfully claim their place in the political hierarchy.

But the conclusions they draw therefrom are wrong: all the numerous problems the Palestinians are facing today cannot be solved by violence, and not even by peaceful demonstrations. And it does even less help them to describe and accept the terror acts, which have cost so many jewish lives, as legitimate islamic fundamentalist reactions, and not to call them what they are: arab-palestinian terror acts.

All Moslems - traditionalists and fundamentalists, intellectuals and politicians alike - who are guided by the Q'ran and not by leftist slogans, see the solution of their jewish and Israeli problems first and foremost in the abolishment of Zionism and of the Jewish State. And this achievement would be crowned by the conversion of all Jews to Islam. Or, in case the Jews should prove stubborn and unwilling to "see the light", they will be forced - as in the past - to live within the islamic world the islam-sanctioned existence of "dhimmis" - which I have described in the preceding chapter - i.e. the surviving Jews would be condescendingly and graciously granted permission to live as a tolerated minority with a reduced range of social and legal rights.

These Moslems - whether traditionalists or fundamentalists, liberals or intellectuals - who would prefer a "peaceful solution", maintain in addition, that any area, any town or any land which Moslems had once conquered; in which Islam had once been present; or which had in any

other way once come into the possession of followers of Islam, is Dhar-Al-Islam; which means it is for eternity not only moslem property, but sanctified islamic land, which can never be given up; which has forever to remain in moslem hands. Therefore - as not only radical Islamists but also apparently mentally balanced politicians and mild-mannered Mullahs have frankly and officially declared - "every grain of sand between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea is moslem property forever". Islam knows no distinction between Gog and government. Both are directed by the Qu'ran. Hence both aspire to the destruction of Israel.

Islam's fundamentalists are not confined to Israel or the Middle East; they are to be found everywhere in the world. The programed target of all these extremists everywhere has slowly, but very perceivably, changed: it is not anymore Israel - which they magnanimously leave to the mercies of the PLO's Jihad and the Hamas' terrorism in the Middle East - but all the Jews all over the world. According to a widely shown BPS report, a network of islamic extremists, with the distinctly defined program of random killings of Jews, is operating in the US.

Alas, it can be predicted, that the Fundamentalists' terrorist program - though it will not endanger Israel's and Judaism's survival - is liable to cost a great number of victims. And not only the Jews will have to suffer. The terrorists' activities has already claimed victims in some countries of the West. But the ruthless killers will not be subdued as long as most of the western powers continue to believe, that they are immune; that will not be involved. This verdict applies even to the Pope, who could, fortunately, be spared the death moslem terrorists had prepared for him in the Philippines. The democratic countries will continue to think themselves safe and protected against terror acts, because they supply arms and strategic material to the moslem world. Or as long as they feel secure, because - along with the payment of a large ransom - they have made secret arrangements with the islamic terrorist world that "they will not be touched if they keep off".

There is not the slightest doubt in my mind, that it will not take long before the western countries will come to realize, that to the moslem terrorists not only everything jewish, but also everything western; everything non-islamic; everything democratic, is satanic and

has no right to exist. America and France are about to learn their lesson.

It hurts to learn of the bomb attacks in Israel. It hurts to watch the affected people's sufferings which we all share. It hurts to realize the powerlessness of the Security Forces to prevent a suicide attack. It hurts to contemplate, that Arafat and the PLO are dishonest with their promises to eradicate terrorism. But all this does not make me contemplate the possibility, that even the most sustained wave of terror could ever dislocate Israel, provided the country and its people remains physically and spiritually strong. And I feel assured, that Israel will always remain strong, because its people have the will to be strong; and because it will always have the active support of the Jews in the Diaspora.

But I cannot deny the possibility that a beleaguered State of Israel may have to face great dangers - and its people suffer much hurt - not due to any disinterestedness of the world at large; not due to the active or passive connivance of certain otherwise not involved non-moslem countries, but if it is abandoned by its long-standing allies and true friends in the West. Yes, in such a case Israel would be in mortal danger. However, even if we picture the worst of scenarios; even if the islamic Jihad should spread over the whole world; and even if the ensuing dangers should affect and involve Jewry everywhere, the survival of Judaism and of Jewry will never be put in question.

Moslems everywhere - especially those of the Third World; and more so their fundamentalist and other messianic and millenarian movements - show no interest in advancing with the times. On the contrary ! They have the tendency - it appears - to remain stuck in the mentality of the Middle Ages. They refuse to acknowledge the reality of whatever has not been already known to Prophet Muhammad. They refuse to accept as a possible truth whatever is not written in the Qu'ran. In other words: they deny that the scientists can have discovered anything which was not already known to their Prophet; and they accept only as truth that which had been acceptable as such to the desert mentality and civilization of some 1300 years ago. They

feel so sure in their belief, that they refute most of what modern technology has made possible. They deny among other things, that a man could have walked on the moon. They do not allow a Television set into their houses.

Interestingly, they do not find it difficult to accept the fact and effect of a nuclear explosion, because they have their own interpretation of, and explanation for, the nuclear phenomena; and because they have found a way - with the help of this explanation - to fit the nuclear bomb's undeniable reality into their Weltanschauung. This was once explained to me by Sir Zafrullah Khan, a former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, a former President of the UN General Assembly, and last a Judge in the World Court at The Hague. This deeply religious Ahmediya Moslem told me, that he accepts the reality of the nuclear fission - not so much because it is not possible to deny the devastating effects of the atomic bombs dropped over Japan - but because he can point to a passage in the Qu'ran where an event, "which is quite evidently an atomic explosion, is described in clear and unmistakable terms". And I have repeatedly also heard and read since of the belief prevailing in orthodox moslem circles, that the cosmic calamities predicted in the apocalyptic chapters of the Qu'ran, are to be seen as premonitions of the nuclear explosions our generation has witnessed - and may possibly also witness in future.

Will Israel ever be free of terrorist attacks ? Will an agreeable solution ever be found for the "Palestine Question" ? Will the tragic fate of the displaced Palestinians ever be improved ? Will the long since floated proposals, that the Arabs of Israel should be exchanged with jewish communities in arab lands; that the palestinian refugees should be absorbed in other arab or moslem countries; that the israeli Arabs' properties taken over by Israelis be compensated with the properties israeli Jews have abandoned in arab lands; that, instead of forming their own independant state, the Palestinians federate with the Kingdom of Jordan, really offer honestly possible and ethically acceptable solutions ? Was the late Rabbi Meir Kahane right when he warned, that Israel has "to separate the Arabs out"; that only an arab-free Israel will survive; that otherwise an Israel sharing its home with Arabs will not survive ? Is Haetzioni, the settlements' politician, right with his warning that ".....peace with the Arabs is impossible, at least in this generation; that nationally and ethically Israel's goals "are not reconcilable with those of the Arabs, whether rich or poor, moderate or extremist" ? Are Israel's politicians on the right justified to demand that the israeli Arabs be deported ?

Is Rabin right with his declaration that Jews and Arabs have to be physically separated within Israel ?

I am afraid, nobody can give a satisfactory answer to any of these questions. When one observes the masses of young Palestinians - filled with burning rage, leave the mosques, where they have been indoctrinated by politicians and mullahs during the prayer service; when one observes them bursting with religious fervour, burning with hatred, shouting their patriotic slogans, calling for "Itbah al Yahid", for the death of all Jews - any answer anybody has to offer can in no case be an optimistic one. How can there be hope for a sensible way to settle the dispute raging between Palestinians and Jews, when one hears white-bearded Maulvis call those who kill Jews "the beloved of Allah"; promise those who die while killing Jews the immediate admission to the moslem paradise (not only for themselves but for 70 of their relatives and friends too); assure their flock that all Jews will go to hell after they die ?

How can one harbour hope for a peaceful solution, when one hears moslem intellectuals and responsible politicians tell foreigners, that Palestine has always been arab land; and that Jews will never be allowed to live therein ? When one hears arab "historians" and theologians tell the world, that in and for Islam Jerusalem has always been a holy city ? When one hears from moslem politician-historians and politician-theologians, that Jesus had been an Arab and not a Jew ?

I have repeatedly expressed my firm conviction, that Islam has - like all religions - a valuable ethical basis. That it carries the same moral commandments as all other religions in existence. That it transmits the same spiritual values as any other monotheistic religion. That it has the same strength and power as any other revealed religion, to carry mankind along to higher moral and spiritual levels.

But if we are at times uneasy with what we hear about Islam; if we think there is something missing in Islam, it is usually the fault of those incompetents who dare to speak in the name of Islam. It is the sin of those hypocrits who degenerate Islam into a religion of hatred, murder and terrorism. It is the crime of those leaders and

teachers who deform Islam into a religion, where the suicide bomber sacrifices himself in the "knowledge" that the Jews he kills will go straight to hell; and that he himself will without the slightest delay enter the presence of Allah.

Do not think, that what I said just now applies only to the palestinian "martyrs" ! Also the Moslems of Chechnya who revolted against the Russians knew, that ".....if we die we will join Allah and be happy". And neither should you think this applies only to Moslems. There are also Jews who "know" that the Jew who has killed an Arab has done a great a mitzva; and that means Dr. Baruch Goldstein has assuredly entered heaven. And he too knew, that all Arabs will eventually go to hell.

However, there is a fundamental difference: while on the side of the Palestinians such blood-dripping beliefs are preached from the pulpit of the mosques; and such promises are accepted as the holy truth by vast sections - I am inclined to say by most - of the Moslems, this type of aberrant ideas are accepted only by a handful of Jews. And it is a fact that most all Jews call the Goldstein murder an abomination. Fanatic types of such a calibre are only occasionally found among the Jews. Only a handful of Jews have planted a halo around Goldstein's mad deed. These Jews are only exceptions. They are fringe elements. They are deranged people. But they are - though exaggerated - witnesses, that the trauma sustained by the Shoah generation still survives; that it continues to hurt the israeli Jew in particular, as it is kept alive in him by the fear of arab terrorism. It becomes exterioralized into aggression against Palestinians. It is compensated by disdain for the Arab. This psychological state, and the interization of their fear, explain also the Israeli's incessant criticism of authority and his hostility to his fellow Jews.

(On the other hand the demonization of Goldstein makes no sense either. Nor does the Canossa-like pilgrimage of President Weizman to Hebron. Nor does the incessant breast-beating in the Knesseth and the continued recall of the "Hebron Massacre" in the newsmedia. Nor does the eagerness of the Police to gain friends by manhandling the "Settlers".)

The Moslems' antisemitism - in its established sense of hatred for the Jews, and not in that of contempt born of Islam's imagined superiority over all religions in existence - has its origin not in

the birth of the State of Israel; and it has been kept alive and burning by the very fact that the Jewish State exists.

However, let us not nourish any illusions. Hatred for Jews is not due to, and has not been created by, the establishment of Israel. It had been a fact of life in most all the moslem states long before the modern State of Israel was even thought of. Certain modernized versions of antisemitism among Moslems may once have been introduced by jewish and christian converts; but it exists now, and continues to thrive now on its own; and is constantly refreshed and kept alive - and the mechanism of its application is eagerly taught and constantly refined - by moslem students who have absorbed the antisemitic slogans during their sojourn at foreign universities. There they have happily realized - and this was also the experience of the indian and other asiatic students had who never knew of antisemitism in their home countries - that there exists an ethnic group which is even more hated and looked down upon, even more despised and persecuted than they themselves by the indigenous white student body. They eagerly absorbed the envied White's prejudices and took them home, as I could observe myself in India and Pakistan.

In the case of the Moslems the already well-matured christian version of antisemitism is still further aged with qu'ranic spices and religious slogans. This menu is published daily in the newsmedia; is enlarged upon in books; and is in addition - tastelessly tailored to fit the Moslems' liking - offered on every TV screen in the moslem world.

No wonder then, that the long used and abused antisemitic clout is - when the need arises; and when the time is thought appropriate - made into a well tempered weapon, which is at every opportunity raised in the political anti-Israel posturings. There is not a moslem country, where the bookshops do not exhibit much mind-numbing and intelligence-offending antisemitic literature. The first translation into arabic of the infamous "Protocols" - the originally anti-Napolean forgery which the Russians had turned into an antisemitic fantasy - was in 1927 brought out in Cairo. This childish antisemitic concoction was received - and is quasi hallowed - in today's arab world as the true record of Jewry's world-wide intrigues. It is required reading in universities.

From Saudi Arabia to Algeria it has become, next to the Qu'ran, the Arabs' preferred book of reference.

For some time after the last World War the civilized world had nourished the dream, that henceforth peace will be for ever maintained in the world. And the Jews cherished the dream, that under the impact of the Shoah the evil of antisemitism will have become totally eradicated in the world. But these dreams have remained only dreams. Antisemitism survives - openly or temporarily submerged - in every corner of the world. Not only in the moslem world. There is no moslem country today, where the originally religiously-intended anti-jewish statements of the Qu'ran are not mixed into a poisonous brew along with the never extinguished western-bred antisemitism.

The Arabs have become ranking experts in adorning and propagating the originally Church-born and Church-nourished antisemitism of the western world. In the course of a few decades this form of moslemized antisemitism came to acquire its own momentum and its own specific political colouring, while still preserving - in easily recognizable form - that very same old christian antisemitism.

With all I have stated on the preceding page I wanted to make clear, that the moslem world's "modern" anti-jewish furor was not born in either in 1948 nor in 1967; that it has not been forged in the crucible of the Moslems' specific brand of ferocious and blind anti-Zionism; that it has not first erupted in the wake of the arab armies' defeat; and that it has not started to occupy the Arabs' mind only since Israel had occupied the Westbank of the Jordan River. The arab nations' deep, uncompromising, religiously tinted, Qu'ran-imposed negative attitude towards the Jews, which had turned via the original disrespect into extreme hatred, has existed long before Israel has come into existence. It has since long been transmitted from generation to generation. Long before the Moslems' pride had been bruised by Israel has their hatred for the Jews served as a bolster for their sensitive pride and their easily bruised ego.

Whoever claims to have gained a different impression, can only have been influenced by the Arabs' strategy: to hide their antisemitism - and to offer an excuse for their terrorism - behind the mask of a politically motivated anti-Israel propaganda.

On and off a number of arab and moslem states have indicated their readiness to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Their readiness appeared

to the Jews the fulfillment of their eternal and fervent wish for peace not only with all immediate neighbours, but with the entire world. In their daily prayers Israel and all Jewry give expression for their wish that a real and true peace will some day come to be created. Their experiences over thousands of years makes them wish and pray, that it will not be a pseudo-peace of the kind which has resulted from Israel's peace treaty Egypt.

For that peace is nothing but a parody of "peace". It is a peace whose vestiges appear to be kept in place only by the two billion dollar bribe the Americans dish out to the Egyptians every year. In spite of the specific terms of the peace treaty, Egypt maintains the minimal possible diplomatic, social and commercial contact with Israel. It will - whenever given the opportunity - maliciously and zealously agitate, vote and instigate against Israel. Egypt's anti-Israel attitude might be understood - though, of course, not accepted or tolerated - were it apparent only at the popular level. But it is not. It is created and sustained by the government and its controlled newsmedia. Whenever the occasion arises its powerful doctors' and lawyers' unions demand that Egypt cuts all ties with Israel. I share the certainty of large sectors in Israel and abroad, that Egypt will spearhead the next war against Israel, no sooner her fears of Israel's nuclear "last stand opportunity" has in some form or other been neutralized.

Israelis have a more favourable opinion of; a more positive attitude to; and a more hopeful outlook on, the peace signed with Jordan. Under the given circumstances it is the best possible arrangement with an arab state. It is the generalized expectation in Israel, that in the wake of the treaties it has signed with Jordan in 1994/95, a true peace will have come into being.

It is also the Israelis' sincere hope, that Jordan will now make a clean swipe of its not too clean past record. King Hussain's evident goodwill may prevent a repetition of the parody of peace Israel "enjoys" with Egypt; that he will overcome the strong anti-Israel lobby in his country; that he will show true repentance for the anti-jewish excesses his troupes committed in Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967.

But so far there is at the popular level a strong resistance against peace with Israel. "It is difficult for Arabs", explains Ali Kasuay, a Jordanian political analyst, "to adjust to the new conditions; to forget the past and to embrace the peace, because Israel's plans for the future had always been peace with the Arabs, while the future for the Arabs embraced the destruction of Israel".

Am I - notwithstanding all I have just now said - allowed to be pessimistic, after the peace treaty has been signed; after the King has shaken israeli hands; after israeli tourists have given an impetus to Jordan's economy, because Alruahala, Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education could openly state, that he cannot entertain cultural connections with Israel, as "arab culture is more profound than hebrew culture, which is empty and not comprehensive" ? Am I right to suppose that such words indicate more appropriately next to of the Minister's own culture also his persistent anti-israeli and antisemitic attitude ? And I have furthermore to raise the point, that so far - that is at the time I am writing these very lines - Jordan's antisemitic laws of 1954, which affect all Jews and are not only directed against Israel, continue to be in force. These laws state, that whoever wishes can become a subject of the hashemite kingdom, provided he is not a Jew; that no Jew is permitted to reside or even enter Jordan; that even a gentile visitor whose passport bears an israeli visa, is refused entry into Jordan; that the sale of land to a Jew is a capital offense punishable with death. The latter law, still on Jordan's statute book, makes it impossible for Israel to acquire even a building to house its Embassy in Aman.

Alas, it would be an illusion to think, that all of a sudden the Jordanians have turned into friends of Israel; that they have at least accepted it as their duty, to live in peace with Israel; that the excesses the Jordan Army committed when it occupied the Old City of Jerusalem - the obliteration of all signs of a jewish presence in the Old City; the destruction of all the 58 synagogues, of all the libraries, of all the yeshivoth which came under their hands; their building a road through the jewish cemetery; their using jewish gravestones as paving material and toilet seats in jordanian army camps - will never be repeated, cannot ever be repeated by them.

Neither has - for that matter - the PLO's "Palestine National Convent" of 1968 been corrected, although this had been one of the conditions in the "Oslo Agreement". And, to be honest, I cannot see how it will ever be abolished; for the articles relating specifically to Israel are the only proper reason for the PLO's ambitions - and for its right to exist. Specifically the Arafat's PLO postulates that

- only arab Palestinians have a right to the land Israel;

- only armed struggle can solve all problems with Israel;
- Judaism is only a revealed religion and not a nationality;
- Jews are not a single people with a separate identity;
- Zionism is an illegal movement.

I can hardly be called a pessimist, but with respect to any future peaceful coexistence with the Palestinians I am anything but an optimist.

The PLO - it is immaterial whether pushed by the US or in the hope to throw dust into the critically onlooking eyes of the world -- has been trying to project a new image of itself. It has since the signing of the Oslo Agreement prepared a new version of its covenant. But the new version - titled "Palestinian Refugees and the Right to Return", published in english and arabic - is no less a vicious paper than the former.

"...the partition of Palestine was also groundless and illegal", the text goes, "because it failed to consult the majority of the Palestinians, estimated at that time at 90% of Palestine.....Claims of religious or historical ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood. Nor do the Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own; They are citizens of the states to which they belong.....The Jews refused all the arab appeals for peaceful coexistence and for the Arabs' autonomy rule in Palestine and Jordan. All the arab and international attempts sought to convince the Jews to accept self-autonomy rule in Palestine, were doomed to failure".

Whoever thinks the time will come when the Palestinians will be ready and willing to live in peace with the Jews in Israel, must be a dreamer indeed ! Coexistence and peace will remain illusory, if all the actual Palestinian Self-Rule Authority's and evolving Palestinian State's administrative elements - and most of all the palestinian Police - do not collaborate with their israeli counterparts in an ongoing fight against terrorism. If not chaos will result.

I might possibly accept the plea of the israeli politicians, who explain in Arafat's defense that he has to use such harsh words; that he has to deal with too many enemies in his ranks; that he faces too many opponents to his policy; that in his Tunis-based Council he could never get the required majority, not even a quorum; and that he has in any case already publicly declared, that the above objectionable references in the PLO's Palestine Charter are no more valid, are

abolished, are cancelled, are erased, were it not, that whatever he says in this respect in english does not correspond with what he tells his people in arabic; and were I not sure, that what Arafat, whether in english or arabic, may ever say, promise and swear, can and will be abolished, canceled and erased the moment times and conditions call for, or permit, such a step.

I can quite well understand, that with the Zionists' realization of their hopes; and that following the establishment of the Jewish State, the Moslems - in their to them painful confrontation with the Jews - were forced to come to terms with a new situation; with an until then to them unknown situation. Over many centuries and until recently they had perceived the Jews living in their midst as nothing but a weak people; as a politically impotent group; as a socially isolated community; as an ethnic distinguished by nothing but its own corrupt religious faith. It was mainly under the impact of the Nazis' anti-jewish doctrine, that the Moslems - though confirmed, if not strengthened, in their negative opinion about the Jews they knew or harboured - began to perceive the jews as a separate people, as a race apart. They were further confirmed in their revamped view of the Jews, when these founded their own state in which not only their own religion, but also their own culture and their own national aspirations were declared the specific markstones of an independent people. This was for the Moslems very difficult to accept. This was very hard to fit into their lives. And in this development they saw a great danger to their own aspirations. The knowledge, that the Moslems had a strong support for their newly shaped views about Israel and Zionism in the political ambitions of the Soviet regime, did not lessen the frustrations the Moslems sensed in judging their own position. And, not surprisingly, these views and political constellations found also internationally acceptance in the UN resolution that "Zionism is Racism".

All and every claim; all and every argument; all and every basis for the Arabs' fervent wish and hope to annihilate Israel, is associated with, and explained by, their assertion, that Palestine has since ever been an arab possession; that the progenitors of today's Arabs have lived there long before the invading Israelites took possession of the land.

Jordanian TV, for instance, stated on one occasion that "...the Jews murdered Jesus, the palestinian prophet". And Arafat was not far behind by calling the Apostle Paulus "a Palestinian who defied Rome". Neither did Hannan Ashrawi hesitate to come forth with her assertion that she "...can trace her ancestry to the first Christians....."

The posture of the Arabs is in plain words: the Jews have usurped the country which belongs to the Arabs. Ergo: the Palestinians have every right to claim back the land occupied by Israel. Ergo: Israel has no right to exist. Ergo: Israel has to be eliminated.

But all proof to the contrary the Jews may bring forth - that Israel is a small country measuring a mere 80 by 450 km; that what the world likes to call the "Westbank" is the biblical Judaea and Samaria, the real biblical heart and soul of the Jewish Nation, falls on deaf ears not only in moslem realms but also to the world at large. Even America, Israel's best friend, refuses to accept Israel's claim to this piece of land. The United States of America, which in the name of "manifest destiny" - i.e. because God willed it thus - took lands from the Indians and from Mexico, now demands of Israel, that it returns lands which had belonged to the Jews in the past to people who have no right to these lands.

It is an indisputable fact that Jews have lived in Palestine for the last 3500 years, while no Arabs had turned up anywhere between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea until 1300 years ago. The first of the arab newcomers had arrived from the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula in the wake of Islam's conquering armies.

In the 1920s and 1930s, when the first of the major waves of jewish pioneers arrived in the geographic unit then called "Palestine", they found there not more than a small number of permanently settled Arabs. Only at a later stage in the Zionist's development of the land did larger numbers of Arabs flock into Palestine. These were immigrants, attracted by the promise of better economic conditions, came from the neighbouring countries. They had been lured by the expectation, that greater economic opportunities were being created by these early jewish pioneers - although these settlers themselves had in those early years to live under poor and primitive conditions.

Also the Arabs' often heard complaint, that in the wake of the 1967 war Israel had illegally occupied the so-called Westbank, is totally unjustified. As I have mentioned on a previous occasion already, victorious Israel took over from Jordan the possession of that part of Palestine. Jordan itself had no legal rights to that part of

Palestine along the western bank of the Jordan River, for according to international law, its occupation of that portion of the country in 1948 had been an illegal act. The international community clearly pointed to the illegality of Jordan's intervention: except for two countries -- Britain and Pakistan -- Jordan's usurped "ownership" of the land on the west bank of the Jordan River had never been internationally accepted or recognized by any of the world's nations.

There are quite a number of such incompatible claims and counter-claims. One such, for instance, is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and another is about the ownership of the Machpela Caves in Hebron. As I mentioned already, the Moslems claim sole ownership of both. They tell the world that the Jews not only have no owner rights, but they have not even the right to enter the place where the Holy Temple stood, nor the burial place of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of their own nation !

The Moslems claim also Patriarch Abraham exclusively their own. They pretend that the Jews of today are no more related -- or even that they have never been related -- to Abraham. The Arabs claim, there are no more true Jews since Hadrian -- after the defeat of Bar Kochba in 135 CE -- had expelled all Jews from the Land of Judaea. The Arabs' discovery that today's Jews are descendants of gentiles who in the course of the last 2000 years had converted to Judaism, is accepted in many parts of the world. This kind of argument turns the arab-israeli conflict from time to time into a true comedy.

All these arguments and counter-arguments, all these facts and their denial lead to one surmountable obstacle to a true coexistence: in the name of Islam the Moslems deny Israel the right to their own homeland; to their only homeland; to their true homeland. However, were the Moslems to extend their absolute trust in the veracity of their Qu'ran also on this issue, they might, I am certain, have become less firm in their hostile position.

They cannot be unaware of the historic, qu'ranically well documented fact, that in the earliest period of Islam -- at the time when Muhammad still had expected to attract the Jews to his newly born religion -- he had addressed the jewish tribes in his neighbourhood with these words: "Remember, my people, the favours which Allah has bestowed on you. He has raised up prophets among you, made you kings, and given you that which was given to no other nation. Enter, my people, the holy land which Allah has

assigned you, do not turn back or you shall be ruined". Alas, the faithful Moslem prefers to lean on later passages which reflect the Prophet's unforgiving ire against the recalcitrant Jewish tribes. One of these passages reads: "Humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them, and they were visited by the wrath of God".

The final and basic issue, the one which is mostly responsible for the continued tension between Israel and the Arabs, is the latter's hope to establish an Islamic state in what is now the State of Israel. It is, regrettably, the Arabs' deep, blind, faith-born conviction, that all means leading to this goal are permitted. As a rule they are quite outspoken in this respect; but occasionally they try also to cover their true aim with the assertion - which they do not even care to express in acceptable diplomatic language - that in the conciliatory spirit of Islam their goal will only be achieved, when the major part of the world and all of Israel are occupied by Moslems.

In practice the Israeli-Arab conflict is centred on Jerusalem.

The Arabs call Jerusalem theirs because it is the "Third Holy Place in Islam". They demand in addition, that Jerusalem - 72% of whose inhabitants are Jewish - be declared the capital of their hoped for Islamic State of Palestine. But they offer no explanation for the fact, that throughout the 1200 years during which Jerusalem had been in the hands of the Moslems, it has never been given anything approaching the status of a holy city; that it has at no time functioned as the capital of an Arab state; that during the years Jordan ruled in Jerusalem, no Moslem potentate - except for the Jordanian monarch himself - has ever come on pilgrimage to "Islam's Third Holy City".

It is quite evident, that the Moslems have only in recent years been inspired with the manoeuvre to elevate Jerusalem to the rank of a holy city. And it is equally evident, that they have done so only for purely political motivations. How else can it be explained, that while praying on the Temple Mount they do not turn to the Al Aqsa Mosque but towards Mecca ?!

It is impossible to omit mentioning also Christianity's attitude to and claims about Jerusalem, when airing the Moslems' attitudes to and claims about Jerusalem.

For similar complaints about the Israelis; similar demands on Jerusalem; and similar claims to the holy places, one is likely to hear from the leaders of most, if not all, of the 40 Christian denominations

represented in Israel.

Their complaints, demands and claims are no less exorbitant; are often not much differently worded; are usually as tendentious, as those of the Moslems. To give their claims some kind of expression, the christian member states of the European Union have refrained - for evidently political reasons - from taking part in the 3000-Years-Jerusalem Jubilee. But it is interesting to learn, that the Pope has issued instructions, that in the year 2000, on the occasion of the festivals in Rome at the end of the second millennium "...the relationship with our jewish brothers, whose presence in Rome is more ancient than ours..." be adequately stressed.

The issue - it has so far not yet deteriorated into a dispute - of the christian holy places, raised between Israel and the christian world, has a wider horizon, however. The dispute about Jerusalem which rages between the Jewish State and the arab states, has mostly remained restricted to the Middle East; but all which concerns the christian claims in Jerusalem is the concern of the wide world outside the Middle East.

And we must not forget that the disputes about jewish rights in Israel may be even more than a bother, because whenever the dispute between the Palestinians and Israel is aired; whenever the question of the Palestinians' rights versus those of the Jews is on the agenda; whenever outside governments and the United Nations' bodies enter the discussions, the true substance involved is primarily Jerusalem.

It is only since a few years that the christian churches have raised claims, similar to those of the Arabs, on Jerusalem; and it is only since Israel's 1967 conquest of Jerusalem that the Vatican has entered the fray. For many centuries since the Crusades - i.e. during all the time Jerusalem was in moslem hands - the Catholic Church and the other christian denominations have not raised the issue of christian rights in and over Jerusalem.

The churches have raised this issue with increasing zeal only since 1967, when Israel took possession of the Holy City. Christianity has seen in Judaism its hated rival since the first half of the second century, when - under the teaching of Marcion and Iranaeus - the two religions became separated. And the Vatican is embarrassed by Israel's rebirth, and by Jews living again in Jerusalem. Since the renewal of Israel, the Vatican tries with its anti-Israel policy to overshadow the fact, that the prophecy of Jesus and the vision of Paulus have proved wrong.

Jewish resentment has to a slight degree been eased by Pope John-Paul the Second's somewhat favourable sounding - but in quality and content only minor - remark about the relationship of the Jews with the Holy Land: "...it must be understood", he said, "that Jews who for 2000 years have been dispersed all over the world, have returned to the land of their ancestors. This is their right". Otherwise his church in Israel - and his churches abroad - will rarely miss an opportunity to paint Israel in the wrong. The Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem tries in his anti-Israel statements to outdo the Palestinians.

Also catholic bishops in the US made their contribution. They issued a statement in which they blamed Israel for the emigration of large numbers of Christians from Jerusalem.

They should have been aware of the true facts, that is, that during the post-war period from 1945 to 1995, ninety percent of all christian emigration from Jerusalem took place between 1948 and 1967, when Jerusalem was in Jordan's hands. In those years the majority of Christians in Jerusalem - in 1945 more than 28 000 Christians had lived in Jerusalem, and in 1967 less than 11 000 - left because they felt affected by Jordan's policy to islamicize Jerusalem. And it is also worth mentioning, that since 1948, since State of Israel was born, the number of Christians in the country has quadrupled.

No catholic bishop protested, when between 1948 and 1967 Jordan severely restricted the number of Christians who could come on pilgrimage to Jerusalem; when it imposed limitations on christian schools; when it forced christian students to study the Qu'ran; when it did not allow christian institutions to acquire real estate in Jerusalem. Nor are there today protests, that Christians - like Jews - are not allowed to pray on the Temple Mount.

We are not surprised - neither should we with all our past and recent experience be - if highly placed moslem prelates attack Jews and Israel; if they use lies; if they preach hatred; if they mishandle historic facts. But we are taken aback - but should with our past and recent experiences not be - when such attacks come from the mouth of cardinals or bishops.

The Christian churches - as I have explained - make every effort to prevent Israel from retaining possession of Jerusalem. Christian

leaders never miss an opportunity to join Arafat in his protests against the "judaization" of Jerusalem. But one hears no christian government or authority protest, that in Egypt about 15 000 Copts turn Moslems every year; that 300 000 Christians have left Lebanon since 1967; that Christians are regularly murdered in Sudan, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq; that these same countries, along with the Pope, have supported Saddam Hussain during the Gulf War.

And while talking in this connection about the Church's unabated antisemitism, I cannot prevent myself from adding, that antisemitism, whatever its origin, has many a shape and various expressions; that we Jews are sensitized to antisemitism whatever its form and expression; that they see in islamic terrorism an outgrowth of anti-semitism; that Israelis react strongly against the moslem and christian Arabs' antisemitism because it recalls their past insecurity; that since the State of Israel exists, Jews feel entitled to take a strong, a courageous, an outspoken stand against all and every form of antisemitism; and that, embittered by the Shoah, Jews will not miss an opportunity to drain the churches' teaching of its antisemitic venom. Jews have not forgotten - and will never forget - the harm Christianity has caused them since the time of Theodosius in the 4th century; all through the Middle Ages; throughout the time of the Reformation; through the Inquisition; and finally under the reign of the Nazis.

Jerusalem is a unique city. It has an atmosphere of uniqueness even for Secularists. It has an aura of holiness even for the non-theistic faiths.

When Kate and I decided to come on Aliya, we knew we we had to settle only in Jerusalem and nowhere else in Israel. To paraphrase the words Pericles addressed to the Athenians before his own funeral: "Fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Jerusalem, as the city really is, and.....fall in love with her". With such a determination we were in no way an exception. One can hear many of the actual inhabitants of the Holy City and of potential immigrants give expression to this sentiment, which has been formulated in the words US Vice President Al Gore said on one of his visits to Jerusalem: "No one can escape the conviction, that this city exists in a special relationship to God. Jerusalem, like no other place on earth appeals to our sense of the universal and the eternal. It reminds us of the choices we must make if we are to live as brethren at peace with one another, and unafraid".

The Christians' claims to, and complaints about, Jerusalem have

no more justification than those of the Moslems. Until recently the Christians have never perceived Jerusalem as a capital city. None of the Popes has ever resided in Jerusalem. Christianity has in all history never perceived Jerusalem as a holy city. Only certain places and some buildings in Jerusalem - and some such here and there in the Holy Land - are sanctified in the christian faith; but never the Holy City or the country as such.

Only Jews have called Jerusalem their country's capital. To nobody but the Jews has Jerusalem all through the last 3000 years been a holy city. Throughout these thousands of years the Jews - wherever in the world they may have been living - have turned to Jerusalem while praying.

Having said all I said in this chapter I have also to say, that one hears, of course, also the voices of moderate moslem politicians. They preach patience. They advise their people to rely on Allah's help. But I cannot avoid seeing in their words no less a violence-loaded approach to the very goal all Palestinians aspire. One of those - to give an instance - who is prominent among the moderation preaching preachers, is Sheikh Abdula Nimr Darwish in Jerusalem. He is one of those who predict, that the Moslems will come into the possession of the land of Israel, because one day the majority of the Jews will have been made to accept Islam as their proper religion. In his view of the future world, this utopian state of affairs will automatically come to pass after Islam has again conquered the entire civilized world - by fire and sword most likely - and when world-wide all the Jews, not only those of Israel, will be forced to accept Islam as the mankind's true and only faith. Should the Jews go on refusing, they will - with Allah's consent and in his name, of course - be properly dealt with.

It is unfortunate for all concerned, that Islam's "true believers" are not willing to wait for the dawning of that glorious epoch. In their trust in the inevitability of history taking such a development, they think it superfluous to make a conciliatory approach, or even to undertake a proselytizing campaign among the Israelis. They try instead to make the Jews; all the Jews; every single Jew, leave the country now, at once, without delay.

They have not the slightest doubt, that terrorism is the best suited weapon for this purpose; and they are absolutely sure, that they have Allah on their side; and they assure each other, that they enjoy Allah's full consent, help and support. Whenever they shoot, bomb or stab a Jew, they shout "Allah hu Akbar", stating with fervour and zeal that Allah is Great. This their battle cry is also meant to express the conviction, that their handiwork pleases their God. Indeed, Allah and the Qu'ran are called as witnesses, that the murderer of a jewish infidel will receive suitable compensation. Their religious leaders make this promise in the name of Allah the All-Merciful. The Shamgar Commission has recorded, that in February 1993, during a Friday

Morning Service in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Sheikh Tayashor Tamimi - who is now a member of the Religious Court constituted by Arafat - assured his congregants that "...for those who fly the flag of armed struggle and kill, their deeds are writ in gold; their's are sacred acts in the battle between the believers and the infidels". And his colleagues - no less well versed not only in islamic doctrine but also in the celestial rules of admission through the pearly gates - proclaim that whoever is killed while killing a Jew will go straight to Paradise, where he will be provided with 70 brides; while with no less certainty the murdered Jew will go to hell.

I have not heard yet any of these religious leaders mention Islam's basic teaching, that in confronting one's enemies one has to be humane; that civilians should not be made the victims of war; that those not bearing arms should not be attacked.

What is the quintessence of all I have said so far ? What way can I show to get us out of this embroglio ? There is no doubt in any reasoning Jew's mind, that Israel can only exist if there is peace with its environment; that Israel's security and wellbeing can only be assured if a state of harmony is created between Jews and Arabs; that the zionist dream will only be fully realized the moment Palestinians and Israelis share the same aspirations. Both sides are to be blamed for the failure to reach such a peaceful coexistence, although all the necessary building stones are in our reach. The first stage is for the Jews to recognize that the Arabs's historic-religious claims have to be respected; and for the Arabs to recognize those very same of the Jews. The Jews have to accept the Arabs claim that Abraham is their forefather; and the Arabs have to acknowledge the Jews' claim to this ancestor. The Jews have to agree that the Arabs, as the sons of Ishmail, have the same rights of heritage as they themselves; and the Arabs have to acknowledge that the Jews, as sons of Yizhak, have the same right to demand a share as they themselves. After so much fighting and hatred Jews and Arabs have to discover, that they can live together in peace now, as Yizhak did with Ishmail after their dispute; and as did Yacov with Esau after theirs. In short: the politicians of both sides should proclaim that Jews and Arabs are one family; and the Mullahs and Rabbis should preach that Jews and Arabs are cousins. Is this so difficult ? Is this really so unacceptable to any but the selfish and ignorant extremists ? After all both sides, Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians, live already within the same boundaries, and will have to go on living therein for the future. The only difference the above outlined approach would make, is that both sides will live in peace; that there will not be a hostile dividing line; that the children will grow up with a healthy mind; that all benefit; that all can be happy at last.

But there is one additional pre-condition: the Palestinians will have to concede that the Jews have a far greater right on Jerusalem as the political capital of their state. Nablus or Ramalla or Gaza can be the capital of the State of Palestine. And the same applies to Jerusalem as the religious centre of Judaism. The Arab world have no such relationship with Jerusalem. Why should the Palestinians exclude the Jews from praying on the Temple Mount and in the Machpela Caves? Those who wish to pray there can do so alongside each other. Neither the Jews nor the Moslems dispute the holiness of Bethlehem or Nazareth for the Christians. Why not learn from this?

Alas, it come down to goodwill and clear-mindedness and the proper leadership to create an atmosphere of peace in the unique land in which Jews have created a home for themselves and meet Moslems and Christians as equals.
meet again

8.

Is the Diaspora a factor in Judaism's survival ?

There has hardly ever been a time in the Jews' two thousand years lasting, most of the inhabited world encompassing, Diaspora when Jews were allowed to enjoy - as is today the case at least in the culturally more advanced and economically more solid countries of the West - such a vast social acceptance; such a socially elevated status; such a measure of political influence; such a degree of economic power; such an impressive predominance in the field of sciences; such a leading role in nearly all the intellectual camps. When, in short, the Jews occupied the accepted and acknowledged place they are granted today in the public life of most of their various countries of residence.

Already at the time of the Second Temple had a large and strong diaspora existed in Greece and in Egypt, in Rome and in Asia. But sooner or later life there turned for the Jews mostly into an existence burdened with humiliation and degradation; a life full of hostility- and hatred-loaded arguments not different from those heard throughout later ages. I am reminded of a statement Cicero made in a court case "...you know...how unanimously they stick together; how influential they are in politics".

As a rule their survival was dependant on the whims and moods of their erstwhile rulers. I am mentioning only the wise decision of the Renaissance Pope Pius V, when he gave his permission for prostitutes and Jews to settle in his domain: "...to ensure a degree of filth on this earth, so that the Saviour may need to come".

It must, however, be accepted as an axiom, that the on an average favourable environment the Jews enjoy today in the diaspora; that the often prominent places the Jews occupy today in democratic countries; and that the legal and political equality the Jews are granted today in the enlightened West at least, are to a great extent - with due acknowledgement of the revolution in social perception and humanitarian demands the 18th century Enlightenment has brought on in human society

- owed to the fact, that there is an Israel; that there is a Jewish State; that there is the independent democratic State of Israel.

With these words I want to state my opinion, that the favourable milieu today's Jews encounter in the Diaspora is not, as I hear so often claimed, due to the reaction of the democratic nations to the guilt-feelings they might harbour about their callous attitudes during the years the Shoah raged. And in case I am mistaken; and in case the western powers do indeed feel guilty today about their having stood by inactive while the Germans killed the six million Jews, their regrets and their repentance can only to a minor degree have influenced their actual attitude to the Jews.

As was the case in medieval-islamic environments; as was the case in the Western World even in the aftermath of the Enlightenment; and as was the case until Israel had asserted itself as a solid independent state, Jews had at best been tolerated in the western world. And - while figuring as foreign elements - they were everywhere kept apart from the national entity of their host country. They were tolerated as businessmen; they were honoured as scientists; they were accepted as writers; but they were never really accepted as fully entitled citizens. Neither were they fully accepted as social equals.

Only from the time the State of Israel exists are the Jews in the Diaspora - who have always taken great pains to prove themselves dedicated and enthusiastic citizens of the countries in which they lived - no more looked at as a rootless people; are they not considered a pariah people; are they not made to feel anymore a homeless people. The Jews of the Diaspora have acquired now a background which makes it easier for their countries of residence to grant the full acceptance.

Also the status of the Jews of Israel has undergone a fundamental change. For the first time since time immemorial do the Jews in Israel enjoy - qua citizens of Israel; and by the fact that the State of Israel exists - the same civil status and legal rights as possess the citizens of all the other countries in the world. Abroad - outside the muslim world that is - they have more or less nowadays to overcome the type of hostility and the kind of difficulties which also citizens of other countries encounter here and there from the governments and inhabitants of the various countries and cultures.

However, I may have to correct myself somewhat, as I might be called wrong to make such a sweeping statement. It is a saddening fact, that Israeli tourists have succeeded in creating for themselves in many a foreign country - to use the most favourable expression possible - a rather cautious welcome; and have provided Israel with a rather negative aura.

But I feel entitled to repeat, that the Jews in the Diaspora enjoy - whatever their pleasant and the less pleasant experiences may be from case to case - respect and acknowledgement both on behalf of their own personal and civil rights and achievements, as well as - and no less also - by virtue of the image reflected on them by the State of Israel.

In other words: there is no country, no official, no individual that will not somehow relate a Jew, whatever passport he may carry, to Israel's existence and presence; to its past history and actual problems.

Israel's economy is, of course, inter-connected with that of the world at large; but much more so, and in an uncommon - I might say specific way - Israel's economic well-being is inter-connected with that of the Jews in the Diaspora. And in a unique sense also the opposite is true.

Israel's economy has mostly been under strain. Studies of a research institute in Luxembourg have found, that among the fifteen industrialized in the West Israel and Ireland show, after the USA, the greatest number of poor children. It is true that Israel's economy has considerably improved in recent years, but it has still to face great difficulties not only due to the need to sustain a large modern army, but also because it has taken on the task to absorb large numbers of new immigrants. Ten percent of Israel's actual population has arrived between 1990 and 1995. And even though most of the immigrants are better educated, are easier absorbed and are greatly contributing to the economy, the strain on Israel's finances is considerable. Due to the large influx of the immigrants from the CIS one sees in Israel for the first time homeless people sleeping in the street.

Even now that Israel - supported by expert evaluation and based on reliable statistics - can officially claim its economy is strong; and even though its living conditions are better than ever, the average Israeli will never be satisfied. He will not sit back and express satisfaction with his lot. The contrary is true; he will not cease to wail and lament that better amenities are available

to the Diaspora Jews. One will hear him continue with his complaints that unemployment is high; that the growing inflation hurts the pensioners who have to live on fixed incomes; that housing is far too expensive; that the health care is in a chaotic condition; that the medical staff is undisciplined and that the victims of their errors are kept hidden; that violent crimes are on the increase; that drug abuse grows; that traffic is congested; that accidents are too frequent; that education is inadequate; that there is no true leadership in Israel; that there is no proper government. In short: that he sacrifices himself for Judaism and merits a better life.

Israel and its people will make every effort to get the Diaspora as much as possible involved in these problems; to make the Jews abroad share these inconveniences with them. To this day Israelis turn to their brethren in the Diaspora for compassionate support and material help - and in most instances they will succeed and receive the requested financial support along with much unasked for and unwanted advice.

Whatever government is in power in Israel - whether Likud or Labour - will strive for political and financial support from Diaspora Jews - mainly so from those in the States - and the party in opposition will inevitably protest this campaign as an unfair, unethical, uncalled for attempt to illegally inveigle the Diaspora into Israel's affairs. One part of the mostly non-elected and non-representative diaspora leadership will only too gladly get involved; while the other part - mostly the non-zionist current in the Diaspora - will feel antagonistic.

The Presidents of Jewish Organizations in America, along with many other leaders of organized Diaspora Jewry, claim that by upholding and maintaining the Diaspora's Jewishness in Jewish-conscious environment they make at least as great a contribution to the survival of Judaism as Israel, and often even greater sacrifices; and that this entitles them to proffer advice whenever they think advice is required, even if Israelis do not agree.

A case in point is the uninvited halachic ruling of orthodox American rabbis that Jewish soldiers should refuse obedience when it comes to evacuate settlements in the occupied territories. This declaration has, of course, led to delegations of other-minded rabbis. At the very time Israel was facing great political difficulties and had to solve heavy problems, the rabbinically produced turmoil, their initiators and opponents were anything but welcome. But there was at least one profit: many religious Jews came to realize that Halacha has no place in politics; and that not only in this instance ethical and political issues should not be judged by rules which might have

found application some 1800 to 1400 years ago.

I willingly agree, one hears complaints voiced in very many other countries too about interference by unwanted and uninformed outsiders similar to the ones above; but this should not be a sufficient justification to hear them in Israel and about the Diaspora. In all these and most other respects in which ethical motives are involved, Israel should be different. Although it had been the aim and hope of the Zionist pioneers to "be like all other nations; to have the same faults and problems", such aspirations are totally incongruous - and should be seen incompatible - with respect to the existence of Israel; with the purpose justifying the existence of Israel; with the aims on which the existence of Israel is based.

The Diaspora should learn to live in symbiosis with Israel to the benefit of both.

With the dawn of Enlightenment, the Diaspora had to adapt its views and practices of Judaism in order to facilitate its integration into its environment. Relatively small communities in the Diaspora could easily adapt and integrate themselves. Unfortunately, this led also to an easier absorption and a rapid assimilation into their environment. The large and more stratified unit of Jewry in America could not merge in its totality into American society, and had to form for its status a specific social definition, a firmer ideology and an added spiritualization. When the equally large Jewish society in Communist countries became suffocated by a government directed adversity, it chose to go under by inertia. They became successful citizens and also fervent patriots. And in both these instances there were large sections of the Diaspora which - the ones voluntarily the others inevitably by superior force - avoided all possibly arising conflict by avoiding any identification with Israel, if not with Judaism too.

And whereas also the Israeli Jews developed along specific lines of thought and interest, of social outlook and cultural conceptions, a marked difference came to develop between them and the Correligionists in the Diaspora. This difference remains noticeable at least for 1-2 generations even in those, whose profound belief in Judaism's values and Israel's meaning - or the call of their religious faith - has brought on Aliyah.

Israel is not relevant to a large part of the Diaspora. To many the State of Israel is even an incongruous institution. They see the Diaspora as more significant for the survival of Judaism than Israel. It believes it has to justify itself all the time. The non-Zionist

Diaspora sees in Israel a threat to its peace of mind. It feels accused by Israel of deserting the Jewish People. It sees in Israel an obstacle to the ongoing integration into the host society which - many of them are ready to concede - will sooner or later lead to assimilation.

Let the Israelis not forget, that those Diaspora Jews who are ready to identify with, and make sacrifices for, Israel do so mostly because they identify with its Zionist roots. Let us all not forget, that the Zionist ideal and ideological ingredient - which created and grew, and which still nourishes the Jewish State - aimed for a sovereign but also egalitarian, an enlightened and also just, a socialist and also a God-fearing state. Let nobody in Israel overlook, that the Jews in the Diaspora are expecting from Israel to be outstanding in ethical governance; that they are demanding of Israel to act like a progressive country; that they are looking towards Jerusalem for cultural as well as religious guidance; that they are presuming the Israelis to be their models in moral conduct.

The Jews of Israel should be well aware of these expectations. The Jews of Israel should be well aware that they must prove themselves worthy of the trust the Diaspora imposes on them. They should tell themselves, that - and this is my firm conviction - one of the reasons why Israel exists, is for the country to be inhabited and governed by Jews who have the common wellbeing of their co-patriots at heart; who have to make the Diaspora proud of them; and who are well aware of their appointment as the showcase of moral conduct and of selfless behaviour. The Jews returned to their land to be a Jewish people. And this implies they have to live in accordance with the ethics of the Bible; that they have to be a light unto the world.

Alas ! Israel is far away still from such an achievement. There is no such society today in Israel; no such community; no such a group of men and women.

But let us tell us also, that crime has not taken on in Israel such a frightening extent; and that lawlessness has not become in Israel such an overwhelming concern as in the US and elsewhere in the world; and that this can only be due to the Jews' inherited sense of mutual responsibility; can only be due to their inbred concern not to embarrass the Jewish world at large. Yes, Israelis are definitely aware of their responsibilities in this respect. It has, therefore, to be shown as

significant, that the wave of organized, mafia-style crime which has hit Israel since recent years, has been "imported" by new immigrants; is in the hands of Jews most of whom never had, until their immigration, any contact with Jews and Jewishness.

Since ever has mutual responsibility been a guideline for the Jewish People; and in today's Israeli society - surrounded by hostile countries and living under the threat of terrorism - this duty has taken on a major significance of its own; one which overshadows all other interests and needs, but, alas, not yet all the political and religious divisions and fragmentations in the country.

I can with confidence say, that the Diaspora has every reason to look with pride on Israel's youth. The young people may be impulsive, selfish, undisciplined; but to the vast majority of them there exists the high protective wall of moral traditions and mutual responsibility which prevents them from sliding into major crime.

Israel's youth is ambitious. It is the ambition of every boy and girl to acquire the knowledge and skill with which to achieve a higher standing in society. On the other hand, no always and all of today's Israeli of today is willing to put in the necessary effort; in particular not, if this means giving up many of the pleasures which life has to offer today. Military service is, fortunately of great value in this respect. It exposes the youth to a strict discipline at an age and at a stage in their development, when the danger of going astray is the greatest.

The Diaspora has recognized that its own youth can benefit from direct and personal contact not only with Israel but also with Israeli youth. But the right approach has not always been found.

Teenagers in the Diaspora were offered a subsidized visit to Israel, in the expectation that the days filled with sight-seeing and entertainment would awaken in them not so much the desire to come on Aliyah as the interest in their background, in their Jewishness. But the campaign did not get off the ground. There were few takers. Most lacking was the interest of the parents; they did not want to expose their children to Israel, and their possibly turning into enthusiastic and active Zionists. The success rate among older and more serious youth, among graduates, however, was more gratifying.

A less impressive characteristic of so many of Israeli men and women - which disappoints the Diaspora and leads it to harsh criticism

- is their unwillingness to conform, even when not confronted with adverse economic and political situations, to the ethical demands which are the true values of their people; and which represent the unusual strength which has given their fatherland its special position in the actual world. Diaspora Jewry is also negatively impressed by the Israelis' readiness to overlook - or to find for them insufficient or unacceptable excuses - the fading away of the Jewish People's implicit morals; to disregard Judaism's demands of decency and honesty; to often trample underfoot the most significant Zionist ideals; and to prefer instead the pleasures and comfort of an easy life. To the Jews abroad - whose grand-parents if not parents had worked hard in manual and often menial jobs before reaching what they have now - it is incomprehensible that some 100 000 Romanian, Thai, Bulgarian, Turkish, Philippinian, Polish and Chilean "Gastarbeiter" have been imported as construction workers, as farm workers, as household workers, as hotel workers - alongside, or in place of, the considerable numbers of Palestinian labourers - while the rate of the unemployed among Israelis is growing.

It would have been unimaginable only a generation ago - Zionists in the Diaspora say - that house construction and agricultural activities could come to a standstill because for one reason or other Arab workers are not available. Nor would it have been thinkable to the Zionist pioneers and their children, that Israel, with such a large number of unemployed of its own, should import workers from abroad.

And even if this had not been the case - i.e. had the Zionist founders of the country been persuaded that the economy of the country was in urgent need of such "Gastarbeiter" - they would certainly have been horrified by the way the Jewish contractors and entrepreneurs treat workers who are at the mercy of their employers. The living conditions of the foreign workmen are below acceptable civilized standards; their accommodations are poor; and their pay is very low. However, these men dare not protest, as their passports are in the hands of their employers, who know only too well how to make the workers amenable with the threat of deportation. The foreign workers receive at the most \$7-800 a month. It should not be accepted as an excuse of what is after all unacceptable exploitation of helpless men, that even so they are better paid in Israel than in their home countries. No wonder, therefore, that no unemployed resident or immigrant Israeli is willing to work under such conditions. And neither is it a surprise, that the contractors and farmers prefer to employ the foreign workers.

Have the Jews of Israel forgotten - I have been asked abroad by a Jew - how they or their parents had been treated in the Diaspora ?

Had these same Jews, these same Israeli contractors and farmers - or their parents - when they were living in the Diaspora, not always aspired to be treated on an equal footing with all other citizens in their host countries? And whenever or wherever this was not the case, did they not complain bitterly about maltreatment, persecution and similar sub-categories of antisemitism? Today's Diaspora Jewry remembers all this well. And thus today's Diaspora Jewry reasons.

The question comes just now to mind, whether those in government, construction and trade who are responsible for this arrangement of imported labour, have taken into consideration the chance, that these usually dissatisfied and unhappy foreign workers may represent a danger? That they may turn to crime? That they may even indulge in, or be hired for terrorist acts?

In other words: Zionism - whose main program was to fight for dignity in freedom; which aimed at equal rights for whoever lived in Israel's borders - has failed in the application of its basic principles. Israel has failed in one of the very purposes for which it has been created. The Diaspora is well aware of this and wonders.....

Let us have no illusions: this is one of the aspects where Israel has failed in the eyes of the Diaspora.

And neither is this the only reason why Israel's reputation abroad is not the best; why its reputation is damaged; why its reputation is at times badly damaged; why also Israel's ethical purpose of existence has been badly undermined.

American Jews are well off today. They are better off than Jews have ever been at any time or in any country in the 2000 years of the Diaspora or in the 3000 years since Jews have lived in settlements or other places outside the Jewish Commonwealth. The Jews in the US have acquired a degree of economic and cultural influence, which until recently would have been considered unlikely for diaspora Jews anywhere to achieve. They are also greatly involved in the political machinery of their country. This enables them to exert a marked influence on world events and on the functioning of the United Nations. Some are now even resentful, that in the framework of "affirmative action" they are counted as "Whites".

"Perhaps no other religious group has found American soil so fertile for their personal aspirations, yet so antagonistic to the

the dominance of their religious practices", says Paul Wilke. Indeed, in America, as everywhere else in the Diaspora, we see the Jews grapple with an identity crisis in the instances where they do not associate their being Jews with participation in one or the other of the manifestations or activities or tasks associated with the Jewish faith; or if they do not at least identify with some form or other of Jewishness. In the past decades - and most markedly so during the last century when antisemitism had started to make ever greater inroads - the Jews had been very conscious of their being Jews. And for this reason the Jewish communities could survive and flourish everywhere.

It appears, that in our days, when we see antisemitism greatly reduced - and see even the absence of an impact from any of its many disguised forms - the Jews of America, England, Australia and so on do not yet realize, that it had been mainly the "good old antisemitism", which in the past had made them conscious of their Jewishness.

Let us hope that the Diaspora Jews - feeling free in, and being now accepted by, their host environment - will never forget that they are and will always remain a minority; and that since time immemorial, and in every country, whenever a social or economic or military upheaval occurs, a permanent minority was always made to bear the brunt in the very same country which until then had made them feel at home.

The Jews in the Diaspora know quite well, that Zionism has since long ceased to demand; and that Israel - whatever some chauvinist here or there may say - does not even consider the possibility, that the reality of Israel's, of a Jewish State's existence does so ipso impose on the Diaspora Jew the duty to count himself - or is by his host country considered to be - a citizen of Israel. I very much doubt if Jews could be found in the Diaspora, who would ever consent to have this type of definition of the Jew imposed on themselves. The vast majority of the Jews in the Diaspora consider themselves citizens of the country in which they live, i.e. they are Americans, French, Germans and so on. They certainly do not consider themselves "Israelis living abroad". And they are fully entitled to think thus of themselves.

However, it is a fact, that the Jews who live anywhere but in Israel are - whatever their citizenship may be - in addition also Jews.

Being a Jew is today not always, and not of necessity, a religious appellation. Today it is - in addition and as a rule - meant and applied by all non-Jews as a "racially distinctive" label to the Jew.

Religion - that is the Jew's active or non-active identification with one of the religious currents of Judaism - is for a large number of Jews in Israel or in the Diaspora no more an essential factor in their being Jews; in their aspiring to be defined as Jews; in their living their Jewishness. Next to the acknowledgement of being a Jew - at least to oneself - it is the common fate, tradition and history which bind a Jew to the Jewish People.

To the orthodox guardians of the Jewish heritage - whether they have been appointed to exert this function or not - parentage is an additional factor of great significance: that is to say, they accept only the individual as entitled to call himself a Jew whose mother is or was Jewish; and if this is not the case, whether the mother had undergone a "proper" conversion.

Competent observers have stated, that in the course of the last few years a large part of the Diaspora's Jewry has become alienated from Israel. Or has at least become disillusioned with Israel. These men and women express - in often not very conciliatory terms - their disappointment with Israel's inner politics; with its never ceasing infighting; with its ever more evident mediocrity.

Diaspora Jews everywhere are particularly antagonized by the Israelis' vaunted aggressiveness and intolerance. In addition, the orthodox elements in the Diaspora are disappointed that Israel has not developed into a theocracy. And the secular sector of the Diaspora's Jews is disappointed that Israel is not a worldly state. In consequence, it has been discovered, the accustomed active support for Israel of large parts of Jewry in America and elsewhere becomes greatly reduced in the years when Israel is not facing an existential threat; and when it is in addition doing well economically. At those times the Diaspora's contributions to the UJA is often reduced to a degree which endangers the blown-up budget of the Jewish Agency. Also the expected cut in the 3 billion aid Israel receives from America is connected - though not directly - with Israel's economy.

Still, the remark of Beilin when he was Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, that his country does not anymore require

financial help from american Jews; that Israel is rich enough to stand on its own feet, has not been gratefully accepted abroad, but has been interpreted as implying in addition to conceit a slight, if not an offense.

To go back what I said a short while before: Diaspora Jewry is disappointed, because it had expected Israel to develop into an exemplary state. However just their expectation, it was not justified. It is superfluous to argue this point here and now, as it is in any case a fact that their expectations are by far not fulfilled.

Israel is well aware - if not, it should very well be - that this is one of the reasons why Israel has lost so much of its importance for so many Jews abroad; that this is the reason, why more and more Jews in the Diaspora are denying Israel the centrality it claims for itself in their Jewishness; that this is the reason why Diaspora Jewry wants to be autonomous in matters relating to jewish culture.

But this demand is not new. The entire question complex is not the outcome of recent developments. It may sound surprising, but it is a fact that in the past only a very small number of Diaspora Jews have ever identified to a more than superficial degree with Israel. As such I see a money donation without direct personal involvement too. This is more than elsewhere the case with american Jews. Since the foundation of the State of Israel only 1% of american Jewry has come on aliya. Only ten percent of american Jewry have ever visited Israel, while - to offer a comparison - for australian Jewry the rates are 15% and 75% respectively.

There is a specific diaspora phenom which has be to clarified: even though the Diaspora Jew may not be interested in Zionism and Israel, he still cannot avoid feeling affected by everything which happens to and in Israel. Especially is this the case if there are unfavourable news from or about Israel. His reaction is similar, if not identical, with the one he experiences when he is faced with, or is personally affected by, signs or manifestations of antisemitism in his personal environment; or even in far away countries like Russia or Iran. He feels himself affected, if not directly involved, whenever he learns that Israel is slandered by antisemites; or has been attacked by terrorists; or is involved in a war. At such times - or at any time under the impact of bad news from or about Israel - he will identify with the Jewish State and will feel himself personally hurt. At such times - without having suddenly been turned into a Zionist - he will make a financial contribution whenever he is told of Israel's need of

support. In simple words: Zionism and Israel are in the eyes of this type of American Jew nothing more than Jewish institutions in need of a money contribution from a fellow Jew.

But this should not grant us the right to look down on these Jews; for apart from the value such money contributions have for Israel, they are a welcome and important means of identification with Israel by Jews who are otherwise much alienated. These are the means by which the assimilating Jew can proclaim his Jewishness. These are the means for any non-affiliated Jew to declare voluntarily his alignment with Judaism. But they should not be taken also to mean that such a Jew has publicly expressed his association or identification with Zionism.

It cannot be sufficiently appreciated as an important ingredient in Israel's - and no less also of Judaism's - survival, that whenever Israel is at war; or when tragedy strikes Israel; or whenever the United Nations passes another nasty resolution against Israel, more or less all Jews everywhere in the world will experience an awakening of their deep-seated Jewish anxiety; an upsurging appreciation of Israel's existence; a subconscious awareness of belonging to the Jewish People; an otherwise never acknowledged identification with the Jewish State.

Dangerous times which have had such an effect in the Diaspora; and murderous events which evoke this kind of feelings in the Jews all over the world, have unfortunately been frequent in the short history of Israel. But notwithstanding the painful events which have caused them to erupt, these reactions are nevertheless of great value to the Jewish State. In addition they are a great consolation to the people of Israel, even though the Galuth reaction to fearful news about Israel is usually evoked not by any sudden identification with the Jewish State, but by the re-awakening of memories of past persecutions and pogroms; and even though they have recalled in the Diaspora Jew his repressed fear for his own personal safety; and the apprehension that the never totally extinguished foci of antisemitism in his own country might flare up and will undermine his own tenuous sense of security.

These situations and events indicate not only how tenuous the Jews' acculturation is in the Diaspora. It confirms that the Jewish continuity is endangered in the Diaspora. And, strange as it must sound, the only hope for Diaspora Judaism to survive is that antisemitism, will now and then raise its multiple heads from its only dormant state. But even rampant antisemitism - notwithstanding the racial factor Hitler has added - will not stop the

assimilatory process. On the contrary.

It is not rare nor difficult to witness the unrolling of such a scenario in every country which harbours Jews. Can this not be taken as an indication, that in his subconscious depth the Diaspora Jew does not always feel as secure as he has made himself believe? That the lowering of his guard is triggered whenever the security, the social, economic or political equilibrium in his host country is disturbed? In many circles in the US, for example, this is likely to happen whenever the black population's dormant antisemitism flares up into the kind of hatred, which is preached by Farrakhan and the "Nation of Islam". Or when a change in the Congress composition brings rightist elements to power.

However, it can be taken as certain that this form of antisemitism and any of its manifestations, which are particularly strong among the university students - even if it leads to bloody clashes on the campus, ugly protests in the streets and offensive articles in the press - will in no way endanger Judaism, especially not American Jewry.

Although from every point of view Israel can see itself as the fulfillment of the Zionist dream; although Israel is, in my opinion and in my experience, the only place on earth where a Jew can truly feel at home; and although Israel is the best hope for the survival of the Jewish people, these arguments are - in view of the physical danger Israel faces, and will face for a long time to come - no absolutely valid guarantee. Nor are they, in their absoluteness, easy to defend without the active help of the Diaspora; but.....

In the last fifty years the number of Jews in the world has remained at 13 million, while the world population has exploded. Since the last war, the five million Jews of America have increased by some ten percent, while the entire population has doubled from 130 to 260 million. In Britain the number has declined by one third. The number of Jews is dwindling due to the low birthrate, intermarriage and the lowering of the antisemitic barriers. And due to less care for Israel. "The Jewish world", says President Ezer Weizman, "is in the process of diminishing through assimilation. We must teach the Jews to be Jews... and bring them to Israel for this purpose. Israel is central. Jewish education must take place here and not in the Diaspora".

This most effective remedy for what ails our youth in Israel and in the Diaspora, the Jewish education of the youth, has been neglected not only in Israel but also in the Diaspora. It has, for example, been predicted that only 10% of all of today's Jewish children in England will have any knowledge of Judaism by the time they reach the age of eighteen.

The unacceptable alternative, in case Israel cannot provide the needs of education for its own youth, would be to fall back on the Jewish Diaspora; would be to exclusively entrust it to continue the Jewish People's survival. It would mean the unjustified hope, that the Diaspora Jews will preserve the Jewish religion. It would mean the expectation, that the Diaspora Jews will safeguard the Jewish traditions. And this alternative would be preaching the belief, that the Diaspora Jews will preserve the characteristics of the Jewish people.

But, in view of the increasing trend of inter-marriage among the Diaspora Jews, such reliance would in any case be an insurance policy of doubtful value. These negative trends are certain to continue and to reach an even higher percentage with the increase in Jewish inter-marriages. For inter-marriage has become acceptable in our days. It has lost more or less all its stigma in the Jewish as well as in the non-Jewish ambience.

The trend to assimilate has found expression in the great numbers of inter-marriages which had two generations ago been only a very negligible factor. This rings alarm bells everywhere today, not only in the US. Inter-marriage occurs also in other ethnic and religious groups everywhere, it is true, but these groups' existence is never jeopardized as are the Jews. Jews marrying outside the faith have in the last fifty years increased from 1:10 to 1:2. Only one 1:20 of the non-Jewish partners converts to Judaism; and less than 1:2 of their off-spring is raised as Jews. In England - whose Jewish population has shrunk by 25% in the course of the last decade - intermarriage is at the rate of 50%; and only one marriage in three takes place in a synagogue. In the US 25% of the Jews live in inter-married families; in Canada 14%. Most of the offspring of such marriages will distance themselves more and more from Judaism.

If the Diaspora Jew does not live as a Jew, all that "Cultural Judaism" is meant to express; all attempts to create an ethnic Jewish identity; all synagogue attendance at High Holidays; all profession of Jewishness, will not suffice to keep him a Jew.

In this respect orthodox Jews are the exception. Nearly all the negative trends associated with the assimilatory process in the Diaspora - this includes the increasing tendency of young people to emigrate from Israel - are almost unknown among religious Zionists in the Diaspora. And - by the way - it is in general also quite rare in the Zionist circles in Israel.

However, I must concede that this latter statement may be out-of-date already. Yossi Beilin, the ubiquitous former Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel, declared before a conference of Presidents of Major American Organizations, that if his child wanted to marry a non-Jew, he would be hard-pressed to offer any compelling arguments against it.

Beilin expects at least to be asked.
I have never been asked.

The assimilatory process goes, of course, parallel to the lowering of the fulfillment of - or even of concessions to - the religious demands. Most assimilants in the US pass first through a stage of identification with Reform Judaism before their descent into total assimilation starts. But this should not be taken to mean that Reform Judaism is the exit from Judaism into assimilation. Orthodox - or even conservative - Judaism may not be threatened with extinction, but Reform Judaism - which has today acquired a secure base and a safe outlet in Israel - can also play a vital role in offering a haven to those Diaspora Jews, who are interested in remaining Jews, as long as they can find an acceptable and uncomplicated expression for their waning sense of Jewishness.

The Reform Movement's liberal-progressive form of Judaism appeals to the pride of many liberal-minded Jews who realize, that the alternative - that is their total assimilation - would make them give up a precious valuable heirloom. However, it has to be accepted, that the Jewish People and Judaism will not and cannot survive, if it has to rely on Liberal Judaism. Unless.... Unless it will always be facing that unrelenting and openly preached adversity of the antisemites, which makes assimilation impossible. But it has also to be clearly stated, that if, and as long as, Liberal-Reform Judaism continues with its efforts to teach and preach what is valuable in the tradition and history of the Jewish religion and its ethics, it will earn the thanks of future generations of educated and enthusiastic Jews. Otherwise, as I want to point out again, Judaism will need for its survival a steady flowing antisemitic adversity, whatever the shape or form may be.

9.

Will Aliya contribute to Israel's survival ?

I do not blame anyone calling this question an oxymoron. Of course, aliya is of vital importance to Israel. The question I put should be more precisely, what kind of immigrants does Israel need ? Or is every immigrant needed and therefore welcome ? Or does the answer to the last question depend on whether Israel not only is giving the Oleh the right welcome, but also the needed jewish education and the indispensable social acceptance ? These questions are rather new; they were not needed, appropriate or in place when Zionism and Aliya were identical concepts.

Until not long ago Zionism's only solution for Jews in hostile lands lay in a mass exodus and in the hope of achieving national sovereignty in their ancient homeland. The Zionist Organizations kept this aim and program alive; it directs all official economic and settlement activity on behalf of the immigrants. The Jewish Agency was created to centralize World Jewry's resources to establish the homeland in Israel. Today's potential immigrants hardly ever seek a safe haven, but an economic betterment, and only rarely an intellectual or spiritual fulfillment. To the religious Zionists no 'ism is needed; to them, no less than the secular Zionists, God's promise of the Land of Israel is enough of a motiv.

Notwithstanding the absence of foci of active persecutions of Jews, next to normalizing the status of the Jewish People by providing it with a home of its own, the main purpose Zionism's cardinal role and Israel's guiding principle have remained to this days the availability of a refuge to Jews in distress. For Zionism the jewish immigrant is the "Jew who returns home". This principle is defined in the "Law of Return", which gives whoever can prove to be jewish, or to have descended from at least one jewish grand-parent, automatically the right to immigrate into Israel. In principle this excludes the gentile who is not in possession of such "qualifications", unless he has undergone a conversion in accordance with halachic principles.

Acting according to another, no less fundamental principle, Zionism urges all Jews in the Diaspora - even if they are not endangered - to "come home to Israel". Indeed, since the establishment of the State many have followed this call. And it is worth underlining, that year in year out - until the recent mass immigration of liberated masses of Jews from the former Soviet Empire - a great proportion of the new immigrants have been motivated more by idealism than by need. They came to fulfill in and for themselves the Zionist program of "Livnoth V'lehibanoth" - to build and to be rebuilt.

But Zionism's dream to create a modern, unified, pluralistic society has remained a dream. Strong oppositional currents are made up not only of religious differences but also also by political disputes about philosophical ideologies, humanitarian values and military activities.

The number of Olim, of immigrants to Israel, has varied from year to year; sometimes there is a very flood, and at other just a trickle; but there has never been a time, when Jews have ceased to arrive and to settle in Israel. And it is also worth underlining, that Israel's economic, cultural and scientific successes; as well as its physical and military strength in the early years of its existence - when it had to fight for its very survival - is, if not primarily at least greatly, due to the sustained immigration from the Diaspora. And in view of growing anti-Olim feelings in Israel I find it necessary to point out, that the continued waves of immigrants have greatly contributed to the cultural intercourse and multi-cultural appreciation of Israel among the nations.

Relative to its size Israel absorbs enormous numbers of immigrants. By virtue of the Law of Return - this uniquely Jewish institution - every Jew is granted not only the right to immigrate to Israel, but also to receive at once all the rights and privileges enjoyed by an Israeli, along with the immediate grant of Israeli citizenship. The Oleh and his family are also from the day of their arrival provided with full health insurance. Can there be any doubt, that this always open invitation has given hope and sustenance, insurance and assurance to the Jews in the Diaspora? Even to the most fervent anti-Zionists among them? Nobody should be surprised, therefore, that in order to finance these expenses - as well as the enormous outlay for the Armed Forces - Israel has been turned into the country with the highest income taxes.

Of the great number of immigrants who continue to arrive from all over the world - from the Americas and Europe, from Australia and South Africa, from the Baltic States and from Ethiopia, and nowadays mostly from the former Soviet Union - only few have come because their life is in danger; or because they might otherwise feel threatened. On the other hand there is no doubt in my mind, that very many of the Olim who since the last few years have been arriving in Israel, were mainly motivated by the wish to improve their economic status.

It was only to be expected, that also negative, unwelcome elements would come along with every wave of immigrants. This is by far not a unique experience for Israel; it is an experience it shares with all the countries which opens their borders to immigrants.

It did not take long after Israel had come into being; after it had issued an open invitation to the Jews in the Diaspora; and after it had passed the laws which granted the above mentioned privileges to the New Immigrant, that also the abuse of these privileges began. One of the most common experiences in the first years of statehood; and one of the bitter and sad disappointments the country had to register in the wake of the first immigration waves, was the policy of the community leaders in Cochin and Iran, in Morocco and Iraq, to send their old and their sick, their mentally abnormal and their physically disabled people to Israel, while the young and the healthy ones; the monied businessmen and the expert professionals; the wealthy and the educated classes proceeded to Europe or the Americas. Similarly, during the more recent immigration wave from the former Soviet countries, a proportionally very large number of old and sick people arrived in Lod Airport, of whom a considerable number had at once to be hospitalized or institutionalized, while their healthy and fit nearest relatives moved on to Germany or America. There was frequently the case of an old grandmother who, unaccompanied by other and younger family members, immigrated with an often 100% disabled grandchild. The other family members had, instead, preferred to settle in Canada or Australia.

Another unusual feature of the recent immigration wave which had so far hardly ever been encountered before, are the many immigrants who in the past had never had any connection whatsoever with Judaism; whose papers had never shown that they were Jews; who, in front of the visa-issuing Israeli Authority in their homeland, had vigorously, and often stridiously maintained their "ownership" of at least one - and often for good measure even more - fictitious jewish grandparents; and who had presented forged documents in proof of their claims. Or who - in the case of Ethiopians exhibiting a cross tattooed on their forehead

- bring witnesses who swear by all which is holy, that the cross "means nothing"; and that the bearer is, was and will always be a perfect Jew or Jewess.

Around 60 000 among the 550 000 recent immigrants are halachically non-jewish on arrival. And most of them have not converted to Judaism since their arrival. However, except for the right to be buried in a jewish cemetery, their status prevents them not from receiving all the benefits and facilities like the other immigrants. But they are also not "admitted" to christian cemeteries, though it is clear that in this case religion plays less a role than "nationalistic" reasons. But also this handicap of the non-jewish Olim has been eased, as the Government has built one or two non-confessional "christian cemeteries" for them.

Voices are raised from time to time in Israel which demand, that the Government takes action to prevent these abuses; that in future it be less generous with the grant of visas; that it refuses visas to physically and mentally handicapped persons; that it restricts the Law of Return to those who are truly convinced and ethnically proper Jews. But Israel can impossibly accede to these demands. To change the basics of the Law of Return would negate the very soul and purpose of Zionism; and would deprive Israel of its own raison d'être. It would be better if the intellectual and religious leaders in Israel see it as their holy task, to turn at least the valuable and willing elements among these new immigrants into the kind of Jews who, along with their descendants, can become an asset for the Jewish People.

In years past Israel and the Israelis have always given the Olim, the new immigrants, a cordial welcome. Every time it has been an understanding and compassionate welcome. It was not only the kind of welcome one Jew offers to another Jew, but also the welcome a "Vatik", a former immigrant, who remembers the difficulties he had to overcome, so that the new immigrant might be spared the same pains and problems. In those early years the Israelis, whether individually or as community, understood only too well, that the Olim - whether they came from the US or from Russia, whether from Morocco or from Australia - arrive into a world which in most every aspect is different from the one they had left; that they are in need of a friendly welcome; that they must be made to feel they have come home.

Alas, all this has greatly changed in the last decade. The israeli

public did not show them much warmth. The newly arriving immigrants of the early '90s were made to experience a number of disappointments. The greatest of all their disappointments were their encounters with Israel's bureaucracy. In their homelands they had known and suffered the home-grown bureaucrats, but the feeling of helplessness these had created in them could not be compared with that the israel-bred brand was able to invoke in the new immigrant. And the politicians - except at election time when the Olim become the centre of their attention - showed the least interest in them.

No sooner had the immigrant landed in Israel, than every stage and step involving the settling into their new environment appeared to be made up of difficulties. Their attempts at befriending Israelis; the way the parents were henceforth going to communicate with their children; the way the children were going to relate to their parents; and the ways the adolescent youth among the immigrants could socialize with the various other ethnic entities in Israel, appeared unsurmountably difficult to those involved. To many an immigrant these were the main causes of their despair and desolation. These became the foundation onto which ever new disappointments were added. And the frequent social missteps and legal errors a newcomer is likely to make, caused them, likewise inevitably, much pain and sorrow.

The only consolation the immigrants can be offered under such circumstances, is to have them share the experience of former immigrants: to have patience and understanding; and to be assured that most all their problems will evaporate after the next generation has grown up and has passed through the melting pot of the Israel Defence Forces.

And indeed ! Notwithstanding all the disappointing times; and notwithstanding all the negative experiences, more or less everyone who arrived in one of the variegated waves of immigrants, has in due course become well integrated; even though each and everyone of them, without exception and inevitably, had to face all the many economical and cultural difficulties.

It can be taken as a fact, that on an average the emigrants who had preferred to leave for the US or Canada, for Germany or Australia instead of coming on aliya to

Israel, have by far not fared as well. In other countries the immigrants are not granted at once a free health insurance. They are not immediately granted citizenship and all the privileges this involves. They are not given financial assistance and sustenance for a year, in the course of which they are supposed to learn the local language; to assimilate to the local conditions; and to find jobs and housing.

All these privileges the new immigrant enjoys in Israel; and this system of absorption appears to have - to some degree at least - shown success in nearly all the cases. Surveys show, that 3-4 years after their arrival the percentage of unemployed among the many hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union is about the same as that among the rest of the population.

It is a sad fact, that lately - as I have already mentioned - a marked change has occurred in the fate experienced by - and in the welcome given to - the plane-loads of new immigrants who regularly arrive in Lod Airport. Unfortunately - as I have already mentioned - these are not changes for the better. They are brought on by mistakes made by both sides, the Israelis and the new immigrants. I could write an entire book about the failings of the Government authorities in the ways they provide for the new Israelis, but shall content myself with citing only a few points.

* It must be conceded, that Israel and the Israelis - this young country of whose inhabitants most all have themselves been immigrants once or are children of immigrants - behave towards the new immigrants in what I cannot avoid calling a callous manner. The newcomers are at best ignored. Only few Israelis volunteer a part of their free time to help a new immigrant over his initial difficulties. There are only few Israelis who have properly befriended a new immigrant. There are only very few Israelis who have adopted a family of immigrants. There are only very few Israelis who are willing to help or guide a newly arrived russian or ethiopian immigrants' navigation through the maze of Israel's bureaucracy. The Olim, in their disappointment and dissatisfaction have lost much of the respect they initially had for Israel and the Israelis.

* The large number of single mothers; as well as the elderly people who, mostly alone and without family, have immigrated from the former Soviet Russia. have been "accommodated" in mostly dilapidated rooms in a dilapidated hotel under the aegis of no less a dilapidated

management. It would have been wiser not to have these old people brought to Israel. It would have been kinder not to have uprooted them. It would have been better to have extended to them social help and financial support wherever they may have been living before.

On the other hand, the Israelis - Government and individuals - are no less disappointed. Those immigrants from Russia, who formerly never had any connection with, nor had any interest in, Judaism before they had been offered the opportunity to come to Israel; who have been labelled non-jewish Jews - especially the intelligentsia among them - show no inclination to get truly integrated into the Israeli society which, in accordance with their apparently highly refined taste, is "too Levantine".

Whether surprisingly or not, one will find in every immigration wave a number of young and older people with such a mentality: that is people who prefer to live in ghettos of their own making; who tend to live separated from the main stream of Israelis; who prefer to go on socializing exclusively among themselves. I think it is indicative of this trend - which is especially strong among the Russian Jews - that there are some 50-60 Russian language newspapers and journals in Israel. Is it then illogical to suppose, that these men and women plan to leave Israel at the opportunity?

I may find few to agree with me when I say that it appears to me logical for an individual in any part of the former Soviet Union, who had little or no contact with either Judaism or Zionism; and who never had any relationship with Israel, to be better off staying home as long as he is not starving; or in case his life is not in danger. If he feels a true affinity awakening in him for his long-forgotten Jewishness, the Zionist Organization might offer him the opportunity to learn about it before coming on aliyah; may even pay for him to visit Israel before making up his mind.

President Weizman is of a different opinion. "The Jewish world", he says, "is in the process of diminishing through assimilation. We must teach the Jews to be Jews ...and bring them to Israel for this purpose. Israel is central. Jewish education must take place here and not in the Diaspora".

Does this apply also to the younger people in the Diaspora, who do not consider themselves Jews, who do not care for Judaism and for whom Zionism has no meaning? They will never fit in with the people

of Israel. They will always be unhappy in Israel. They will easily drift into criminality. Were these very same youths who expect to be coddled and who demand to be pampered in Israel to emigrate, to Germany say or to England, they would not mind to take on those very same lowest menial jobs they deem below their dignity in Israel. Elsewhere - but never in Israel - they are at once forced to stand on their own legs.

These individuals - whose number is relatively not great - should in a first place not have been encouraged to come to Israel. Individuals like these will not help Judaism to survive or Israel to grow. It would be better to leave them where they are; to grant them possibly some form of financial support; and, above all, to provide them in their home places with a Jewish education, if they so wish. Once they know what Judaism represents and what Zionism means, and they still wish to come on aliya, they should be more than welcome. And, surely, then they will feel they have chosen well.

Israel absorbs enormous numbers of immigrants. In the five years ending 1994 some 550 000 immigrants have arrived from the former Soviet Empire alone. They are on an average well educated and "civilized" people. Among them are 13 000 physicians, 14 000 musicians and artists, 25 000 engineers. Of course, in a small country like Israel it is difficult to provide them with jobs in their professions. Alas, this difficulty does not nurse in them a love for Israel. Nor makes it grow in them the interest to become integrated in Israel and with the Israelis.

However, it is a fact that the "Russian aliya" has made a tremendous contribution to Israel's economy, its educational level, its cultural standards and its industrial progress.

The immigrants from the former Soviet Empire, who feel at home, never regret their coming; appreciate the Government's assistance; understand the difficulties the country and its people have to face. More than half of them own their own home after five years. A poll shows that 3% feel well in Israel, although the promises made to them before the 1992 election (they claim that their vote has brought the Labour Party their victory) have been broken. Their main complaint is that only 36% of them are working in their professions. Otherwise it is surprising with what ease they have become adjusted to Israel's politics, political lingo and political manoeuvring.

The moral record of Israel with respect to the Ethiopian immigration is even more dismal. Israel society has failed to integrate the 50 000 strong ethiopian community. The Ethiopian Jews are an ancient, cultured, people whose intelligence, willingness - and Jewishness - would have helped them getting more rapidly still absorbed and integrated, were they treated by the establishment in Israel as they and every feeling and proud Jew would have expected. Instead they are made to feel utterly isolated. They blame their skin colour for the negative attitude they encounter. They feel themselves classified as second-class citizens not only by their israeli neighbours' lack of acceptance, support and sympathy, but also by the manipulations of the Ministry of Education, whose wise pedagogues had issued the order, that the younger ethiopian schoolchildren have to be placed in segregated "absorption classes"; or have to be restricted to classes where the ethiopian children are in the majority. There is substance in the Ethiopians' complaint, that the school authority had given in to the demands of the ashkenazi and sephardi parents who did not want to have their own children to be seated in the same classroom as ethiopian children. But even this might have been a somewhat acceptable arrangement, were this done to mean that the ethiopian children are helped to maintain, develop and cultivate their own culture. But in this school arrangement their religious instruction is as a rule entrusted to non-ethiopian teachers. And many of these teachers are in addition ultra-orthodox ashkenazi Jews who have anything but their own interests in mind. It may sound impressive that a number of ethiopian children have been accommodated in boarding schools; but these are "special" schools and the schoolmates of the ethiopian boarders are mainly israeli problem children.

Most of these strange arrangements were modified or canceled after some time, but not before an irreparable damage had already been done.

Israel has to develop into a multi-cultural society in which not only all the various religious currents but also all the various ethnic strains must find their equally endowed berth. This applies also to the Ethiopian Jews who are a human material which would greatly benefit Israel. The ethiopian diaspora is the only one whose dissolution and transport in toto to Israel had been contemplated and planned - which decision and execution I personally do justify and welcome.

The harmful effects on the ethiopian community of all these uncalled-for arrangements are mostly noticeable in its teen-age youth. The young Ethiopians have been led to distantiate themselves even from

the traditional ancient jewish values of their family background.

They have become rebellious young people. They show a growing tendency to talk about "us and them". They call themselves "Blacks" and not Jews. They prefer to cultivate what they call a non-jewish and non-israeli "black culture"; and they enjoy what they call their "black pride". Some - so far a small number only - have turned to crime, to drugs, to prostitution. They have formed gangs which are fighting each other.

Is it not ironic - and also significant - that the immigrants from Ethiopia continue to this day to observe in Israel the "Sigd Day", which in the past had been one of their most important festive day ? It takes place some time after Yom Kippur and is the day, when the community prays to God for his help to bring the ethiopian Jews to Israel.

Whether we like it or not, we have to concede as not unjustified the majority of immigrants' openly vented complaints - whatever their place of origin - that they are not welcomed by the general population in Israel. It is a fact: the majority of the Israelis does not care to make the new Olim feel welcome. The Olim are not made welcome by the very same Israelis of whom most cannot - or should not - have forgotten the pains and difficulties they had themselves experienced when they came on aliya. Neither can they have forgotten the help and sympathy they had received at that time from the Israelis who were already settled in the country. Instead one hears so often the old-established Israelis tell the newcomers how very little help - no housing nor subsidies - they had received from the governments of their time on coming on aliya.

I do not agree with the social and welfare workers who maintain, that all over the world immigrants are usually treated badly by veteran immigrants, especially in places where there is a marked insufficiency of housing and in times when there is a lack of jobs. Whatever happens elsewhere, things should - according to my way of thinking - be different in Israel, where the relationship is one between Olim and "Vatikim". That is to say, when an Oleh is a new member joining the family.

But it seems to me, that very few Israelis think likewise.

No only the Ethiopians feel badly treated; feel neglected; feel

humiliated. One hears complaints from most all the Olim, not only from the "Russians". The latter's complaints are even more numerous. They complain that the housing provided is insufficient; that their highly skilled professionals waste their time in menial jobs; that many of the women among them are financially exploited and sexually harassed in their working places; that their children suffer abuse by their schoolmates.

And, in addition, the - what I feel justified to call callous - attitude of the Israeli government and public towards all the new immigrants makes the complaints of today's immigrants the more worrisome and depressing.

The Israelis of today do not mind how the immigrants fare. They do not feel involved. They are not ashamed, that their street sweeper is a Russian professor; that their house-help is a Russian teacher; that the low-grade factory worker is a qualified Russian engineer. Rightly the often highly experienced scientists from the former Soviet Russia are disappointed, that they do not find the right employment. They complain that their knowledge, their experience and their specific capabilities are neither appreciated nor used. They accuse the tenured, well established Israeli scientists of finding ever new ways to block their employment; and to prevent Government from granting them a continuation of their subsidized appointment.

Abundant material is readily available which justifies the immigrants' complaints. I can mention only a few of them: the Russian immigrant Ida Nudel - a "Refusenik", who had not so long ago arrived in Israel; who had been welcomed as a heroine - is today a deeply disappointed woman. "Many Russian women tell me", she complained to a reporter, "that whenever they apply for a job, their potential employer first wants to sleep with them; that women have to go to bed with their landlords, as they would otherwise be evicted; that many of the women cannot refuse sexual demands from their employer or landlord, because they are single and have children to feed....." For good measure Ida Nudel tells also of the case, where a Jewish man takes a twelve years old Russian girl into his bed and pays her a dollar.....

No wonder, Ida Nudel and the women she mentioned are disappointed. No wonder they and their families will never turn into the kind of enthusiastic Israelis this country will need in future still more than even today. They had expected to find in the homeland of the Torah a different behaviour from the supposed custodians of Judaism's ethical

laws.

The list of complaints one hears from immigrants of the former Soviet Union, is therewith by far not not exhausted. Like the Jews from Ethiopia they are dissatisfied with the Ministry of Education and its ways, plans and systems. They complain, that the children of new immigrants are placed straight away into regular classrooms with israel-born students, where they can impossibly understand what is going on. They complain, that students who had in Russia been at the head of their classes in mathematics, physics and biology, fail in Israel to pass examinations in these disciplines. Why ? Because they do not understand hebrew; and because in consequence they are ignored by teachers and co-students alike. Is it a wonder, we are asked, that these young boys and girls lose all interest in learning ? And in the country ?

There are 20 000 teachers among the russian immigrants; of these only 1200 have found employment. Were more of them integrated into the school system, these discrepancies could be avoided.

Is it, therefore, to be wondered I ask again, that so many of the Jews from the former Soviet Union are disappointed ? That they have lost all respect for Israel and the Israelis ? That they emigrate again no sooner they have the chance to do so ? It is to Israel's shame, I think, that these emigrants, who have arrived in Israel under the Law of Return; who in an impressive ceremony had been handed their first israeli passport; who had been so greatly moved when they received their israeli citizenship, are allowed to immigrate into Canada under the classification label of "persecuted refugees from a racist country"!

Of course, Israel's Authorities know all this. And we can rightly suppose that they do feel ashamed. Of course, Israel's Jews are deeply affected and hurt by what they hear and read. Of course, Israelis and their government in turn cannot wait to bring forth their own protests; and to express their own concern. And, of course, they refuse to accept any blame.

They point to the report of the Ministry of Absorption which shows, that 30% of the russian immigrants have found employment in their own specialties. They point out, that 50% have been given permanent housing. They point also out, that a majority of the immigrants has already fitted individually and professionally into Israel's society; and that many

of the new immigrants have already made great contributions to Israel's economy.

And, in addition, the Authorities in Israel do not fail to produce their own list of complaints. They complain, that 33% of the immigrant youth do not want to serve in army; that 33% would like to leave again; that 50% are over-all dissatisfied with, and disrespectful of, what goes on in Israel.

The Authorities complain furthermore, that there is a large degree of criminality among the "russian immigrants"; that they have imported into Israel a mafia-style underground; that a number of these criminals had already been members of the "russian criminal underground" before they had immigrated to Israel; that it is most of all the russian youth's engagement in prostitution and violence which alienates them from their environment.

The Authorities complain, that many of the russian youths are drug addicts and alcoholics; that a majority of them had already been addicted to these vices before they came to Israel; that in many towns american-style gangs of russian teenagers and young adults have formed; that these gangs are dealing in drugs; that the gangs fight each other; that the gangs gang up especially against ethiopian immigrants.

However, after intensive investigations social researchers have found these complaints and accusations to be baseless. They presented it as a statistically proven fact, that among the 550 000 plus russian immigrants the percentage of the above cited or similar derelicts is far less than in Israel's veteran population.

The Authorities would be wise to search for an explanation of the unhappiness of the immigrants about the Israelis' behaviour towards them; and for the causes of the Israelis' alienation from the recent waves of immigrants, in the deep and growing social differences which exist today between Israelis and Immigrants. They differ in most all aspects; not only in the way a israeli neighbourhood looks different from the one lived in by new immigrants.

Who is to be blamed ?

I have gained the impression, that the Government Ministries involved in the absorption of new immigrants; and that the Government institutions charged with the welfare of the immigrants, do the best

they can; but that the population of Israel; that the Israeli living next door to the immigrant; that the Israeli schoolboy sitting in the same classroom as the immigrant child; that the colleague sitting at the desk next to that of the immigrant, have to be blamed for not caring enough; for not wanting to be involved with the immigrants; for being so often even actively hostile.

Also the religious circles, whose interest is mostly restricted to the "return of all Russian immigrants to Judaism"; and who refuse to acknowledge the Ethiopian Jews as Jews, have much reason to be disappointed.

They have given much care and attention particularly to the Olim from Russia. They have made every effort to awaken in these immigrants interest in what is the value and the meaning of Judaism. They have invited the Olim to Shabbath meals at their Orthodox tables to give them a practical demonstration of what Jewishness has to offer. But, the Haredim had to discover, ninety percent of all the immigrants do not care for Judaism; are disinterested in Jewishness.

These and similar experiences have made the responsible religious circles reach the conclusion, that their approach to the Russian - possibly also to the Ethiopian - immigrants has been "too intellectual"; that is to say, that the immigrants have been made to listen to far too many lectures in history and politics, while no effort has been made to turn them into proper Jews; to introduce them to basic Jewish traditions; to teach them the fundamentals of Jewish ethics.

It seems to me, however, that the failure of the Haredim, who have so eagerly "taken the immigrants in hand", is to a very great extent due to the attempts of their teachers not only to provide these newcomers with knowledge tailored to a strictly Orthodox point of view, but mainly to their strenuous, undisguised efforts, to indoctrinate their pupils with their own anti-Zionist ideology.

It appears that these problems with the "Russian Jews" will soon be less acute. With the Jews still in Ethiopia the kind of problems other diaspora units have, do not exist. Whether the Jews still in the former Soviet Union and the Baltic States are a priori disinterested in making Aliya; or whether they are refrained from taking this step

by the unfavourable reports reaching them from Israel about the absorption process, the majority of these Jews appear to have given up any intention they may once upon a time have had of returning to Judaism and of coming to Israel. The Jews in Russia and its successor states are not in physical danger today. Those who are still interested in aliya will come, no sooner the absorption process awaiting them in Israel will have turned more promising.

We have to cope somehow with the fact, that a far greater majority of these Diaspora Jews in Eastern Europe are instead getting - at an alarming speed in addition - assimilated into their actual environment. The already frightening rate of inter-marriages among the Jews still in the post-soviet lands is accelerating. It is nowadays greater there than elsewhere in the Diaspora.

It is painful to learn of this; but it should not be taken as more than another step in the tragic history of Russian Jewry; as another indication of its slide into a progressing disappearance. It had in any case always been wrong to count - at least as much as has been done so far - on the Russian immigration or the Russian diaspora as a large reservoir of potential Olim; to see in them an important element in the continued existence of Judaism; to evaluate them as a clog in Judaism's future; to rely on them as potential contributors to Judaism's survival. And if this had been the case until recently, it is not so anymore. It had possibly never been so, and things have not changed. For it is relatively rare to find a Russian immigrant who has come to Israel to fulfill the "Zionist Dream".

Fortunately, such kind of painful conclusions; and such kind of painful experiences have not induced the Jewish leadership of Israel and of the Diaspora to turn indifferent to the negative developments, which are going on in the fate and survival of the Jews in the former Soviet Union and the Baltic States. They have not given up their efforts to save these Jewish communities from extinction.

Notwithstanding what I have said in the previous paragraph, the Jews still living in the former Soviet Empire are now, and will for a long time be, the main - if not the only - source left from which the population of Israel can be replenished. For this purpose one cannot count on any of the other foci of Jews in the Diaspora. There is little hope that - given the actual circumstances - great numbers of Olim will come from the US or other western

countries.

Of all this - of the immense importance of the more than a million Jews in those parts of the world for the survival of Judaism - the Jewish leadership is well aware. And it knows, that it is most important to keep the consciousness of their Jewishness alive in these Diaspora Jews. For it would be of immense value, were even only a small fraction of these Jews saved for the Jewish People. Israel cannot exist without immigrants.

But, on the other hand, Israel will have to take strict precautions against the threatened mass immigration of the huge numbers of aspirants from the Third World, who have learned of the Law of Return; who think, that by claiming to be descendants of one or the other of the "Ten Lost Tribes", they can escape from a life of utter poverty and misery in the countries in which they live at the moment. It is said, that some 15 million people in Pakistan, India, Kashmir, Burmah, the Philippines etc. claim they are children of the Tribe of Menashe. People in South America claim to be Bnei Moshe. There is even talk, that another 300 million Indians are about to raise such claims. These aliya-aspirants in exotic lands are not Jews according to Halacha, but they could be turned into Jews by an act of conversion. And this seems to have awakened the interest and sponsorship of a number of "idealistic" rabbis. Some 150 of the Indians from Assam, claiming descent from the tribe of Menashe - and mentioning data or exhibiting customs they must have learned once upon a time from Christian Missionaries - have indeed already found sponsors in some fanatic rabbis; and have succeeded to come to Israel. Here they have "for safety's sake" been properly converted by their sponsoring rabbis. And these rabbis salivate now afresh at the prospect to bring in many more of this kind of people. A cynic may say, that the promise of the psalms is coming true: that the peoples of the world are joining us to come to Jerusalem..... Does this mean that the Messiah will soon arrive too ?

Israel has always welcomed converts, but such a massive addition to the Jewish gene pool would turn out to be a disaster. These certainly unentitled claimants have not the positive significance of the converts of diverse ethnicities who have been regularly and slowly added to the Jewish people at all times - in the antique to this day - and who have mostly shown a positive attitude to the Jewish religion; and whose conversion rate did and can also now compensate for the fall in births and loss

by conversion.

I feel myself obliged, in the frame of the questions I have raised in the beginning of the chapter, to come to a conclusion regarding the significance of a sustained aliya - whether without selection and sifting or not - for the benefit, or even the survival, of Israel.

I do not want to enter again into an argument, whether the families immigrated from Ethiopia or the former soviet lands' CIS - often made up of ten or more members - who by conversion, or due to indifference, have nothing in common with Judaism; who do not identify with Judaism or Israel; who saw in their aliya only an opportunity to improve their economic situation, should continue to be counted as Jews; are of benefit to Judaism; do in any way contribute to Israel's survival. But I intend to take issue with the proponents of the extended zionist dream, which wants all the Jews living still abroad, to come to Israel; which wants entire jewish communities - even if they are well established in their host countries - to leave everything and to come to Israel. In plain words: I am going to argue with those who want the Diaspora to be abolished.

Should the Diaspora really be abolished ?

It is my considered opinion, that it would cause great damage to the jewish people, were the Jewish Diaspora abolished; that it would be wrong not only to interfere with the Jews' cosmopolitan character, but also to empty the reserve pool which would guaranty Judaism's survival. Diaspora Jewry should be a fall-back whenever Israel is in danger. We need the Jews living abroad also to represent jewish interests abroad - and no less also of those of Israel.

But it is incumbent on the jewish leadership to make sure that Diaspora Jewry is fit to take on this task; that it is suited to play its role. Israel can actively contribute to the enhancement of jewish education in the diaspora communities, not only to raise the level of their jewish knowledge, but also to deepen their sense of Jewishness. Furthermore, Israel should help and support the jewish communities in the Diaspora, so that they can become reserve depositories of that jewish knowledge and tradition which have been collected and accumulated in Israel; and so that they will at the same remain also treasure houses

for the culture grown in the Diaspora over the decades and centuries.

Ancient jewish diaspora culture has mostly vanished. Although a number of Jews live again in Germany and Poland - and their number may increase further still - they have no association with, nor are they the heirs of, the cultural values which the jewish communities had once developed in these countries. Alas ! These centuries old communities and their high cultural level have disappeared for ever. They will never rise again. They will become past history like the communities of Babylonia. They will become awe-inspiring memories like the communities in the "Spain of the Golden Age". Nothing will be left of them, as nothing is left of the jewish communities of Yemen, of India, of North Africa which have disappeared forever.

Yes ! We must face realities and leave off dreaming. We must be aware of the importance Israel has now as the depository, as the guardian, as the curator of jewish culture and tradition. We have to live with the fact, that the centuries' old centres of jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe are now history and will never be revived again. The same applies to those empty shells left in India, Iran, Iraq. And now also the jewish community of Syria, which has existed since 3000 years, has been finally closed down.

It may come to pass, that within one or two generations only two major jewish communities will exist, those in Israel and in the US. It is of vital importance that they inter-act. They have to support and nourish each other. Both should be strengthened and maintained, so that one of them will survive and assure the continuation of the Jewish People. It cannot be otherwise - else there would not be any sense in what was and is. In other words: there is no other explanation for Jewry's passage through, and place in, history.

I will repeat again: we should not think of preaching, or even demanding, the dissolution of the Diaspora communities. We have instead to strengthen the Jewishness of the Diaspora Jews. We must send them teachers, rabbis, instructors to maintain the knowledge of jewish history, tradition and culture among the jewish communities abroad. We must not give them the impression that we do not care about them; that we have abandoned them. We must invite every year a few hundred or even thousands of young Jews from the Diaspora to spend a few months, possible a year in Israel - not to induce them to come on aliya, but to have them drink from the source of Jewishness - so that we can send

them back home with a deepened knowledge of their roots and a fuller awareness of their jewish heritage.

We should take these young people to the Yad Vashem not only to teach them what happened to the Jews when there was no Israel and Jews were helpless victims in hostile countries, but to implant into their hearts and minds the feeling of pride, that their people has with its own hands and arms, with its own strength and willpower built up Israel, because it had been divinely preserved and guided so far.

10.

How great is the danger of islamic extremism ?

Against all expectations the Jews have succeeded in rebuilding their 3000 years' old home. In face of the most insurmountable appearing difficulties they have established their reborn state on the land on which their forefathers had reigned, ruled and lived until 2000 years ago. That God has promised the Jews the Land of Israel is the motiv not only of religious Zionism; is not only the firm belief of large sectors of Christianity; but is also accepted by large numbers of secular Zionists.

Against the advice of many of their most ardent followers, the early Zionists have recreated their home on the very land, where Judaism had flourished for over a thousand years. And they did not listen to the objections and warnings of economists and politicians, of theologians and historians, but went ahead with the rebuilding of their Homeland.

They did not even listen to Albert Einstein - a well-wisher and at the time the man admired as the greatest genius of his time - who gave it as his well weighed and considered opinion, that "the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a jewish state with borders" and that nationalism will "...cause severe inner damage to Judaism".

That Zionism's dream to create a modern, pluralistic, unified society still remains a dream; and that strong oppositional currents - not only made up of religious differences but also of politicised disputes about humanitarian values and military activities - are still facts of life in Israel, should not be cause of despair, and not even of criticism, but should be accepted as evidence of a strongly pulsating intellectual, spiritual and political life in Israel.

No nation or people can look back on an equal, or even on an only approximately similar, background. Also in this respect is Israel a unique phenom in mankind's history. Yes, it is true that after the last war quite a number of nations in Asia, Europe and Africa have regained their independence; and that others have reconstructed their devastated nationhood, but without exception none of these nations had

until then ever had to live outside the borders of the country in which they were at last resurrected. Neither had any of these peoples had to build up their country from scratch. Nor has any people had to renew its nationhood against such heavy odds.

All this the moslem countries refuse to acknowledge; and far more for commercial than ideological reasons large parts of the non-moslem world take their stand at the Moslems' side. Most christian churches, led by the Vatican, keep them faithful company.

This has been never more marked than on the occasion of Jerusalem's 3000 years' jubilee. Arafat's Administration came out with the undiplomatically worded protest, that "the alleged celebrations represent an unprecedented robbery for the whole world to see...Israel is not entitled to nominate itself as the only inheritor of thousands of years of varied cultures and religions.....Arabs have lived uninterruptedly for 3000 years in Jerusalem...."

There may not always be absolute truth in the way history is presented and reported, but there is an absolute way to discover discernible falsehoods. In this case Arafat must certainly know that he is not telling the truth. For he must have learned from the people he has appointed as custodians of the Temple Mount that they regularly find - and as regularly destroy - much archaeological evidence of a jewish past.

Allright ! Even if the Moslems make all these and other efforts to hide the true facts, at least the world at large should acknowledge Jewry's inalienable rights to Jerusalem and Israel alike. But again - and may I say as expected ? - the countries of the European Union use the opportunity to blame Israel by siding with the Moslems. Even the US "expressed reservations". The Vatican at first did support Arafat's protest against the jubilee festivals; but found it wiser to recognize the truth in view of its own forthcoming remembrance of Jesus' birth some 2000-years ago.!

The moslem was officially approached to participate and provide its own share; but it refused because it suspects the Festivals' political character, though it was provided with all proof that nothing done was political. And in any case, next to the ubiquitously found "Khatam Suleyman", the Seal of Solomon, there would hardly be any islamic symbolism specific for Jerusalem to be exposed. Even the European Union's objections were unjustified: Christianity was well represented in the Jubilee's program. For instance the Jubilee Year started with the performance in situ of "Jesus on the Mount of Olives" and with a 1000-voice choir from Holland "making a joyful noise to the

Lord".

The People of Israel which has returned to its homeland, is very different from the one which some nearly 2000 years ago had been forced into a diaspora existence. Except for the existential problems which may be similar, it is in every aspect a totally different country with a totally different people. And it is a country and people with totally different neighbours. That is to say, not only modern Israel's internal environment has changed, but also all the nations she has as neighbours have changed. What should have been an advantage - i.e. the fact that today's Israel is planted in a world made up of arab states, moslem nations and semitic peoples - has instead turned into a negative asset.

These states, nations and peoples consider Israel an unwelcome guest, a disturbing intruder. It is totally inconceivable to Moslems to have a non-moslem state in their midst; and in particular, to have to live alongside an independant jewish state. They do not miss an occasion, nor do they omit an effort, to remedy what they refuse to accept. They use every means they can think of - and among these terror, war and boycott predominate - to drive Israel from what the Arabs claim is their land.

Although the Rabin Government - in its drive to achieve peace - had offered a compromise by calling Judaea and Samaria not occupied territories nor liberated territories but "administered territories; and although Peres had made his contribution by calling the Golan Heights "Syrian Heights", this has not pacified the Moslems nor reverberated among the Jews. The Palestinians have persuaded the western world that the "settlements" on former arab lands are illegal. And whenever large numbers of new immigrants arrive in Israel, the Arabs fear that they will be settled in these settlements; and that these lands will be lost for ever to the Arabs.

In some way they are justified, for at the onset of the large immigration wave of Soviet Jews in 1990 Shamir, the then Prime Minister, declared that the "territories" could never be given back as they are needed for these immigrants.

However, the settlements on lands beyond the "green line" are perfectly legal. They do not violate any Geneva Convention. Nobody would call Natanya an illegal settlement as it is done with Kaduma, as both were erected on conquered land; the one in 1948 the other in 1967. Neither part of territory was allotted to Israel by the UN. The "West Bank", that is Judaea and Samaria, was not taken from Jordan as it never did belong to Jordan. When the Ottoman Empire was defeated at the end of WWI no Jordan existed yet; and the land belonged to the Jews for whom it had been designed in the British Mandate.

And by the way: Alsace-Lorraine is never mentioned as disputed land in the UN or anywhere else, though France had taken it from Germany after the last war.

Another favoured complaint of the Palestinians - and which never fails to appear in books and articles about Israel; and which is always heard in the anti-Israel addresses in the UN - is that Israel has done nothing to improve their living conditions. Until recently these sets of complaints were concentrated on the conditions in East Jerusalem, and I am not going to repeat what I said in this context on some previous occasion. Today the Palestinians complain to foreign visitors and in foreign capitals, that Israel has done nothing to improve the living conditions in Gaza. But they omit to say that Israel could not complete the housing projects there because the PLO had threatened to kill all those of its people who dared to accept permanent housing from Israel and would thus forfeit their refugee status. Nor are the foreigners told, that curfew had to be imposed in Gaza so that the workers could lay down water pipes without being stoned by PLO and Hamas "militants". Nor is the world told that under israeli rule life expectancy among the Palestinians rose by 20 years; that infant mortality was reduced from 86 per 1000 live births in 1968 to 26 per 1000 in 1990 (while in Egypt it is 87, in Iraq 70 and in Jordan 45).

I have repeatedly stated my opinion, that the Jews of Israel are at fault for having failed to befriend, to accommodate, to absorb, to pacify the Arabs of Israel. The two peoples quite evidently do not speak the same language. They differ in their conception of Israel-Arab coe-existence. Their politicians speak in political terms; the military elements involved in the peace process see it in tactical terms. The Jews are mostly secular people who see the matter in a non-religious light; while their arab opposites see the matter in a total opposite way and speak in terms of a Jihad. The Jews present a nation, the Arabs a religion. Even if the leading Palestinians were secularist Moslems, they would never dare to indicate or act as if there exists a non-islamic way to solve the issues between Jews and Arabs.

The actual state of mutual estrangement between Jews and Arabs has to be accepted as a fact of life which can hardly be expected to change for the next generation or two. Israel sees in its Arabs a distrusted and potentially dangerous minority. If responsibility has to be assigned for this situation, it will be difficult to decide who is more at fault. Certainly the breast beatings of Israel's "leftist movements" and "new historians" are totally unjustified.

The way to fully accept the arab minority into the population of Israel would have been to incorporate them into the army. This has

always proved effective with new immigrants; but it was impossible from the beginning in the case of the Palestinians, as these would never have agreed to fight other Arabs. Nor could this have been expected from them. And Israelis would never have felt comfortable if not unsafe with Arabs in their army. The Palestinians will be the first to agree that under the best of condition they would not be trustworthy as soldiers and also not in certain sensitive ministries and industries.

There is not a Jew in Israel and in the Diaspora who does not wish and hope, that peace will sooner than later be established between Israel and its neighbours. No Israeli government has ever missed an occasion to express its fervid wish for peace. Ben Gurion said that for the sake of peace Israel should give back all conquered territories, except for Jerusalem. Later on he added Hebron. After the victorious war of 1967 the Government offered to return the conquered lands but was refused with the "Three Noes of Khartoum".

All through modern Israel's history more or less everyone of Israel's governments has declared its willingness to make wide-ranging concessions for the sake of peace. Indeed, a series of peace processes have since some time been under way; and Israel has already signed some peace treaties - with the fanfare and pomp the parties and their sponsors appear to consider indispensable for such occasions - with some of the Arab states. But it would mean inviting inevitable disaster, were Israel to have any illusion about the other side's sincerity; were Israel to believe in the agreements' durability; and were Israel not to keep up its preparations for every eventuality.

Even the majority of Israel's own Arabs has not accepted Israel's right to exist. A recent poll showed that 63% of the Arab residents of Jerusalem prefer war to have Israel continue to "occupy" the eastern part of the city. And were the Israeli Arabs and the Palestinians of Jerusalem to help overcome the mistrust between the two nations and accept a peaceful co-existence with Israel, they would fall between the chairs as they would be accused of - and be condemned as - Israel's collaborators.

Yaacov Herzog wrote already some 30 years ago, that "an Arab-Jewish peace does not depend on our making concessions to thembut on their understanding the unique quality of the Jewish People and its separate path".

But in the main it had been economic considerations, American persistence and the fear of the rapidly growing fundamentalist Islamic movement in their own countries

- and not a genuine desire for peace - which have brought mainly Egypt and Jordan, but also and some other islamic states in the Middle East, to the conference table for face to face talks with Israel.

Neither should anybody have the illusion, that any arab or islamic state, or even any individual Moslem, will ever be truly resigned to Israel's existence; and that not all of them are readying themselves for the opportune moment to take up arms against Israel. And should I be wrong; and should the actual arab rulers honour their signatures, the scenario will more than likely evolve one day, when the new rulers who take over; or when new regimes which will emerge - those who will inevitably sooner or later replace the dictatorial ones actually in power in the arab countries that have signed a peace treaties with Israel - will not feel anymore bound by the pacts made and the treaties signed by their predecessors.

Unfavourable prognostications of this kind, and all they imply, place a great responsibility - and no less also an enormous financial strain - on Israel. They force - or at least should force - its leaders never to give in to illusions. They demand - or at least should demand - from Israel's leaders and their advisers, that they carefully weigh any ongoing change in the political atmosphere in the countries around them; that they strive to gain an insight into the character of their counter-players; that they seek to comprehend the religious sensibilities and the national ambitions of the leaders and the inhabitants of the neighbouring arab countries; that they never overlook the sensibilities and aspirations of Israel's own moslem citizens.

These may be called simplicistic rules, primary demands for every country and the basic precautions of every government, especially in the Middle East; but - this has to be stated with regret - except for those who originate from one of the arab countries, very few of Israel's leaders understand and speak arabic; and the number of such experts gets less year by year. Nor are to all appearances even the officials of Israel's Foreign Service sufficiently versed in the specifics of Islam.

We Jews are infidels in the eyes of the Moslem. And according to Islam's theology, and under the rules which guide moslem society, infidels occupy a low social status. Jews should never even think of overstepping the limits drawn for them by islamic law. This kind of negative, religion-born, tradition-based and politics-upgraded attitude toward the State of Israel is a vital ingredient in the make-up of all Moslems today, wherever in the world they prostrate themselves before

Allah. Their unflexible attitude towards the Jewish State is rigidified still more by their perception of Israel and its Jews as foreign bodies within the arab world. It is inconceivable to a moslem believer - especially if he belongs to the species of Fundamentalists - that a nation of infidels should rule over Moslems; should live in Palestine, the country the Arabs claim their own; and should in addition occupy Jerusalem which Islam has very recently crowned its own holy city.

As I have repeatedly pointed out, it is this latter claim - the ownership of Jerusalem - in particular, which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for Israel and the Israelis to develop, if not kindly and brotherly feelings at least that degree of acceptance, which makes collaboration and co-existence possible. For Jerusalem is to both the peoples an object of very great sensitivity. The Moslem is not yet ready to concede Jerusalem to the Jew as his political capital, while the Jew is ready and willing to concede to him and the Christian that they have a spiritual home in Jerusalem.

But still and finally Jerusalem, 75% jewish and 25% arabic, will be the crucible in which the chances, effectiveness and viability of arab-israeli and in particular moslem-jewish co-existence will be tested. It becomes more and more clear, that here the "facts on the ground" - an expression the moslem leaders love to use - will in the near future favour the Palestinians; for in metropolitan Jerusalem, by their greater fertility rate and their ensuing larger families, Arab will in all likelihood within a generation outnumber the Jews. The Arabs ready themselves for this demographic event: without a care for zoning rules and other laws, entire new arab villages continue to be created wherever possible in the areas surrounding Jerusalem.

The number of non-jewish religions in Israel - and their subdivision into various denominations - is staggering. Not a single of them harbours love or sympathy for the others. Not rarely does their hostility degenerate into physical attacks. But from my personal experience I can say that under israeli rule the excesses have become less. But it is still a miracle, that the overall number of homicides and the level of hemlock among the members of the various communities are - relatively speaking - so small. The Authorities know quite well, that the peace which reigns among the moslem and christian religious groups is a state of armistice and nothing more. This is most likely so, because the size of the various groups, and the outside support the different parties receive, are well balanced.

One might have thought, that once such a favourable situation had come about in the course of the last few years, a somewhat more satisfactory degree of peaceful collaboration would have henceforth have become perpetuated. But this has so far not been the case. The only thing which keeps the various religious denomination in a peaceful state is the only thing they have in common: their negative attitude to Jews and Israel; their anti-israeli policies and activities; their favourable and welcoming attitudes to palestinian nationalism. Otherwise there is no coexistence; no inter-denominational peace; no civilized collaboration; no tolerance, among the various religious moslem and christian groups and sects. None of them in particular can be faulted; the fault has to be shared by all.

It will severely test the limits also of the Jews' tolerance to create an acceptable state of coexistence, collaboration and peace with the Arabs. It will test the strength of their ethical controls. It will relentlessly test their moral fiber. And - let us have no illusions - the positive and enduring outcome of these tests may well be the recipe for Israel's survival.

These same will be no less also severe tests for Islam and its followers. I will go further and say, these may be for them even more severe tests than for the Jews. Because the Moslems would have to make greater greater adjustments; would have to agree to a fundamental change in their ideology. But, alas, for a Moslem it is a near impossibility to make compromises on the differences and disputes of the kind I have mentioned. Islam knows only an either/or. Islam does not permit polemics. Islam will never make concessions. Islam demands, that man be morally perfect. And above all that man has to have unlimited belief in what is said, decreed and done in the name of Allah. To doubt Allah; to have scruples about Allah; or to enter into a dispute about Allah, is a sin of utmost gravity. A sinner who commits such a sin is accordingly judged by his peers. And usually he is condemned to death. And so are the man or woman, who for whatever reason converts to another religion. They endanger their lives.

There is no moslem Emerson to say "...what is man born for but to be a reformer". Whoever wants to introduce reforms; whoever proposes only a minor change; whoever attempts to propose even a minor form of secularization, is called a heretic and is in danger of being eliminated.

This does not apply to the many sects and sub-divisions in Islam which have sprung up. Unlike the Catholic Church,

which declares any deviation from the established belief a grave sin, Moslems have a certain latitude in their approach to Islam, as long as they believe in Allah as the true God; in Muhammad as the true Prophet; in the Qu'ran as the God-given absolute truth. And as long as their private beliefs do not represent a threat to social or political or religious determinations.

And whereas the Arabs' demands on Israel arise on an originally religious base; and whereas any true concessions would contradict religious determinations; and whereas any substantial concession whatsoever to the Jews can and will be considered heretical, I cannot see how a compromise - and therewith a true peace - can ever be possible.

Least of all can any compromise whatsoever ever be demanded or expected from the Islamic Fundamentalists, who grow stronger day by day; who acquire ever more followers; who penetrate ever more countries.

Through their excellent social work; with their free medical clinics; by the financial support they provide to the families of those who have died in the fight against Israel; and above all by their promise of a new, free, rich, powerful islamic future, the moslem fundamentalists have succeeded in gaining an ever growing influence in the islamic world; and very much so among the youth inside Israel and in all the countries in its neighbourhood.

But this extremism is by no means a recent institution; and neither is it an exclusively Israel-affecting phenomenon. Since more than twenty years have the maulvis, the islamic clerics, of Lebanon set out to attract and organize - with the promise of Allah's unlimited bounty - the socially and economically more underprivileged Shi'ites in their country. Since many years - from the moment they seized power - have the Ayatollahs of Iran not only organized a wave of terrorism all over the world, they have also been preaching revolt within certain other moslem countries. These Fundamentalists have become a threat not only to Jews and Moslems, but also to the proper functioning of human society at large, and to democracy itself. But none of the promises - dealt out so generously by the islamic revolutionaries - have anywhere come true. Nor have the social conditions of their own peoples - and in particular of their followers - anywhere shown even the slightest improvement.

Hamas - most likely the best organized among the various extremist movements - owes most of its power, strength and influence to the growing unemployment in the under-developed moslem countries; and to the decline in the living standards in the arab countries under the heel of corrupt dictatorships.

This phenomenon is more than ever blatant in Israel. Uninfluenced by whatever the Israelis and the Palestinians may bring forth in the aftermath of the "peace processes" they have been incubating, Hamas and Jihad, the other extremist group, have become uncontrollable forces inside the refugee camps, in Gaza and in many parts of the West Bank, where a majority of the Palestinians live in squalor, and will continue to live thus for a long time to come.

Although Hamas is labeled a movement of religious fundamentalists; and although it is led by Moslem clerics; and although it fights in the name of Islam; and although they assure themselves and others of acting in the name of Allah; and although every terrorist dies with a copy of the Qu'ran in his hand, Hamas has to be judged less a religious and more a revolutionary movement. It does not care very much about the basic teachings of Islam. It does not care about the ethical values preached in the Qu'ran. It does not show the respect for human life which is taught in Islam. Hamas' leaders look for power. And most of all they care for their own personal power. And, of course - last but not least - they aspire to, and fight for, the destruction of Israel.

In the '80s Hamas formed a viable socio-political force in the territories. It could build up a formidable structure - based on an expansive network of religious, educational and welfare institutions - undisturbed by the Israeli authorities which had hoped to use the Hamas against the militant PLO which enjoyed a greater popular appeal. At the time of the Madrid Conference of 1991, and more so with the beginning of the Oslo discussions in 1993, Hamas changed into a military and terrorist organization, directing its activities against Israel with the intention to disrupt whatever Israel-PLO agreements.

Hamas terror is different from that of the more organized PLO-Intifada terror. Hamas copied the methods of the Hizbullah of Lebanon. Suicide bombers became the "fashion". It was difficult to eradicate Hamas, as its compartmentalized organization was in the hands of very motivated religious fanatics. The fight against the ultra-religious fundamentalist ideology of Hamas has to be by an international effort. Hamas is widely dispersed. It has an office in Amman-Jordan. Some of its leaders live in Damascus-Syria, in Europe, in North America and in Latin America.

The Hamas terrorists represent, no doubt, a danger for Israel. But not a grave and unsurmountable danger. It can be taken for granted, that they cannot and will not achieve their cherished goal: that is the destruction of Israel. The Hamas danger can be contained. And it is indeed being contained.

The real danger is with the Israelis themselves. If they do not succeed in building up in themselves that fortitude which a full and sincere trust in their fate conveys; and which the honest belief in their destiny demands, they can impossibly identify with the principles from which their right to their homeland derives; which grant Israel the right to exist. They will not be imbued with that strength and that courage which alone will make them overcome all outer enemies and inner adversities. And Israel will lose its most significant strength: its unique manpower. For those who have not developed the necessary strength and courage, will not and cannot find a secure haven and a blessed home in Israel. They will look for an alternative; and will sooner or later join those who emigrate in the expectation of a better and safer future in the Diaspora.

Islamic Fundamentalists, as I said before, are steadily gaining in influence all over the moslem world. Understandably, they are not welcome everywhere. Or possibly anywhere. The more moderate countries are terrified of this growing fundamentalist anti-western trend in Islam. Sociologists try to explain the extremist-fundamentalist phenomen as a reaction of the masses against the oppression and suffering, against the corruption and repression to which they are exposed at the hand of their own autocratic, undemocratic rulers. Their anti-Israel policy and slogans are a useful flag under which they can march, shout and kill.

An additional cause of the ongoing fermentation in the moslem world is - and in the past has always been - its deep division by sectarian schisms. This phenomen is compounded by the poverty which affects most of the islamic countries. It is the often abysmal poverty of many moslem countries which makes them the proper recruiting grounds for the extremist teaching of the Fundamentalists. In their search for a formula to explain the poverty and backwardness they are facing, the under-privileged Moslems will not point to their corrupt rulers - who, they are taught, govern over them by Allah's will and consent - but will accuse, not without some justification, the humiliating and oppressing colonial rulers, who for decades - some even centuries - have kept them from developing a sound economy; and who, above all, have never cared for them to receive a modern education.

Without exception - and certainly and absolutely with justification - the billion Moslems in today's world are striving to advance culturally

and economically. They too want to enjoy the benefits modern progress has to offer. But the Fundamentalists do not agree with this. Their ideology condemns everything modern. They endeavour to prevent all attempts to introduce what progress provides. Though the Fundamentalists are a minority everywhere, they succeed in making the moslem countries adhere to a common - as pure and fraternal proclaimed - political program by exerting their considerable power over the masses; by using brutal force when necessary; by always religiously following up their threats; and by spreading mayhem whenever indicated.

Considering that the populace in nearly all moslem countries is deeply affected by the political and economical turmoil it has to face; considering that it cannot see any hope nor opportunity to improve its living conditions, these masses provide the fertile ground in which fundamentalist extremism can thrive. Whenever they cannot find a hostile country to absorb their fermenting energies; or there is not a foreign ideology which they can concentrate their attacks, religious extremists are forced to select a target among the doctrinally different currents within their own midst.

A number of countries, which have to face such problems and such a state of affairs, have already known civil strife and fraternal war.

With the above I wanted to point out, that Israel is not the only enemy target of the Moslem Fundamentalists. The latter's extremism has since years been a dominant factor in Iran, Lybia and Sudan. It is getting stronger in Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. It has now invaded also Bahrein and Saudi Arabia.

The Fundamentalists' power can only be broken, if there is peace within the arab countries and among the moslem countries. And no less also, if there is a true peace between all the moslem countries and Israel. This may not be too much of an utopian dream. Contrary to what I have opined a short while ago, real peace - first at least an armistice-like and generally accepted state of some kind of peaceful coexistence - may, and only can, come about when all the arab and other moslem countries achieve a sufficient degree of economic success; when the indoctrination these peoples actually get, is replaced by an honest identification with the tennets of democracy; and when the rulers will at last be able to satisfy the even most elementary expectations of their people. As long as this is not the case, the fundamentalists will continue to be a threat. And ultimately they will succeed in formenting major and devastating wars.

The arab world's actual strength; their political and military power; and their lust to go to war, depend ultimately on the price they can demand for their oil. Should the oil price rise again to such phenomenal heights as has happened once - this threat is very real, because many oil wells outside the large oil basins in Russia, Iraq, Lybia and Saudia are nearing exhaustion - we may expect Islam's Fundamentalists to feel encouraged, and even divinely empowered, to try and fulfill all Moslems' never absent aspirations to re-establish Islam's once glorious domain over the civilized world.

The Fundamentalists, who will under no circumstance ever recognize Israel's right to exist, notwithstanding the only temporary and only fictitious arrangements with the PLO, have first and foremost selected Israel as their target, because - with the help of the Palestinians within Israel's borders; with the support from the arab countries in the Middle East; with the connivance of a silent world; and with the vocal support of the United Nations - they are convinced they can expect an ultimate victory. But Israel has so far withstood their onslaught, and will certainly do so also in future.

Until now Israel has stood alone. It had on its own to withstand the hostility of these extremists, and the butt of their terror. Now the islamic extremists turn not only against the western world, but also against those elements and parties who oppose them within the moslem countries. However, the time has not come for Israel to benefit from this development. Israel had hoped and expected, that the common interest would induce at least some of the affected moslem countries - and more so even the western ones - to offer their assistance in its fight against islamic extremism. But during the Gulf War Israel had to learn a bitter lesson: its offer, to form a common defense system against this common threat did not materialize. And it may be taken for granted, that also in future it will not materialize.

Actively and passively Israel has always stood in the forefront of the fight against terrorism. It has rigorously acted against all acts of terrorism, be it within or outside its borders. Much of the world was surprised when Israel returned a number of hijackers to the Soviet Union just before the communist empire disintegrated. Hopefully Israel's position will be better understood in future, as terrorism has become an international crime - the millennarians' nerve gas terror in Tokio, the series of bombings in France and so on, have brought further confirmation - which can only be controlled by complete and sincere international collaboration. But when Israel warned in world

forums like the United Nations, that terrorists would become enemies of all mankind, many of the nations rose to "justify" the PLO's, the IRA's and the Red Army's actions as acts of war against injustice.

Israel, I hope, has now finally come to the realization, that no moslem state will ever form an alliance with the Jewish State against any other moslem state.

But the Gulf War has brought home also another lesson. In the past and also today, nobody has ever felt any compunction to maintain, that it is Israel's presence in the Middle East which has caused whatever unrest exists in this area; that Israel is responsible for whatever war has so far been fought between arab states. It matters not at all to its accusers, that their accusation is an absolute nonsense; that the Iraq-Iran war, the Chad war, the Gulf war, the Yemen wars have nothing whatsoever to do with Israel. On the contrary: by now even more such wars might have broken out here and there, had Israel not existed.

Tension between nearly all the arab states is a reality. It is a fact of life for the islamic world. And there is yet no expectation, that this tension will so soon come to an end. There is no arab state which has not territorial claims against a neighbouring arab state. There are optimists who think, that the solution of the Israel-Arab conflict will bring peace to the Middle East. They will surely be disappointed.

By what I have written; and from what I have described as the realities of life, I may be accused of being myself not aware of these very realities. But though I sound optimistic and confident, I have never had illusions regarding the danger Israel is facing from the hostile world, mainly from the arab world, and in particular from the extremist groups in Islam. Israel will for a long time have to deal with the threats inherent in the radical islamic movements. There should not be any doubt that this is a major problem and a major danger. But let us remember, that this islamic extremism is not new; that the Jews are familiar with this side of Islam; that by tradition Islam has been hostile to all Jews and not only to Israel; and that the Jews, and now Israel, have always survived this danger. Israel is fortunate: it is nowadays not the only target of the terrorists, who more and more share their hostility out to the democratic world; and who direct their attacks more or less against each and everyone of the countries in the Western

World. And it has become more and more evident - as incidents in Egypt, Sudan, Algeria etc have shown - that not only the Jews but also the Christians are now targetted by extremist Islam.

We have no cause nor reason to nurse any unjustified hopes. We still can expect only little sympathy, and even less help, from the western countries who are no less threatened than Israel by today's terrorist movements. Because they allow economic considerations to dictate their policy towards the terror-sponsoring islamic countries, most of the western democracies prefer not to take an active stand against the fundamentalistic terror movements in Islam. Even the US is no exception; it has signed an agreement with the Fundamentalists of Algeria about the exploration of their country's oilfields. And the result is that no American has been killed there.

However, though it may not yet feel itself directly threatened, the West is slowly becoming aware of the terror which Iran and Sudan, Syria and Lybia are organizing in their own environments too. The western metropolises are crowded with terrorists disguised as mullahs, students or business people who are supported and supplied by the iranian and sudanese, the syrian and lybian embassies. Iran has clearly, often and undeniably been proved a hotbed of international terrorism, which is not only directed against Jews.

But not only the above countries are the providers of international terror. Other moslem countries - even the Saudis - tolerate and support the terrorists trained in Syria and Sudan, in Algeria and Lebanon. Iran makes every effort to acquire the "bomb", not so much to destroy Israel - such an attack will in any case automatically first on its program - than to affirm Islam's claim to eventual dominance over the western world.

The western countries are well aware, I am sure, of the great danger the world faces from the uncontrolled availability of nuclear technology. There are 50-70 000 nuclear warheads spread all over the globe; a mistake may explode them, and with them the entire planet. Nations like Iraq, Iran, Lybia, Pakistan, North Korea and a number of others are acquiring - or have already acquired - the material necessary to produce and explode a nuclear advice. Students of these countries crowd the science departments of the american and british universities. Germany, France, Britain and Russia are willing to supply whatever is needed for their nuclear program. Russia is willing to replenish its treasury with the profit made on the nuclear market. But the world has not thought it necessary to take action. Nobody anywhere doubts, that the rogue nations I have mentioned, are feverishly working to build at least a couple of atom bombs; and that they will not hesitate to explode

them at the first opportunity.

Israel is suspected - and accused - of harbouring a stock of nuclear weapons. It refuses to confirm or to deny the possession of a nuclear bomb. Nor is it willing - notwithstanding the hysteric outbursts of the Egyptians - to sign the NPT, the Non-Proliferation-Treaty. There are sections of Israelis who urge the Government to sign the NPT, as within a few years many more countries will have the "Bomb". But, as the fifty years' stand-off between America and the Soviet Union have proved, the threat of an "Assured Mutual Destruction" is the best guarantee for such a bomb not to go off. But it can in my opinion be taken for granted that - when it is threatened by extreme danger - Israel will use the nuclear arsenal whose existence it does neither deny nor confirm. Of course this moment in the future will bring about not only the end of Israel - but that of the entire civilized world, and also that of all mankind.

I have mentioned Iran as the most blatant example for the blindness shown by the western democratic world. Or should I better say by the western business-dominated world? For the sake of doing big business with oil-rich Iran, and without a care about all norms of decency, Germany - I am referring to this country by name as one example among many - and other western powers continue to do business with Iran; to supply Iran with all the arms it wants; to sell it the material it will require for the production of "non-conventional arms".

I cannot avoid the feeling, that the governments of the West I have in mind, combine in their sustained effort to help Iran to be accepted as a respectable member of the international family of nations, because they have been given to understand, that only Israel and the Jews - and maybe under certain circumstances satanic America - are its enemies; and that they themselves are safe from the roving terrorist gangs organized, provisioned and supported by Iran. But these very countries do not appear to realize the danger to which they are exposing themselves: Iran and the islamic-fundamentalist world will interpret their business behaviour - in the same way as they judge the Europeans' faulty democratic and ethical behaviour in the past - as evidence of weakness; as an indication of degeneration; and as directive from Allah.

Israel may count itself lucky that the US - and nowadays also the Saudis, the Kuwaitis and some of the other Gulf States - are beginning to realize the danger Iran, Iraq and Lybia present also for them.

11.

Is Israel being eroded and endangered from within ?

Israel, as I have taken pains to point out, is threatened by its determined enemies near and far.

However, the magnitude of this danger to its survival is by far not comparable with the one which lurks within its own borders, viz:- the moral deterioration of its own citizens, which in turn erodes the nation's ethical foundations. I have on more than one occasion voiced my opinion, that Israel can only survive if its citizens, the Jews of Israel, show the moral fortitude and the firm determination to justify their regaining Israel as their old-new home. In other words: the way the Israeli behave and react, the manner in which they handle and overcome the difficulties they face, are tests whose passing or failing will determine the State's survival or failure.

In other words: the government and people of Israel can blame only themselves for many of the problems they are facing. And it depends only on the government and people of Israel how they solve these problems; and whether they do so in an acceptable ethical manner.

Much of tiny Israel's strength depends on the goodwill of the civilized world; but all of Israel's reputation as a unique country with a special people, as the people of the Bible in the country of the Bible, depends entirely on the Israelis themselves. It is, therefore, imperative that this tiny Israel is seen as morally big and ethically strong. It is according to the high standards of the Tnach that the Jewish people are expected to live; that Israel is and will always be judged. It is, and always will be, valued in accordance with the ethical standards it observes. These standards are and will be measured according to the degree these are cultivated and lived by the Jews of Israel. And Israel's right to survive is and will be weighed according to its human material.

What are these standards ? How and in which way are they observed or violated ?

I must repeat here, that I cannot at every stage, i.e. whenever I raise a point or open a discussion, bring all the material I have available, even if it does fit into the exclusive purpose of my discussion. Nor can I dedicate all the time and space to enumerate in a more detailed form even some of the material I think necessary and worth bringing. In addition I have already referred to much of this material in the preceding pages.

I have, therefore, to be satisfied with mentioning only a few of the relevant points:

* Israel is a progressive country with a technical and scientific, a social and economic standard comparable, if not equal, to the most advanced countries of Europe. It can send satellites into space; it sells military equipment to the US army; it has per capita a larger military outfit than any other nation in the world. But there is still a large number of illiterate youths in Israel; it has a great number of slums; it harbours, as surveys show, a depressing number of people who live below the poverty line. Visitors write home, that in Tel-Aviv some 100 to 200 - their number is difficult to establish - homeless sleep in parks or house entrances. The Municipality explains it has difficulties to have them enter a shelter. Many of them are drunkards or mental cases. The problem has exploded since the "russian aliya"; and indeed 70-80% of these vagrants are from the former Soviet Russian part. They are often well educated individuals.

* The zeal, energy and dedication of the Halutzim, the early pioneers have disappeared. Among the fourteen most developed countries Israel ranks last both in per-capita productivity as well as per-capita production. This is explained by the plethora of "days off" and public holidays which leaves less working days than in any other industrialized country.

* In addition, Israel has also to wrestle with many other social problems. It has an unemployment rate of about 10%, but next to the palestinian work force it has imported masses of foreign workers. The surge of these "Gastarbeiter" - 60 000 and more in 1995 - involved severe socio-economic consequences: the unemployment among the Israelis is thereby not reduced; the major part of the payments the foreign workers receive is sent abroad; and that of the Palestinians is spent in Gaza.

* Israel has to deal with a growing criminality among its people. Car theft is as common in Israel as elsewhere. In the year 1993 some 23.656 cars were reported stolen. In this small country ! In this respect Israel is percent-wise in leading position. Although it is assumed that most of the thieves are Arabs, Jews have their share too in these statistics. It is interesting, that in the realm of car-

thieving Jews and Arabs collaborate in greater harmony than in any other sphere.

* In 1994 the eight Rape-Crisis-Centres took 2.300 calls; that is six a day ! But it may be taken as certain, that only a fraction of the actual number of rape incidents had been reported.

* Israel has the ignominious reputation, that it functions as the place where the trans-shipment of drugs from Asia and Africa to Europe and the US is organized.

* Israel has about 15 000 habituated, and about 30 000 occasional users of hard drugs. These are to be found in every stratum of the society. Only the haredi community is less likely to get involved in drug abuse, though it is not immune.

It is, however, not possible to categorically state, that religious education is the reason for the low number of known drug abusers among the orthodox members of the population; for it is difficult to register their addicts; or to have them undergo treatment, because they hide their affliction out of fear, that knowledge of a drug user in the family will harm its reputation; and will ruin the marriage chances of any of its members.

* Incidences of misbehaviour by the "Ugly Israeli" are reported from every corner of the globe. The lack of self-control in the conduct of these specimen of Israelis has greatly damaged the country's often tenuous relations with many a country. The latest I saw reported from Jordan: the supposed grave of Aaron in Jordan has been closed to Israels, because members of a group of religious visitors have been seen chipping away ancient markings to take home as souvenirs; and others are reported to have carved their own modern graffiti on the walls of the grave. And then there were the israeli couples which, returning from a visit to Jordan resp. Turkey, were stopped on the jordanian resp. turkish side and were found to be carrying curtains, carpets, paintings - and reportedly even faucets - from the room they had occupied in the resp. hotels. Another couple, on a visit to Jordan, has being investigated for changing old demonetized shekel notes into dinars.

* The number of criminal cases involving juvenile violence - which is such a grave problem in many of the industrialized countries - begins to increase now also in Israel. Cases have occurred here, where children arrive in school not only with a bottle of vodka; not only with a knife, but also with their father's handgun.

* The "battered wife syndrome" is rampant in Israel. Wife-beating is more and more reported.

It has, however, to be taken in consideration, that wife-beating is an acceptable form of behaviour in Russia and Ethiopia; and that the increased alcoholism in the country - along with frustration - make their contribution

in these ethnic groups. But to my great surprise, also Ashkenazim and Sephardim, Haredim and Secularists think themselves entitled to "discipline" their wives.

* It is not rare anymore to read about husbands killing their wives. And vice versa. This appears to be an Israeli phenomenon and not a Jewish one; for judges presiding over Domestic Violence Courts or Family Courts in the US have stated, that in their experience violence against women occur among the Jews in the Diaspora far less often than is reported in Israel.

* Apart from the general complaint, that the Israeli physician or surgeon behaves in a rude and unpleasant manner towards his patients; that he has no respect for his patients; that he soon forgets most of the obligations imposed upon him by his Hippocratic Oath, he is also blamed for neglecting those patients who do not or cannot engage him to act as their private medical or surgical attendant. The Jewish physician's old-established, famous and vaunted standards of morality and decency show signs of erosion among the medical profession in Israel. For instance: in the past it would have been impossible - as it is still impossible elsewhere - what a recent Health Ministry survey disclosed: that 27% of the health-insured families have paid the doctors private fees "under the table" for the medical care to which they were entitled without having to make a payment.

* Politics and politicians are tainted everywhere; but democratic countries exert a certain control of the politicians and a certain check on their politics. The Israeli politicians, however, are aggressive and behave in an uncivil way among themselves and towards the public.

The MKs - the Members of the Knesset - are cowards in addition. They know that their Government is lying; that their Ministers are cheating; that they send secret letters which contravene their own policy; that they sign papers which endanger the country. But they prefer to be kept in the dark, as otherwise they would have to vote against their own party and lose a comfortable place in the country's hierarchy. For instance: even when the Government objected to Senator Dole's proposal to shift the US Embassy to Jerusalem, the ruling party did not intervene. And when the Government's action greatly reduced the Diaspora's support for Israel, none of these MKs raised his voice.

* I am going to mention again an unpleasant feature in the Israeli Jew. It is the Jewish self-hatred of which I have already written. It is also noticeable in the Diaspora Jew, but in him it is by far not as frequent. In the Diaspora Jew it is if not well compensated at least well suppressed. To compare Israelis with Nazis is a frequent accusation

of the Gentiles, but also of the Israeli Leftists, particularly the intellectuals. They like to use this gadget, most likely in their search for world recognition.

There are Jewish authors who appear not to miss an opportunity to degrade what Judaism, Zionism, Israel stand for. There are so-called intellectuals, writers, academics, playwrights, journalists who do not mind denigrating Jewish values, Zionism, the Hagana, the IDF, the early Halutzim. The novelist A.B. Yehoshua, for instance, compared on one occasion the Israelis' silence on the oppression of the Palestinians to the silence of the Germans during the Nazi era. Prof. Yeshajahu Leibowitz, the Left's leading guru, habitually used to call certain Jewish groups Judeo-Nazis. Ruth Dayan, the leftist Member of the Knesset, speaking to a delighted German audience in Bonn, stated that Israel has the same obligations to the Palestinians as the debt owed to Jews by Germany; that the Nazi crimes were not worse than those committed by Israelis.

* With justification enjoys the IDF, the Jewish Defence Force, the admiration and envy of the world. But worrisome changes have made their appearance: the new recruits do not make as before every effort to be appointed to one of the combat units. There is now a manpower problem in filling in the combat units, while there is a surplus of soldiers for rear-guard and non-combatant units.

No less worrisome is the politicization of the IDF High Command. Israel had always known the phenomenon that its generals retire early and are - if they do not enter party politics - appointed to high civil or private positions. There is in today's IDF most likely not more competition for advancement than in the past, and no more personal sensitiveness, but all this finds today an outlet in the newsmedia.

* Israel's newsmedia gleefully and self-congratulatingly report the great number of tax and other fraud cases regularly uncovered in Italy and elsewhere. From what I read in the Israeli papers; from what I observe myself; and from what I know from conversations with friends and acquaintances, Israel can "boast" of no less a great number of businessmen and politicians who have been - or should have been - exposed and punished for similar crimes.

* I do not think there exist another country in which such a large number of white-collar criminals are so kindly treated by the judiciary; where such a large number of criminals is freed on bail or condemned to a short period of "community service". Most of these trespassers would elsewhere be convicted to a long-term stay in jail. Is it any wonder, that these individuals have no compunction to go on repetition

their crimes ? The excuses we are offered for the range of mild punishments meted out by the judges - that there is not enough room to accommodate all these criminals in the available jails - is hardly convincing.

* When the Histadruth - the all-powerful Trade Union Organization - foundered, the public learned not only that enormous sums had been regularly transferred to the Labour Party; not only that large sums had illegally been spend for election expenses, but also that their leaders had over the last decades been paid - better said, had paid themselves - bonanzas suited to a rich country but hardly to socialist Israel. Their salaries and pensions are among the highest in the country. It is true that also the judges, the army officers, the directors of the corporations and the university professors receive - relative to the general economy of the state - very high salaries; but the Histadruth officials are men and women who have been elected to create an egalitarian society in Israel !

* While daily large number of workers or employees are dismissed from work; while large contingents of the population have an insufficient income; while a large sector of the populations lives below the poverty level, the salaries of some industrial tycoons and bank managers reach up to \$300 000 a month !

* An "Israeli Mafia" has been established abroad. Israelis belong also to - and often are the leaders of - crime organizations in France, America, Russia and Germany. I happens not rarely, that some of these jewish mafia bosses ultimately seek asylum in Israel.

It seems that one of the most shocking chapters in modern jewish history is now repeated: at the end of last century, and the beginning of this one, organizations of jewish pimps procured - with the promise of marriage - literally thousands of innocent jewish girls from eastern Europe for brothels in all five continents. Nowadays their russian counterparts bring jewish and gentile girls - with the promise of great fortunes to be made here -from the former soviet countries to serve as prostitutes in Israel.

* Israel's society is developing, in nearly all spheres of life, a degree and kind of selfishness, which is in conflict with the basic ethics of its inheritance. As I have already pointed out on a previous occasion, our attitude to the new immigrants is one such instance. The immigrant-child suffers from its imposed social difference with the native-israeli child. This experience induces many boys to turn to crime and leads many girls into prostitution.

Government officials in responsible position should

have known better. Had the administrators and educators throughout the years shown the proper interest in their duties, they would have found the right guidance in, and they could have learned the right lessons from, the past experiences of the country. For this is by far not a new experience: when 40-50 years ago - in the course of the moroccan immigration - the young men and young girls witnessed the material advantages enjoyed by the local youth; when they saw the israeli youth's flashy clothes and the money the Israelis freely spent on luxuries the newly arrived boys and girls had never known, these latter boys turned to crime; and the girls became prostitutes, in order to earn the money to buy such clothes, cosmetics and drugs too. The same happens to many a russian boy and girl today.

* Most foreign visitors, and many elderly Israelis who can recall their european education, are appalled by the rudeness and unfriendliness of the Israelis, young and old. It is common to hear visitors comment on this unpleasant feature of the Israeli. And the contagiousness of this behaviour is evidenced by the new immigrants, who within a short time after their arrival are as rude and unpleasant as the natives.

* I am not going to mention here - but shall return to it in a later chapter - the unpleasantness a visitor witnesses on Israel's religious scene; and of which the world learns from the newsmedia.

* Israelis are accused of having forgotten a main jewish feature: charity. The old virtue of sharing with less favoured brethren is no more. There are many rich Jews in Israel, but their contributions to the general welfare are less than those of Jews abroad.

I have not listed all the above instances - their number is so ample and the space available in my essay so limited, that I brought only a small part of the material I have available - in order to label Israel a land of criminals and rowdies. This is certainly not the case; it would in addition be a ridiculous undertaking. The authorities in America, Japan, France, Britain would be happy with a record as that of Israel. For instance: Americans kill and maim each other at a per capita rate 4-5 times as high as that of other industrialized countries.

Israel's image - even its self-image - suffers from the lamentable fact that whenever anything of a negative nature occurs in Israel or is done by Israelis, the newsmedia all over the world will greatly exaggerate these occurrences in their reporting; and more willingly than inadvertently will set the mills of antisemitism to work in high gear.

The purpose of what I have listed above is not only to make the point, that all these negative features may be ingrained in israeli

society, but are certainly only the heritage of the long years of galuth existence; that they can, must - and most likely will - disappear in the next generation or generations, especially if Israel can relax in peace; and when the hardened conscience of the Israeli - in the manner it comports itself towards other Israelis and especially the Palestinians - will be allowed to soften.

I have pointed to all these facts, because I want to give expression to my hope, that the Israeli will realize - even if only vaguely - that he is tested; that his, his generation's and his country's ethical values are tested; that Israel and its people are tested regarding their worthiness to survive; that his awareness is tested about how little and however he oversteps the ethical borders erected by Judaism, he is liable to harm the moral standing of the Israeli society; that the criminals among the Israeli Jews commit treason to the Jewish people; that whatever act oversteps the limits of the moral obligations imposed on us, undermines the justification for the very existence of the Jewish People, and in particular of the State of Israel.

However: that the above trespasses and their perpetrators are not indications of the true Jewish character; that they are only deviations from the norm, is in my opinion proved by what can be regularly observed: that in case of common danger; that whenever a disaster affects the country; that whenever an emergency occurs, the Israelis will forget their usual selfishness and self-centredness; will lay aside their commonplace rudeness and grossness; will behave and act in accordance with traditional Judaism's charity, and will identify with the Jewish victims of Arab terror; and will rush to offer help, assistance and consolation wherever needed. There has never been an instance, where this is not the regular occurrence.

And in this respect I want to make another point: the entire world agrees with the PLO, the Jihad and Hamas, that the success of the Intifada had been the outcome of the Palestinian youth's revolt against the Government of Israel; that it has forced Israel to come to the peace table in Oslo; and that Israel has had meekly to give in to Arafat's demands. There should not be - and there is absolutely not - any question, that the Israel Armed Forces could have matched violence for violence; that it could have easily put down the Intifada. And I have no doubt, that most other countries would have acted in this way. But it became clear to the leadership of Israel, that such a role would have played havoc with the soldiers' morale; that it would not have been tolerated by the population.

Why then are we presented with these two contrasting, black and

white pictures of the isreali Jew ? The answer is not simply, that the Jews are not better than the people elsewhere; that they have forgotten that they should not be like the others; that it is a psychological fact that a person of whatever origin and background will make use of whatever opportunity he is offered to gain an advantage. The real reason is, that the individuals who contravene the moral standards; and more so those who act against the laws of the country, have, in the process of their education at home or in school, not been taught the specific duties of a Jew towards his society; have not been told of the special status the Jewish People occupies; have not been indoctrinated with the ethics of the Scriptures. Those who have not learned all this, offer a negative testimony of the jewish values and to Israel's existence.

They undermine not only the vitality but also the survival of Israel.

12.

Will the hostile world cease to threaten Israel ?

Israel's birth had been very difficult. Also while growing up it was confronted with every imaginable kind of difficulties and every possible kind of problems. During and after the wars of 1948 and 1967 - when each time it was forced to fight for its very survival - Israel was faced with most unusual and unexpected predicaments which, however, it could solve as best as the circumstances permitted. But each time it stood alone. Except for the selfless and ungrudging support of Diaspora Jewry, it received hardly any help from outside.

It is a fact - though not acknowledged even by unbiased politicians and historians, that the War of Independence of 1948, though hard and bitter, had been fought in a more humane way than any other war anywhere in this century. This has not refrained Israel's critics abroad to indulge in a stream of unrestrained and slanderous condemnations, though none of them would have been able to look at its own actions, or point to any other country, which under similar conditions would have behaved - and has behaved - towards its enemies in as humane a way as Israel did towards the Arabs.

I could bring pages and pages of facts and data to support my allegation, but I would only be repeating what is generally and since long known. Instead I shall mention only a few incidents, where the historic realities cannot but attribute more fault and shame to the actions of others, and especially to the British who are one of Israel's most outspoken critics.

* During the Hitler regime - before the outbreak of the war - Britain and the other member states of the League of Nations did not want to take in any of the Jewish refugees of whom they knew very well that their lives were endangered. One of the many reasons brought forward was the fear, that Poland and Rumania might try to benefit from such "generosity" to get rid of their Jews.

* The British government and the British newsmedia have - from the time Britain was entrusted by the League of Nations with the Mandate over Palestine to this day - ranked among Israel's most unrestrained and unreasonable detractors. I could bring an immense list of examples, but may the following suffice: the Reuter News Agency enjoys censoring Israel for its censorship; not so long ago the BBC assumed for itself the right to call the Rwanda Refugee Camps "a new Gaza Strip"; the British Parliament never misses an occasion to pass resolutions critical of Israel; since 1967 the British Government has refused to sell arms to Israel; during the Gulf War it refused to sell Israel even the gasmasks it needed for its civil population. Only recently, since its arms industry is idle, has Britain been weighing the possibility of lifting this arms embargo. But throughout all these years the British have made strenuous efforts to sell sophisticated armaments to each one of Israel's enemies.

* Britain loves to criticize Israel about its alleged maltreatment of the Palestinians; but the British have least of all the right to utter such criticisms. I am not going to speak of Britain's colonial past; I am not going to write about my personal experiences in pre-war India. I shall restrict myself on Britain's post-war behaviour in Ireland, where it has never applied the measures which it urges Israel to adopt in its occupied territories. Israel's soldiers cannot compete in rudeness and crudeness, in barbarity and suppression with the British troops, who for 25 years - and at a cost of at least 3000 lives - have ferociously booted down the Irish patriots in their own land. Impartial observers cannot but confirm, that all in all Britain has been treating the Irish Catholics worse than the Israelis have ever treated the Gazans.

* Britain is the leading democratic country in the West which tries to bury the memory of the Shoah; to minimize its effect on Jewry; to hide its own failure in coming to the Jews' help; to make come true posthumously Hitler's prediction "...who remembers today the massacre of the Armenian people of 1915?", with which he could reassure his generals that their misdeeds would soon be forgotten.

I have asked many usually well informed Israelis, why the Government of Britain and its information media - and its citizens no less - take this negative attitude towards the Jewish State. But I have never received a satisfactory answer to my question. Britain's traditional friendships with, and its commercial interests in, the Arab world are to my mind not a sufficient explanation. My own explanation seems to me not too far out: that the

people and government of Britain have never overcome the frustration, the shame and the pain to have been driven out from Palestine in 1948 by a poorly armed rag-tag bunch of Israelis.

* In 1949, soon after the formation of the State, when the United Nations threatened to internationalize Jerusalem, Ben Gurion declared Jerusalem to be for ever the Capital of Israel. This inalterable fact has been confirmed since - like it were a vow of faith - by every Israeli government; and has no less persistently been denied, decried and fought against by the Arab world; by every Moslem state; by the Vatican; by the former Soviet Block; and also by those who claim to be neutral or even Israel's friends.

* So far the Vatican, nor any of the Cardinals have not made statements of the kind one hears from the Arabs - i.e. doubting the originality of today's Jewry - but I have no doubts, that officially or unofficially they agree with John Strugness' prediction. This Harvard Professor of Divinity and devoted Catholic - officially in charge of the Dead Sea Scrolls Project since Jordan had occupied Jerusalem - opined that "Judaism is merely a precursor of Christianity; and is destined to wither away in face of the true faith".

Neither has the Church expressed agreement or disagreement with the "True Christian Believers", that "Israel has emerged anew in the Promised Land by military conquest, just as the Bible had predicted". But Pope John Paul II has openly declared, that it is the right of the Jews to return to their land from which they had been driven 2000 years ago.

But the Church has not agreed that the Jews are the rightful carriers of God's appointment. The Roman Catholic Church still maintains, that the Jews' right to the Kingdom of God ended in the year 70 EC with the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Roman Legions. Throughout the last nearly 1900 years the Popes have usurped the right to proclaim the Church as having inherited the Kingdom of God; and also as having the divine permission to proclaim the Vatican City in Rome the "New Jerusalem". However, the actual Pope, John Paul II, who has otherwise shown some understanding for the Jewish claims and rights, has no explanation for - and can therefore impossibly avoid acknowledging the consequences of - the factual disproof of the Gospel's clearly worded prediction - that the former Jerusalem will never again be rebuilt; and that no Jew will ever come to live there again. Acknowledgement of this undeniable factual truth, which contradicts the presumably divine prophecy in the Gospels, must have been more painful to the Church than even the reversal of her

judgement over Gallilei.

As a reasoning clear-headed person might have expected, the Church's painful acknowledgement of the undeniable "facts on the ground" - brought home to her by the Jerusalem and Israel of today - have led the Pope to his face-saving demand that Jerusalem be "internationalized". But in the end - forced not not so much by the intransigency of the Jews as by the insistence of the Arabs that they are the "owners - he had to discover that he cannot persist in this demand. He had to give up also this demand. And, as it is now quite evident that the Pope prefers the Moslems to rule over Jerusalem and not the Jews, he has not ceased to interfere. He continues to deny Israel the right to Jerusalem - at times he will graciously restrict this denial to the eastern half of the Holy City - which the Vatican agrees should be "the future capital of the independant arab state Palestine".

Recently the Vatican has made some friendly sounding announcements. In 1994 did the Vatican at last come forth with some kind of apology to the jewish people for crimes committed from the time of the Inquisition until the Shoah. And in 1995, on the occasion of his visit to Jerusalem, Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago took a further step in this direction. "It is no secret", he jesuitically expressed himself, "that many of our past formulations have seriously distorted the role of the jewish people in human salvation. This has undoubtedly played a role in the persecutions born by jewish communities worldwide; and tragically helped provide a seedbed for christian collaboration with Nazism".

It is a pity, that this papal strategy enjoys the support of most foreign countries. It does not bother any of these, that they show a blatant, undiplomatic disrespect for the Government of Israel; and that it expresses an - among civilized nations at peace with each other - unacceptable disregard for Israel's parliament and ordinances. It may be taken for granted, that none of these foreign governments would, under similar circumstances, ever have tolerated such a behaviour directed against themselves; nor that they would have taken a similar stance with respect to any other country.

* Many of the foreign countries, who maintain regular diplomatic relations with Israel, do also otherwise not mind, knowingly and quite purposefully, to offend Israel by their more than unusual behaviour. On the occasion of their national holidays they do not invite Israelis and Arabs together to the obligatory receptions, but arrange a separate one for each ethnic group of invitees. There is only the one possible

interpretation: that the foreign consulates in Jerusalem do not consider themselves accredited to the Government of Israel but to an independent Palestine State, which since long they suppose to be in the process of forming. It was no surprise, that most of the ambassadors boycotted the inauguration of the 3000-Jerusalem-Year; but it came as a shock to all, that even America thought it right to instruct its Ambassador to absent himself.

The Clinton Administration is valued in Israel as the friendliest ever - especially after Bush and Baker - but it maintains the same policy as all the previous administrations, e.g. that Israel has to withdraw - except for some minor border changes - to the 1949 armistice lines; and that Jerusalem can at best be the capital of both the Jewish State and the Palestinian State. Forgotten is Clinton's campaign pledge of 1992: "I recognize Jerusalem as an undivided city and the eternal capital of Israel".

* Though a number of foreign governments - often very reluctantly, let us concede - recognize israeli sovereignty in Israel, Jerusalem is not included in their recognition. Only three foreign governments are an exception.

This was the reason why President Bill Clinton, on the occasion of his official visit to Jerusalem, requested that no israeli government official accompany him on his planned walk through the Old City and on the Temple Mount. Would he have ever dared to make this demand also on a visit to any other country in the world? In the end he seems to have accepted a timely and wise advice: he canceled the visit when he realized he had attracted too much flak.

* Every israeli government has on every possible occasion repeated, that "Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the State of Israel. It will forever remain undivided under isreali sovereignty". The arab members of the Knesseth have, of course, as often expressed their objection - and usually they found support among some of their jewish colleagues of the Left. One can regularly hear them voice in the press and on the airwaves, that Jerusalem should be again divided; that Jerusalem has never been a truly single town; that the Arabs have a justified claim of ownership to at least the eastern half of Jerusalem. And for good measure this group adds, that the long-suffering Arabs have never enjoyed the same building rights and educational grants in Jerusalem as the Jews; and that for these reasons alone they must be compensated with the eastern half of Jerusalem. Yossi Beilin whom I have mentioned

before, uttered the advice - when addressing the Bnei Brith in Washington - that Palestinians should have "their own administration in their part of Jerusalem".

He too appears to be straining for a Nobel Prize.

Whichever Jew is ready to give up, or even to redivide Jerusalem, has no place in Israel; for if he does not feel like a Jew, he is not a Jew. Israel would have no sense or meaning without all of Jerusalem.

Since some years now Israelis, and no less also Jews everywhere, have not ceased to ask: will the Government truly keep its solemn promise never to give up Jerusalem? Will it resist the pressure, threats and temptations of world opinion to give up Jerusalem ?

The fact, that these questions are at all asked, is testimony to the intrusion of a creeping demoralization, which could turn out to be the greatest danger to Israel and the Jews.

* Only very few among the foreign governments "friendly to Israel" will agree with this country's a priori argument, that the Jews have a right to their homeland; that it has been theirs since 3000 years; that they have never given up these rights; that the League of Nations has accepted the validity of the Balfour Declaration by which Britain had granted the Jews a National Home in what was then called Palestine; that the United Nations has confirmed the League of Nation's decision; that the UN has accepted and recognized the Jewish State; that the Palestinians have already their own state in Jordan; that Britain had after the war illegally transferred to the Hashemites 80% of the land granted to the Jews in the Balfour Declaration; that there is no right nor reason for another palestinian state to exist on israeli soil; that the world can hardly agree with the Moslems' argument, that Allah has promised all the world to the Moslems.

13.

Is there hope on the arab front ?

Israel can rightly say, that this is not the first time that history appears to repeat itself; that the situation it faces today is not new in jewish history; that the Jewish People had to face a similar situation in the past. This was the occasion, when Antiochus accused Shimeon, the Maccabean King, of having illegally occupied Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, and the latter replied: "We have not occupied other people's land; nor have we taken the property of other people. We have only taken back the inheritance of our ancestors, which had been unjustly seized for a time by our enemies. We have grasped our opportunity when it arose; and have reclaimed now our patrimony. With regard to Jaffa and Gezer: these two towns were doing a great deal of damage among our people and in our land..."

Neither is jewish nationalism a new development. It has since long been a factor in jewish history. It led to the Maccabean Revolt of 167-164 BCE against the syrian Greeks; it led to the 66-73 CE revolt against Rome; it led to the 115-117 war of Quietus; it led to the 135-137 CE revolt of Bar Kochba.

Alas ! there is hardly a hope, that the Arabs and their associates will accept such an answer nor such an explanation from modern Israel; nor that an otherwise all-round satisfying solution will ever be found for the problem regarding the property rights to the lands now making up the State of Israel. An even somewhat satisfactory solution can only be possible, if the Moslems accept Israel's right to exist; if the israeli Arabs feel equal citizens of Israel; if the Palestinians share the cultural interests and the civil rights of the Israelis. But I cannot see the Moslems of today at least ever take such a step; ever make such a declaration; ever agree to such a state of collaboration without any hedging. Nor can I see the mentality of the israeli Jews yet ready to stretch out their hand for a brotherly collaboration; nor make room at their side for a fully equal coexistence.

Both sides are at fault for the continued stagnation. The threat to Israel's peaceful existence will, therefore, most likely continue at least during this generation.

Israel is militarily the most powerful; economically the most developed; technically the most advanced; economically the most efficient entity in the Middle East. But this is not enough for it to survive.

Israel cannot let itself be guided by utopian dreams of the kind I have just now mentioned. Its main aim is to make sure of its survival in the actual environment and under the actual conditions. This goal and the status quo can only be maintained; and the actual situation will only remain manageable, as long as Israel remains strong; as long as Israel's friends stand by her side; as long as each Israeli Jew remains conscious of his personal importance and responsibility for the fate of his nation; as long as the Jews in the Diaspora will remain fully involved with Israel; as long as all the Jews will remain conscious of the importance Israel has for their own survival as Jews. And how much they too are responsible for the survival of Judaism itself.

Israel's political parties of the Left offer - not surprisingly, I must say - a solution of their own: that Israel should cede all the territories it occupies since 1967 (and possibly since 1948). And they add their utopian prediction, that such a gesture of goodwill will assure the country a perfect peace for the future.

Apparently they do not realize that the Arabs count on destroying Israel, and not on a modus vivendi with Israel. Apparently they do not accept as logical the fact, that by ceding territories - and bringing about thereby a strategic reduction in depth - the defense of Israel would be exposed to a great, possibly deadly danger; that thereby the time will be reduced which the IDF requires in a crisis situation to mobilize its forces; that, given such circumstances, Israel would most likely have to undertake one or more pre-emptive strikes. And they should be aware of the axiom, that the security of its borders is a prerequisite of a nation's sovereignty.

Israel's leftist politicians do not mind giving the Golan back to Syria. Also the Military High Command has apparently no objection. One cannot avoid the impression, that outsiders are better informed - and possibly even more concerned - about the looming danger than Israel's civil and military leadership: the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that "from the viewpoint of military security, Israel is the only country in the world which, in a comprehensive war, has no margin for error; and the smallest mistake could cause her downfall and bring disaster". He strongly advised Israel, never to give up the Golan Heights.

In other words: for Israel to survive it must have the Golan.

The Golan did once belong to Syria, it is true. But should not the Syrians have to pay the price for their aggression? The Golan

Heights are vital for Israel; as long as they are in Israel's hands, a syrian attack against Israel would be virtually impossible. And I am not so sure, that it is in America's interest to push Israel from the Golan Heights.

The eagerness with which israeli politicians deal with with Asad of Syria makes them liable to blackmail. And Asad is a master in this game, where even experience in bazar dealing and a Nobel Prize are of no use. It is incomprehensible to me in any case that Syria should be the one to make demands. And it is rather repugnant to hear the cynicism with which Rabin and Peres have been referring to the Camp David Agreement between Begin and Sadaat in order to explain their own never ending series of concessions. Nobody denies that this Agreement was a mistake, a bad bargain, a mistake, but this does not justify taking the errors of Camp David as a precedent to excuse the bad and dangerous arrangements with Arafat and Asad.

Individuals may take personal risks, but a responsible government and a democratic government in particular, has not the right to take risks. It should never forget that it is the agent of the people which has entrusted the safety and future into their hands. And a government cannot play fast and lose with its people. If there is even a slight threat or danger to the safety of the country, a government has no right to take risks. No government can boast that its doings are foolproof, especially not in the Middle East, and especially not when so much personal ambition is added, and so much venom is directed ad hominem against the opposition.

In the past Israel had been strong enough to fight on her own the combined forces of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and the PLO. But each of these countries is today supplied by either Iran and Saudia - and in addition also by Europe and America - with the most modern arms and provided with the appropriate training. Israel knows that it can defend itself only with the help of America; that it requires from there not only diplomatic but also technical and financial help. Israel knows also, that it would be unrealistic to expect, that the US will continue for much longer - or even to increase - the payments it makes to Israel. Israel has since more than thirty years been under constant american pressure; and it knows also, that the US has first of all and above all its own interests at heart; and that there are in the Middle East over 200 million Moslems who own much of the world's oil and represent a huge market.

Israel is well aware, that facts and conditions have changed in the last two decades or so; that also US policy changes with every new Administration. The "Roger Plan" demanded the more or less total retreat

to the 1967 lines. In 1975 the Ford Administration declared that "...the US has not developed a final plan. If so, any peace arrangement with Syria must be predicated on Israel remaining on the Golan Heights". In 1977 Carter's Cyril Vance returned to the US' former policy. The Clinton Administration urges Israel "to go down from the Golan". The argument is, that the territory belongs to Syria.

Will it ever be possible for Israel to gain some degree of goodwill from the neighbouring arab states, I am asking again ? Or at least from the Palestinians in their adjoining independent state ? Israel does and will do its best, I am sure. The will has always been there. It depends only on the readiness and willingness of Israel's Arabs to acknowledge Israel's sovereignty. It depends on their readiness to accept Israel's existence.

They explain their negative attitudes with a list of complaints. Some of these are certainly justified. Among these is their complaint that they do not enjoy an equal status with the Jews. But they alone bear the responsibility for this situation. Likewise justified are their grievances about not enjoying the same advantages as the Israelis. It is true that the inhabitants of the eastern half of Jerusalem, for instance, have not always been receiving the same services as those living in the western part. But also for this the Arabs have to blame themselves: had they not obstinately refused to take part in municipal elections, they would have had an influential, possibly even a decisive influence on the policy-making proceedings of the Municipality. The same applies to other towns in Israel, and - as I have already pointed out before - also to the elections for the Knesseth.

Even so, the Arabs' standard of living has dramatically improved since they have come under israeli rule. The most opulent houses in Jerusalem belong to Arabs. Year in year out the Jerusalem Municipality spends as much money on the eastern part of the city as on the western half. Per capita this amounts to three times more spent on the Arabs than on the Jews.

The arab sector of Jerusalem receives today truly excellent services and facilities of a kind it had never known before; certainly not while it was in Jordan's hands. Such services do not exist in any other arab town in the Middle East.

To give an example from the medical field: when in

1967 Jerusalem was united, Government built the health clinics in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. No arab or foreign donors paid for this. Nor was arab tax money used for this. These clinics count today among the best in the country. On an average they treat daily between 900-1000 patients. They are staffed by first-class arab doctors and nurses who have graduated from Israel's Medical Colleges.

Israel had from the beginning made peace one of its main objects. "Only a country that has never known peace could have attached so much importance to that phrase", as Henry Kissinger said. Israel has since its establishment sincerely and arduously pursued the establishment of peaceful relations with its neighbours; and, as far as this was possible, with the entire moslem world. Not rarely has it offered surprisingly generous concessions. In its search for peace and recognition, Israel has proved its willingness to forget the mostly unpleasant past. Nevermind that this very often demands from the Israelis an amnesia for unforgivable historical facts. And equally unfortunate is the loss of much self-respect which such steps involve. Still, the persistent endeavours have here and there shown some positive results. But only time will show, whether the peace so far achieved with Jordan and the Palestinians, for example, will truly be a peace; will be a lasting peace; will not be the kind of "cold peace" which exists with Egypt.

Most people in Israel are not optimistic, however. I hear far too often Jonathan Swift's quote, that "promises and pie crusts are made to be broken". And Arafat's never ceasing call for a "long Jihad, a hard Jihad, an arduous Jihad" - the tape of which Peres called a forgery but Arafat himself acknowledged as genuine - as well as his constant references to Muhammad's breaking, when it was convenient, the pact he had made with the jewish tribes, will hardly contribute to the peace of mind of the average Israeli, nor to the confidence of even the most optimistic Jew.

If there is anything the large majority of Israel agrees upon as a helpful solution of at least most of the problems, it is the physical separation of Palestinians and Israelis. It is a secure fence separating the two sides. It is the total separation of the two sides. It is the conviction, that Israel is much better off without the 1½ million Arabs of Judaea and Samaria, of Gaza and the West Bank.

In all questions relating to a peace with Arab States, the state of peace with Egypt is cited as a dangerous paradigm. I have on previous

occasions ventured my opinion about Israel's relationship with Egypt, but it bears repeating. Israel's relationship with Egypt does not merit to be called either a cold or warm peace. Nobody can in all honesty describe the actual relationship with Egypt as a state of peace. At best it is only an armistice. The tone is exclusively set by the Egyptians. The Israeli ambassador is treated like a pariah while his Egyptian counter-part in Tel-Aviv is everywhere received as an honoured guest; and is not even rebuked whenever he interferes in Israel's internal politics. Egypt, however, ignores at best the Ambassador of Israel. It does not even allow Israelis to participate in its fairs and exhibitions. Egyptians are not allowed to visit Israel either as tourists nor as businessmen. Egyptians are not allowed to take part in any of the international congresses which regularly take place in Israel. Egypt votes against Israel whenever it has an opportunity, be it in the UN or in other international bodies. It has been revealed, that at the time the peace negotiations between Israel and Jordan were under way, Egyptian diplomats tried to dissuade the Jordanians; and for good measure - with the promise of persuading Saudi Arabia to invest in their countries - tried to induce South American governments to close down their embassies in Jerusalem.

It seems to me that in Israel and abroad the situation is misinterpreted because peace movements in the Middle East are compared with those in Europe or elsewhere. Nobody should know this better than Hosni Mubarak, the President of Egypt, who advised an Israeli interviewer "...my friends, you are not in Europe. Had you talked of a new Europe, it would not have sounded too bad. But a new Middle East?"

It appears, that also among Israel's friends and foes the illusion is waning, that Israel's superior forces and better armament will keep in check any military adventure Egypt may plan against Israel. For, according to Avihu Bin Nun - Israel's former Airforce Chief - since the Camp David Agreement Israel possesses no more the former qualitative military superiority over its neighbours, because the Egyptians, Saudis, Kuwaitis - in payment for not sabotaging the Camp David Arrangement - are receiving from the Americans every advanced weapon system which Israel receives. "Worse still", Bin Nun says, "is the fact, that since some time Israel often refrains from requesting a new kind of weapon system lest the Arabs too are supplied with it."

Military experts agree that Egypt is steadily arming. And this can only mean that it is arming against Israel. But even if Israel

thinks it can trust the commonsense and goodwill of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, his position is shaky and his survival is endangered; and it would be more than inappropriate to extend such a trust on any of his eventual successors.

But still, the kind of "peace" in which Israel lives with Egypt would appear ideal in comparison with the one eventually reached with Syria.

I hear today again the solution proposed, which in his time the then Foreign Minister Aba Eban had offered; the one which had been on the program of a group sailing under the name of "Canaanites"; the one which I thought had since long met the death it merits, viz:- that total peace will come "only when we have organized ourselves into the semitic region" without feeling bound to, or responsible for the Diaspora, with whom we have no affinity nor blood-relationship. I am not going to go into a further discussion of this idea and proposal, as I have dealt with their essence already in one of the preceding chapters.

We have to face the fact, that Arabs and Jews are separated by a wall of mutual hatred and distrust; which has increased over the years; and which has not ceased to grow. The Israeli population is afraid of the Palestinians, because these have proved themselves willing tools in the hands of the Hamas leaders who stay safely in the background while zombie-like boys blow themselves up.

There is in addition also a great area of misunderstanding which separates these two ethnic entities in Israel. The Jews from their side - let us concede - have made little if any effort to bridge this separation. They could and should have done so in time. They could and should have done so in the earlier years of the State. They should at least have made an effort to do so. Israel has, in addition, from the beginning committed the unforgivable mistake of not including in the school curriculum the study of Arab culture and customs. Neither has Israel thought it important to educate the young Israelis in the basic tenets of Islam. Nor has Israel ever bothered to make the learning of the Arabic language obligatory in all schools.

Here originates much of the dissent between Arabs and Jews. In view of Israel's political, social and demographic situation it should have been unimaginable that Israelis do not also speak Arabic; that Israelis do not know the basic principles of Islam; that Israelis are not familiar with the Arabs' customs and culture. Except for those who were born in an Arab country, none of the politicians or other leaders in Israel speaks, or at least

sufficiently understands, spoken arabic.

From this self-inflicted deficiency; and from the great harm it has done, Israel will suffer for a long time to come.

But nobody can deny, that Israel has entered with goodwill and honest intention - possibly also free of preconceived ideas and certainly without openly stated preconditions - into negotiations with Jordan, her former enemy, even though Israelis cannot have forgotten - and must still feel bitter about - the total destruction of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem. Israelis cannot have forgotten that Jordan, during the 19 years it occupied the Old City of Jerusalem, has destroyed the 58 synagogues which had functioned there; has desecrated the jewish cemeteries on Mount Olives. The Israelis cannot have forgotten either, that Jordan had expelled from the Old City all Jews it had not killed; that Jordan had issued the order that no Jew is allowed to reside, or even to visit Jordan. But for the sake of peace Israelis have buried all these memories wholeheartedly and eagerly. They have honestly and truly welcomed their Government's peace moves towards Jordan, feeling assured that the jordanian King and his government are honest in their quest for peace.

However ! Even though the israeli-jordanian peace treaty has been welcomed by the vast majority of Israelis; even though most are convinced that among all the neighbouring states Jordan is the only arab country whose intentions can be trusted, also the peace with Jordan can by no means called absolutely and totally secured. Considering the realities in the Middle East; and in view of a large sector of Jordanians opposing any peace with Israel, nobody can ever be sure, whether a peace treaty will remain valid for long. And thus nobody can predict, whether the peace with Jordan - after all the concessions Israel has made in territory and water sources; and after all the financial bonus the US has dropped into King Hussain's lap - will really be a sincere peace; will remain a true peace.

Israel has in the peace treaty conceded more than Jordan could at best have expected. Had the Jews in Israel - or even in the Diaspora - been consulted, they would hardly ever have agreed to these concessions. However, one thing is sure: Israel cannot be blamed should the peaceful relations with Jordan sour; or should it at best turn into the kind of peace which exists between Egypt and Israel.

However, many Israelis have a major objection against the peace treaty with Jordan: the Israel Government's cession of all its rights to the Temple Mount, the holiest place in Judaism. It has greatly surprised me, that even Rabbi Obadia Joseph, the spiritual and virtual head of the Shas Party, and for some time the ultra-orthodox partner in the coalition Government led by the Labour Party, has agreed to this deal. These very orthodox people, like Rabin's own secularist followers, appear to be satisfied with the "Wailing Wall", the paradigm of a pseudo-holy place.

Only time will show, whether by giving in and giving up Israel's Government has committed a blunder, if not a sin, which will be very difficult, nay impossible, ever to correct. Except perhaps by the Messiah. Until then one thing is certain: future generations will not forgive.

Similarly risky - to me in its over-generosity incomprehensible - appears the Government of Israel's dealings with the Palestinians. Even though its mistrust for Arafat and his PLO cannot have in the slightest abated, Israel's leaders dealt with them in an open, honest and supportive way. This, I am certain, is wrongly interpreted by Arafat and his people. They cannot but think this kind of Israeli policy as the result of their own cleverness, - which will stimulate them to take unwarranted risks; or as evidence of Israeli gullibility, will make them make more and more demands. Arafat, whose position in the Palestinian make-up had been quite shaky - has been given a boost and has seen his authority restored. He has also gained many other unexpected advantages. He has quite clearly outmaneuvered the Israeli side, because he knew the psychology of Peres and Rabin; because he was aware of their ambitions; and because Peres was determined to make the Israelis see Arafat surrounded by a shiny halo.

In the first year following the affixation of the signatures on the Oslo Agreement of September 1993, nearly a hundred Jews were killed. The number was more than double that of the preceding year. I am not a military expert; I have to rely on what the majority of experts in Israel and abroad have to tell us: that the concessions Rabin and Peres have with the consent of their cabinet ministers made to Arafat - and worse still those they are granting Syria's Hafez al Asad - are liable to endanger the very existence of Israel.

It is not so much a dispute than a tragedy, that in the Israel-Arab Conflict both sides think their own claims justified and not those of the other side. And this difficulty is compounded by the reality, that the opposing claims are totally irreconcilable. About forty, possibly even fifty years ago - i.e. when Arabs and Jews first met head on - chances for a conciliation, and conditions for an understanding, were more favourable. In those early years it might have been possible for the two peoples to come to a true and binding agreement. But this opportunity was destroyed the moment the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs was turned into an important pawn on the checkerboard of world politics; the moment the Ayatollahs and Maulvis took over the rule in the name of a religion which makes them responsible only to Allah.

It is quite evident, that the number of terrorist groups driven by religious rather than political zealotry is on the rise. And the continuation and the nourishing of this conflict have nowadays become an indispensable prop in the endeavours of the autocratic arab rulers to maintain their power.

Wide circles seem to think, that economic insufficiency is, if not a sine qua non at least an important factor for inducing the Palestinians to indulge in terrorism. No doubt, the palestinian economy is sick and - in view of the rich arab states abstaining from providing the moneys needed - much time will be required for its starting even on its path to recovery. Palestinians had formerly a good reputation as workers, teachers, clerks, doctors. They found well-paid employment in most arab states. Nowadays this is no more the case. This is not only due to the persisting animosity against the Palestinians because Arafat was on the side of Saddam Hussain during the Gulf War, but because the Palestinians have become more radicalized; because they mix terror with religious duties. The autocratic arab regimes are afraid now of the radicalized Palestinians.

And for similar reasons it has come about, that the palestinian workers have eliminated themselves also from Israel's labour market. The non-palestinian workers brought to Israel from abroad are certainly no less efficient in agriculture, in construction, in the restaurants. They are not even more expensive than the Palestinians. And they will certainly not engage in sabotage. Nor will they think it their duty to kill Jews.

Even the Bedouins of Israel, who so far had been reliable citizens of Israel, have become radicalized. They have become more religiously engaged; and this means they too do now incline to fundamentalism. For example: the bedouin town Rehab had in 1988 only one mosque where hardly 50 people came for prayers on Fridays. Only seven years later there are five mosques usually packed with worshippers.

Everybody agrees, that it is important for the Palestinians to gain economic sufficiency; but to the Israelis the lives of their children is much more important.

The political aspect of the adversity against Israel, so eagerly and righteously cultivated everywhere in moslem countries; and also so assiduously maintained by most of the democratic world at large - combined with the never exhausted pool of international antisemitism - have in recent years to some degree been less noticeable; or are at least less openly manifested, since Israel has entered into "peace-dealings" with her neighbours. India, China and a number of Third World countries have overcome the tabu their sympathy for, or their business interests in, the arabs states, had erected against relations with Israel. Also the arab boycott is losing some of its carious teeth. Even relations with the US seemed to be friendlier than ever. But this should not lead us to assume, that the eternal threat to Israel's existence has grown less.

Let us not hesitate to tell ourselves, that Israel's dependency on the US is also its strength. I think I am not mistaken in my impression, that Israel and the Israelis have been greatly surprised - possibly even shocked - when the eventuality was aired in the American Congress, that the infinite continuation of the longstanding reciprocally advantageous relationship with America should not be taken for granted; and that - in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Empire - Israel's usefulness to the United States' eastern strategy and policy has now been vastly reduced if not eliminated. No less worrisome is to Israel and the Israelis the support the American Government gives the syrian claim to the ownership of the Golan Heights, and to the Palestinians to their claim to at least half of Jerusalem. It is fortunate, that Israel continues to enjoy, even under the changed circumstances, much sympathy and great support in Congress and among

most of the people of America. And Israel learned with gratitude, that also the Republican Senators and Representatives in Congress have declared their opposition to a continuation of the policy of Bush and Baker; and that they have promised to continue the US Government's support for Israel.

But does this mean, that Israel will be able to remain in possession of the Golan Heights ? And can Israel, in case it is deprived of the Golan, survive without this vital line of defense ? The occasion in Tiberias is engraved on my mind, when Guenther Scholl saw the Golan Heights and spontaneously exclaimed: "You must never give up that mountain range".

Everybody - whether expert or not - will point out, that the income and livelihood of the Palestinians has become dependant on Israel. In the past they had a good reputation as workers and it was not difficult to fit them into Israel's economy, though at a lower level. But this is no more the case. The palestinian worker is no more as reliable as before, and not as trustworthy. This regrettable change has led to an increased estrangement between the two sides, which strengthens the negative attitude of the Israelis, steadily feeds the resentment of the Palestinians, and nourishes their mutual hatred. In other words: the prognosis has worstened still more.

Will the great mutual hatred between Jews and Arabs, which has accumulated over the years, ever cease ? Or will it continue to grow and fester still more ? The Palestinians are taught from childhood on, that Jews are not a nation; that they have no right on and in Israel; that it is the Moslem's duty to Allah to liberate Jerusalem and Palestine from the clutches of the Jews. It is discouranging, even frightening, to hear small arab children repeat the hate-slogans they learn from the adults; with which they are bombarded in the mosques; and with which they are most likely also indoctrinated in their schools. When these children grow up, they will find it only natural to strive and work for the destruction of Israel.

And it is no less depressing to hear - following one of the frequent terrorist acts - old and young Jews shout "Death to the Arabs".

They all - these kinds of Arabs and these types of Jews - may be of great danger for the survival of Israel.

Will israeli society, which has been traumatized by the excesses of the extremist Islamists, ever adjust to a normal existence ? Will it be able to forget and collaborate in the knowledge that it has not sinned less ? Will Israelis possibly judge all they live through as a test ? Will Israel ever live in peace ? Or will it have to be satisfied with a situation, where it has to keep its military strength superior to that of all the arab states combined, in order to deter its enemies from attacking ? Will it have to nurse, and even increase, its nuclear power ?

I am afraid the answer to most all these questions has to be in the affirmative. I see that such a policy will remain the guideline also for the future. The deciding factor, however - next to the nation's military power - will always be the moral fortitude of the israeli people, as I have repeatedly underlined.

Will the time ever come when the Arabs - and with them the entire moslem world - agree, that Israel has a right to exist ? And in addition, that the Jews have the right to call Israel their homeland and Jerusalem their own ? The arabian fantasy - with justification so very famous because of its incongruity - has been working overtime. The Arabs claim, that they are direct descendants of the Jebusites and Canaanites, the ancient peoples who had built the original Jerusalem; and that the Jews of today are preposterous in their claiming to be descendants of the original Isralites. The Moslems' wise researchers and clever anthropologues have discovered, that today's Jews are in reality a people made up of various races and origins, who once upon a time - and at a far later than the biblical stage - have converted to Judaism.

I am reminded of the late Dr. Khedouri's explanation of the Arabs' attitude to realities. The immediate military successes Islam enjoyed in the 7th and 8th centuries, he said, gave the Moslems the impression, that Allah was fighting on their side. Similarly the predominance of large oil deposits in arab domains must have confirmed them in their conviction, that they are beloved by Allah, and that they have a mission to fulfill. This must have formed their opinion, that all non-Moslems are inferior to them. This must be the cause why they have never taken an interest in other cultures. This must be the reason why they do not take the aspirations of other peoples into account. This must be the explanation why they are not interested in democracy.

And this must be the reason, why they create fantasies to explain away historic facts. Thus - in what appears to be the first shot against the christian world - the Moslems now maintain Jesus to have been a palestinian Arab. This made them also invent a new people, to which they gave the name Palestinians; a name which properly belongs to the Jews. It is equally a fantasy - born from disdain for truth and human intelligence; and is a distortion by political considerations - that Jerusalem is the third holy place in Islam; that it is the cradle of Islam; that it had once been the capital of an ancient arab Palestine. On the basis of this fantasy the "Jerusalem 3000 Festival" is attacked by moslem states; is boycotted by much of Europe; is avoided by America.

The main base on which the Moslems' claim to Jerusalem rests, is a tradition that their Prophet Muhammad had a vision once, in which he started his ride into the heavens from the Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount. But his place of departure has never been clearly named in the Qu'ran; and the Aqsa Mosque was built 650 years after Muhammad's death; and before that it had been a byzantine church !

To my mind this confirms more than anything else, that the Arabs and Moslems could well do with a more complete secular education. Their world is built on conformity and consonance. It is a world where opposition can express itself only in militancy; and where criticism is heresy. It makes it impossible for them to accept even what is the obvious truth; and they have not the leaders who would ever care to tell them the truth.

And again I cannot avoid going on with my asking: will the actually existing conflict situation ever be eliminated ? Will the Arabs ever be ready to accept facts which conflict with their legends ? Will they ever recognize the truths which disagree with their fantasies ? Will they ever distinguish the realities which contradict the hearsay in circulation ? In other words: will there be ever true peace in our region ? In other words still: will the moslem world ever be modernized in all its layers ?

The number of Moslems is increasing also in the West, not only by immigration or fertility but also by the conversion of elements who seek an anchor for their religiosity, but have been repulsed by what they had known before. More and more mosques are built abroad. A decade ago there was only one mosque in Holland; now there are three hundred

of them. It is estimated that there are today 1.2 billion Moslems in the world. The number of Fundamentalists and the degree of their extremism show constant growth. With the expanding influence of the islamic extremists there is no hope, that the existing state of affairs among Moslems; that their stagnation in modern culture and development, will soon come to pass. Even though the ideology of Hamas; and even though the program of the other terrorist groups, who - indoctrinated, financed and nourished by Iran and Sudan - kill in the name of Islam; and even though the radical movements which dictate the policy today, have in truth nothing in common with Islam, their violence is sweeping now through all the north-african countries.

Talking about Fundamentalism, let me mention that also christian fundamentalism, placed on the political right, has grown in strength. It has turned no less aggressive than that of Islam. In the US it wants to give religion a greater role in the schools; it wants Christianity to have more impact on public life; and - riding on the back of its actual political advantage - it wants to gain power also in the political arena. It is our luck, that this christian fundamentalist movement is very supportive of Israel.

The Christian Right refers its politics to the Bible, but its spiritual and religious directives not always follow the ethics outlined in Scripture; it often neglects the fact that the basic demand of religion, the christian included, is the equality of man in whatever circumstance. However, without unfavourably criticising the Christian Right whenever we feel affected because in its wake antisemitism has in many parts of the States been awakened; and without negatively reacting to the right-wing extremism and isolationist wing in american politics who invoke populist bigotry including anti-jewish attitudes, let us always keep in mind, that whatever affects or harms the US; that whatever changes take place in the US, will one way or other very likely affect also Israel. And whereas christian teaching has been and is a very important factor in the creation, the degree, the spread and the maintenance of antisemitism, the growing trend to remove the barrier which has for the last 200 years separated Church and State in the US, should be of great concern also to the Jews of Israel.

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An optimist ponders
about his people's survival
pt. 4 (p. 310-400) ch. 14-18

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14.

Does the Israeli's character assure Israel's survival ?

Those who sit back and resignedly declare that fundamentally and in principle nothing much has changed over the centuries, even over the millennia, may be somehow not too wrong. We possess knowledge one would never have thought possible, it is true, and have acquired now technical capabilities which astonishes even the most sophisticated snob; but we are much the victims of our human weaknesses; are as much the slaves of our vices and faults; are as much exposed to man's cruelty and selfishness; and are as helpless when confronted by nature's unrestrainable forces, as ever before.

At no time does mankind enjoy today a satisfactorily relaxed life; and nowhere is it granted a peacefully secured existence. Our's is not a happy and peaceful world. I will go even so far as to say, that in these our days we face a world more vulgar and harsh, more evil and hostile, more violent and crude than previous generations ever had to face. Modern western culture is deteriorating due to a growing rate of illegitimacy; due to a combination of drugs and homicide; due to a low grade education; due to family breakups and the growth of welfare needs. Uneasiness reigns among the peoples; barriers exist between the societies; tension is never absent between the countries; and jealousies mar the coexistence of the nations. Even more than that: one senses a hidden fear lurking everywhere underneath the surface.

As most of the world to degree or other does, we too have to measure our security and future by what goes on in the US, how the US reacts, what worries the US. We take notice how apprehensive the US is about its future generation. It is especially uneasy with, and fearful of, its black population. In America - of which alone I have at this moment the statistics - homicidal death is the by far leading cause of death among black children. From 1960 to 1991 the rate of homicide death among children under the age of 19 has more than quadrupled. Each year about 1300 children are killed either by their parents or a near relative. From 1985 to 1992 alone the homicide rate for young white males went up by 50%; but it tripled for young black males. In the same period the suicide

among children has tripled. The rate of birth by teenagers has doubled. Today 30% of all births, and 70% of all black births, are illegitimate. "Legions of american children are growing up without fathers, with children for parents, in neighbourhoods so dangerous that they can only hope to make it through the week, rather than plan for the future", says an editorial in the New York Times.

These statistics are not and do not apply only to the America. Without exception all the world is worried and uneasy about what the future may bring. The Japanese are uneasy with, and fearful of, the growing economic and military strength of their neighbours. With a similar apprehension the soviet successor states look at Mother Russia posturing as their self-appointed guardian. For similar reasons Israel is uneasy. It reacts defensively to the threats incessantly pouring from the islamic world. And the islamic world itself is uneasy with, and fearful of, the islamic-fundamentalist movements it harbours.

But these are not the only sources and outgrowths of the fear which is gripping the world of today. There are many more.

There is, for instance, not a country in the world where the complaint is not heard that marriages are no more of the same quality as before.

This I find fittingly expressed in a cartoon I saw, in which one young adult said to the other: "it is only marriage I am proposing after all, and not a lifetime committment".

I would not know of a country - at least in the democratic West - which is not worried about the increasing crime rate within its borders; and about the criminals from abroad who are active on its soil. To use a comparison from the realm of medical pathology: crime spreads as if carried by a contagious virus. It affects and infects mostly the youth. American statistics are truly frightening, as I have just now pointed out. The number of drug addicts goes on increasing. With the Israelis imitating everything american, we can expect soon also Israel to show this trend.

And deep inside every nation's subconscious layers there is - only for the first time openly conceded during the "Bosnia Embroglio" - the disappointment that the United Nations Organization, which had been created to bring about peace, order and relaxation betwen nations and countries, has turned out to be a total failure. Is it a wonder,

therefore, that the goodwill originally poured into its foundations has soured ?

What is going to happen ? What will be the outcome ? Will some kind of an explosion relax this tension and remove these fears ? Alas, I better do not talk so flippantly about explosions, when in our days murderous explosions are more frequent than ever.

How does this actual state of the world affect Israel ? Has Jewry cause to worry ? Does the environment in which Israel finds itself to be seen as a danger zone for Israel's survival ? Or at least as a contributing factor to the never abolished danger ?

Israelis, especially in times the economy flourishes, strive to adopt whatever is trendy and fashionable in the world. Their care for the common good, on the other hand, has become greatly reduced. The Israeli is today more interested in enjoying the advantages of the open market economy; in benefitting from the easier available travel arrangements; and in making use of all the other facilities available to the consumer society which Israel has become.

By all means ! Let Israel, along with other developed countries take part in, and benefit from the changing cycles of economic wellbeing; but it should never permit itself to slacken its caution and precautions; nor to guard its good name; nor to slacken in the supervision of the quality of what it commercially produces.

And let Israel carefully watch and weigh the fact, that the global economic centre is shifting to Asia; that Asia is getting richer while the West is getting poorer. It can be taken for granted that in not too long a time China, Malasia, Indonesia, South Korea will be ruling the world economy. They will certainly not be handicaped by western scruples. Israel will have to make every effort to fit into the new world.

And Israel will have to take all precautions not to inflict social injustice on its own people. Will it avoid developing the narrowed vision which affects many other countries ? Will it be one of the countries which do not see the disadvantaged in their society ? The economy is booming at the moment; the building industry is flourishing; new shopping malls are added, but the working class is getting poorer while the businessmen are getting richer; while the twons get dirtier; and while the ecology is threatened.

One of the israeli societies which care for the wellbeing of the

child reported in 1995, that more than 125 000 children suffer from malnutrition. An international survey revealed, that israeli children are next to the irish ones the poorest in the western world.

Bituach Le'umi, the National Insurance Institute, reports that at least 200 000 families -- of which 80 000 are single-parents households -- have fallen below the poverty line;

that at least 100 000 elderly people subsist on little or no pension;

that more than 300 000 israeli citizens were currently facing criminal persecution, and possible imprisonment, as a result of debts they have incurred or loans they have signed on as guarantors;

that some 132 000 citizens have been barred from the banking system because they can no longer balance their checking accounts;

that people on fixed income cannot afford to pay for basic public utilities like phones and buses;

that underemployment and large pockets of unemployment have impoverished isolated development towns, caravan villages and entire neighbourhoods.

However, having said all this; and having mentioned the many factors which may have a negative effect on Israel and indirectly on the jewish world, I have to repeat myself and state again my firm conviction, that these trends and fashions, these weaknesses and faults do in reality not matter; that Judaism's future greatly depends on, and that Israel's fate will be largely decided by, the moral quality of the jewish society as a whole. And that it depends even more on that of each and every individual Jew. The moral calibre and fortitude of the Jews are the considerations which I see as one of the main pre-conditions for Israel's continued existence and Judaism's survival. These are the reflections, and this is the viewpoint and the angle, which induce me to make the attempt to view -- and in the following pages to review -- Israel's chances for survival.

Lawlessness of the extent; felonies of the severity; and crimes of the brutality so common in the States and in other western countries, are fortunately unknown in Israel, even though the country is not always spared, as is shown by the case of the two pre-teenage boys who killed a taxi driver "just for fun".

Israeli society has been greatly shaken by this latter event. Israelis had never thought such a case possible in Israel. Now one dares not anymore exclude similar,

formerly impossible thought crimes like those committed by Susan Smith and the Menendez boys. Though unjustified, this fear will, hopefully, remove Israel's and Israelis' trend to complacency and bring home to them, that they are not immune to such kind of crimes; that it is an illusion to think they are a different people insofar as such types of crimes never happen among Jews; and that this will free the educational and instances from the illusion, that this was a single event not an indication that Israelis and Jews too are affected by the universally ongoing deterioration of morals.

However, I venture to say - basing myself mainly on what I learn from personal contacts and from the newsmedia - Israel's youth is, in comparison with that of other western countries, less lawless and more restrained. I dare to explain this difference with the inborn, home-transmitted and family-bred morality, which is activated even in the Jew least conscious of his Jewishness. I further explain this fact with the strong family bonds among Jews, which will never be totally torn. I explain this phenomenon further with the Jew's higher developed conscience; with his traditionally transmitted conscience; with his stronger functioning conscience. It is not a conscience enforced from outside or from above. It is not the conscience enforced on the individual by party politics. It is not the conscience created by an ideological indoctrination. It is not the kind of conscience which the Church had in medieval times forced on the Christians with the help of torture and fire. It is not the kind of conscience which the Church continues to make grow in the individual by the threat of hell and brimstone. And, finally, it is neither the kind of doctrinaire conscience, which continues to dominate human society in the islamic countries of the Middle East, where - to ensure an orderly conduct of their affairs - state and religious authorities make use of their immense power to exert unrestricted control over its citizens' and followers' conduct.

What I have written just now was inspired by my having been thinking of the unique jewish conscience, which is based on adherence to the specific jewish ethical laws and commandments, which are enveloped in the specific jewish tradition; and which are encapsulated in the specific jewish history. And I was thinking of the passage in Deuteronomy, when Moses lectured the Israelis while still on the other side of the Jordan River: "...and thou shalt remember all the way the Lord had led thee those forty years in the wildernss, to humble thee, to test thee, to know what was in thy heart".

Judaism's survival depends - as I have pointed out at various times

and will never cease to underline again and again - on the Jews' never wavering awareness of their Jewishness. And Israel's assured survival will always be intimately associated with the quality of its Jewish core.

I base my hope, that Israel will for a long time to come survive physically strong, culturally deepened and universally beneficial; and I justify my positive outlook and optimistic expectations of Judaism's survival with a bright future, on my positive evaluation of what I know of the boys and girls of the actual generation; on the scale I judge Israel's human material; and, unashamedly, on my hope how the future Jewish generations will grow and develop.

Watching and observing the young people of Israel I claim to be fully justified in my optimism. And particularly in the conduct of the promising elements among our youth do I see our people's ethical guidelines reflected. In them I sense translated into reality Judaism's claim, that it rests on a great cultural basis; that the Jews are justified to boast of their uneradicable ethical past; that the Jews can assert never - even in times of great dangers, not even when under great provocations - to have abandoned their moral steadfastness; that we may expect to see, how our ethical values will always form an integral part of, and will always be extended into, our basic national hopes and aspirations.

And it is my fervent wish and prayer, that we shall always remain vigilant to ward off temptations leading to moral slackness; that we shall always be aware of the threats facing our ethical heritage; that we shall always remain conscious of the weaknesses in our character; that we shall always detect in time what may imperil our decency; that we shall always resist the inducements which might seduce us to leave the straight path.

The IDF, Israel's Army, which every fit boy and girl has to join at the age of eighteen, makes a valuable contribution to the maintenance of the high moral level in Israel's society. The Army - expected not only to defend the country but also to serve as an educational medium - has taken it upon itself to fill in the many lacunae in the recruits' education; and to erase, by the experience its soldiers share, the differences between poor and rich; between native and immigrant.

However, having said all this on turning my optimistic view of Israel towards the light; and having aired my sincere and honest, my optimism-born opinion and expectation of Israel's inner strength and

of Judaism's assured survival, truth and honesty demand of me also, that I turn and expose now the country's shadowy side; that I do not omit to mention the lurking dangers; that I do not hesitate to point to the negative factors, with which Israel has to struggle.

All the hopes and wishes I have lined up; all the prognostications and diagnoses I have presented, may turn shaky under the strain caused by the political, social and cultural differentials which are developing in Israel's society. Even though Israel's economy has all through the last few years been steadily growing and strengthening, the Treasury reports that year by year the gap between rich and poor is widening.

Israel can boast of large sector of very rich people. But the gap between the rich and the poor is among the highest in the world. In Israel the wage differential between the top and bottom salaries is 1:30, while in Sweden and Norway it is 1:4. The visible luxury in housing appear to give the lie to the poor state of the economy. I wonder, how many have achieved their luxury homes, cars, travel expenses by rightful means; or whether on their own, that is, and not by powerful benefits from government.

Those who have accumulated some degree of a fortune belong, as a rule, to the new generation which has grown up in freedom; which excels in determination and skill; which faces the world with daring and luck. The large sector of the less enterprising and less fortunate Israelis is made up of the increasingly enlarging sector of ageing people; and is augmented by new immigrants who have not yet found a place in the free economy, or at least not a niche in the job market.

Also the majority among the veteran Israelis belong to the financially less favoured. They had arrived as Zionist pioneers without any property, and have since not accumulated any. There is the additional reason why these veteran citizens are less in the pecuniary limelight: most of them live still in one of the 283 kibbutzim. There they feel happy and not out of place, because they continue to live and work for their ideal, for the building of an egalitarian society.

Israelis never had it as good as now. Notwithstanding what I said above about the economy of the country, they are collectively richer than they ever were. They are richer on an average than the citizens of many a developed country, than for instance Portugal, Spain and Italy. The number of vehicles on the streets of Israel has doubled in the last 5-6 years.

The more wealth the Israeli owns, the bigger the luxury car he drives. It is more disturbing than impressive

that the fifty luxury Jaguars, imported on a special license, have been sold within a month at a price of up to \$170 000 each - at about the same price of a 3-4 room apartment.

Whenever the economy in Israel is showing signs of improving -- this, as also elsewhere, happens usually in waves - the never dormant Israeli's self-assurance, self-assertion and self-centeredness will reveal themselves to a large degree, and will explode into an increased consumption on all fronts. And not vice versa, as should normally be the case. Half of Israel's population spends its vacation abroad. Israel has a great number of supermarkets and shopping malls; and these overflow with imported goods at prices which would have caused a shudder not so long ago; of a kind, which would not even have been heard of a few years ago. But what is offered - and eagerly bought - is not different from the quality of israeli produce; and is produced in Israel now and available at a much cheaper price.

Israeli tourists turn up in masses abroad. And neither they nor anybody else has any doubt, that they are not liked, but are welcome everywhere for the money they spend. They are strongly attracted by Casinos where they can gamble. In fact, when working on their travel plans, many are known to select only a place which boasts of a casino. No wonder that there is so much pressure to have casinos established also in some of the hotels in Israel.

But it seems to me, on hearing and watching the Israelis, that the greater wellbeing and the greater consumption do not mean also a greater happiness. I may even say, no happiness at all.

I cannot avoid the impression, that the average Israeli lives for the day; that he does not care for the future; that he does not even think of the future. His horizon is limited by his personal interests; and he does not like to get involved in anything beyond that range. He leaves everything to "them" in the government or in his political party. When he expresses a political opinion he usually does so in a very forceful and aggressive way; and when he expresses a favourable opinion about a fellow-politician or even a fellow-citizen - I cannot avoid thinking that he is in danger of biting the tongue he keeps in his cheek.

As I said already, all my apprehension may be due to my inexperience in such matters. Except for these last twenty odd years that I live in Israel, there has been only one time when I experienced a closed Jewish society, what one may call a Jewish community. This was during the last war, when I was confined along with my family, to the Internment Camps in Purandhar and Satara. But there it was not difficult for me to avoid getting involved in the petty quarrels, which can be taken as "normal" among the tense and unhappy people confined to a prisoner camp. In my "home-town" Oberhausen I had been too young to care about the community's problems; there I had so many other things to worry about, so that it never came to my mind to take notice of what was going on within the community. Of course, I do not overlook the fact, that also the Jews of Oberhausen had been under great stress during those unpleasant inter-war years.

Therefore, in view of my limited personal experiences; and because I have never indulged in sociological studies, I cannot judge whether in any other Jewish society the fermentation of so much hostility is a common - or even only a "not unusual institution" - as among the Jews restricted to those two prison camps I have known. Of course, I have not overlooked, that during the years the war was raging in Europe and Asia, all of us over there in India were under an extremely great and never ceasing pressure. Does such inner tension exist also in other closed-in groups? Do such cliques - so bitterly hostile to each other - form also outside camps and prisons? And even if this is so, do the Jews more than others harbour more of such a trait?

And should this indeed be the case, the question arises whether this trait or tendency to hostility; whether these expressions of a hardly repressed aggressiveness, have any connection with the high rate of victims in road accidents in Israel; whether this aggressiveness is reflected in the large number of accidents in the work places; whether this aggressiveness is associated with the large number of women murdered by their husbands; whether this aggressiveness has a relation with the 25 accidental deaths of soldiers, and with the 43 suicide cases in the army during the year 1994 alone?

I do not know - but I am apprehensive.

The Jewish society in Israel is divided into many factions. More often than not these are antagonistic to each other; and usually these are more inclined to act in opposition to, than to harmonize with, each other. An observer wandering through the streets of a town in Israel

at any time of day or night; or listening to a discussion between friends or strangers; or reading reports of cabinet or Knesseth meetings, will easily find confirmation of what I have said. Whatever the theme of a discussion between opposing Israelis may be, the tone is mostly acerbic and the language usually lamentable. It is a common - and a commonly accepted - habit of political opponents to verbally insult each other personally or globally.

I could give many an example, but shall restrict myself to two instances only: Yizhak Rabin and Shulamit Aloni. The former - whose language is more suited to a sergeant-major than a government leader - openly accused Netanyahu, the leader of the Opposition, to be "in cahoots with Hamas and Jihad". Shulamit Aloni - the controversial Minister of Education and later of Communications in the 1992 Rabin Government - on whom the Hebrew Union College thought it appropriate to bestow the degree of Doctor Honoris Causae - repeatedly accused the preceding Likud Government of being "racist and fascist".

This is a purposeful and unforgiveable hurt in an Israel which is sensitized to this kind of insults. After her appointment as Minister, Aloni was asked by a BBC interviewer, what changes she expected the new government to bring about in Israel. "Israel will at last learn what democracy is", she replied, without reflecting, that her own career and appointment were the best indications that Israel did not have to learn from her about democracy. And on another occasion, in one of her Knesseth speeches, she enjoyed raising the ire of the religious members by describing the friendship between the biblical David and Yonathan as a "homosexual entanglement".

But political leaders are by far not alone in such extravagancies. Some time ago advertisements and appeals appeared over the signature of Lea Rabin, the wife of the Prime Minister - along with that of Ephraim Sneh, the Minister of Health - for "war against the country's internal fascism which is threatening Israel's body politic".

I can only explain such kind of behaviour - as well as the absence of the most basic courtesy one has the right to expect from politicians in a democratic country - by the fact, that the actual set of Israel's politicians, whatever their party affiliation may be, who today dominate the public stage in Israel, are still of that age group, which immigrated from the stetls in Poland and Russia, respectively from the kasbas of the Levantine countries. There the Jews had never known the meaning of democracy; there the Jews had never experienced tolerance; there the Jews saw in the powers in the hands of an even most minor official

an enviable achievement; and there the Jews had to learn, that offending people from a position of strength had been the accepted privilege of officialdom.

The Talmudic Sages said, that the First Commonwealth was destroyed because of "the prevailing idolatry, along with the sexual license and the wanton shedding of innocent blood"; and that the Second Commonwealth was destroyed because of "the pervading Sinnat Chinam, the wanton or baseless hatred" among the Jews.

Do we not repeat and relive, in this our Third Jewish Commonwealth all the above mentioned negative stigmata? Will our fate be similar to that of our ancestors? Apart from the warnings of the talmudic sages are there not innumerable instances in our own time which should be a home to us, that we have not learned from the mistakes our ancestors have committed in their time? And have we not to fear, that we may be condemned to commit these same mistakes afresh; and will have to suffer the same consequences?

Here is only one such instance: In the years 168-165 BCE the Jews in the Land of Israel were exposed to the danger of total extinction under the hellenistic occupation. They were fortunate to gain a decisive victory over their far more powerful greek enemy. They reconquered the Holy City and reconsecrated the Temple. Their victory and their liberation the Jews have since remembered in the miracle legend of Hanukkah. But the inner dissent which originally had invited their enemies' invasion, persisted within the ranks of the hasmonean hierarchy. They lost all they had won by their victories - along with their throne and their lives.

Similarly, in 1967 CE the Jews, living in the State of Israel, were threatened by the surrounding arab states. Israel's survival and its possible extinction were at risk. But Israel gained a decisive victory over the six combined armies their arab enemies had assembled. The Jews reconquered all of Jerusalem. And they resecrated the Holy City. Will the Six-Day-War and the Yom Ha'azmauth remembering Israel's independence, one day become the theme of a miracle story for the future generations of Jews who have survived the destruction of Israel?

15.

Why is religion in all this not a helpful factor ?

When talking to the average Israeli it is not rare to hear him sooner or later complain, that he does not feel comfortable with his personal status; that although Israel calls itself, with justification, a living democracy, it is nevertheless a theocracy when it comes to the personal rights an individual is granted in Israel; that since the inception of the State the ashkenazi and sephardi Chief Rabbis of Israel - not unlike the Vatican does in its sphere of influence - autocratically control every facet of jewish civil life in Israel. I hear and read so very often the complaint, that the way the Rabbinate strictly applies the halachic rules to the day by day life of the israeli citizen, the simple truth is ignored that we live in the twentieth century; and that the Rabbis' interpretation of morality and duty is based on principles which belong to the past; and that most all of their halachic rules are hardly applicable in these our days.

The civil freedom of the citizen in Israel is indeed greatly restricted especially with regard to his rights to arrange for a civil marriage. No civil marriages are possible in Israel. Whoever cannot be married for any of the halachic reasons, has to go abroad for this purpose. Or arrange through a chain of attorneys a marriage by proxy in Paraguay. In 1995 Israel's Minister of Religious Affairs announced that more than 150 000 Israelis are ineligible for marriage under jewish law.

Nobody can in all honesty object, that the direction, teaching and supervision of Israel's religious-spiritual life is entrusted to the two Chief Rabbis; neither, that next to the two Chief Rabbis of Israel residing in Jerusalem, every town in Israel too has its twin set of local ashkenazi and sephardi Chief Rabbis, who are appointed by the respective local Religious Councils. But it is definitely objectionable, that the orthodox rabbis refuse to see non-orthodox citizens, and especially not women, enrolled among the components of these councils.

The rabbis have warned that in case representatives of the Reform and Conservative Movements are allowed on the Religious Councils, they will boycott them. They will

not allow "the entry onto the Religious Councils of members whose sole intent is to uproot the religion of Israel and the rejection of the truth from Sinai". But they have accepted a woman on a Council here and there.

On the other hand it is accepted and tolerated by the rabbis, that their near relatives are eo ipso given preference over other candidates whenever a rabbi is to be appointed elsewhere to a similar high ranking - and well paid - job, to provide moral guidance and spiritual leadership to the local community.

But - until now at least - the following occurrence has remained unique: one of these Religious Councils appointed a rabbi to the post of "neighbourhood rabbi" in charge of a single street which did not even exist.

These are unfortunate situations and happenings; but we should not a priori feel entitled to condemn the Rabbis of Israel. They merit more than only some reluctant appreciation. We must not overlook, that the majority of the rabbis, whatever their denomination, is made up of men - and nowadays also of women - of goodwill; that all considered they are dedicated to their work; are serious in the fulfillment of their duties; and are as a rule doing a good job. That is to say, that there has hardly ever surfaced an instance when rabbis have abused the trust imposed in them; that - unlike the ways and manners, the crimes and cruelties of the christian priesthood from the Popes down, which jewish history knows to report - the rabbis have always acted in full accordance with the ethics of the Torah. Throughout jewish history, starting from talmudic times, rabbis have assiduously promoted not only the purity of life's conduct; have not only been responsible for the exact outlining of the ethical rules of conduct, but have greatly contributed to the preservation of the Jewish People's readiness for the eventual renewal of its statehood.

And let us be honest with ourselves about the haredi rabbis. Whatever may feel or think about them, without them, without their existence in nuclei here and there throughout the ages, Judaism would not have survived; and without their collaboration and coexistence Judaism will also in future not survive. It must also be pointed out, that among the Haredim - and to a great degree also among the "Modern Orthodox Jews" - intermarriages and assimilation are hardly known.

The Rabbinate is an essential institution in Judaism. On an average every human being finds himself at one time or other in a situation, where he is faced with a personal problem; where he is in need of spiritual advice; where he is on the lookout for some educated guidance;

where he craves some consolation. If such a situation affects a person fortunate to be religious, he will turn to his rabbi and find the right help.

How many are there among us in search of some wider knowledge and some deeper inspiration, who on our own have gained the right kind of insight? How many of us are blessed from the beginning with that standard of ethical integrity which in every situation - on our own and independently - can regulate our lives? Only few can be found among us human beings, who are born with the proper moral guidelines. There are only few human beings, who have such an inborn inner compass. On the other hand, I will agree, there are very many of those, who in the course of their lives have gained that kind, that degree and that clarity of insight, by which they have become enabled to know what is right; and by which they have learned to understand what is beyond the limit of morality.

I want it understood, however, that the Haredim, the ultra-orthodox Jews who believe themselves to belong to the group I have ranked as especially blessed with the right insight and the proper guidance - because they see in themselves the divinely appointed custodians of the Torah and the executors of its commandments - are more often than not mistaken in their assumption. It is true, all the moral laws of Judaism are in their essence contained in the Ten Commandments. It is true, all these commandments are further and explicitly detailed in the 613 mitzvot; are detailed in the 365 positive commandments and the 248 negative ones. However, it is to be well understood, that by strictly and honestly obeying the Ten Commandments alone; and without following also all the other 613 moral instructions and duties, a Jew - and this applies, of course, also to the non-Jew - is not turned into an ethically perfect person.

Mitzvot are the unalterable guidelines of orthodox Jewry. According to their teaching Moses had received these from God, along with the two tablets, during the forty days he stayed on the Mountain. The Orthodox see this fact quite clearly told in the Bible: "And the Lord said to Moses: 'Come up to me on the Mountain, and I will give you the tablets of stone, and the laws and the commandments which I have written, that you may teach them'".

Even though I will not pretend, that every ethically thinking and morally acting Jew is a priori also a religious Jew, I dare to maintain, that a religious Jew has to be guided in his thoughts and actions by

the ethical laws of his religion.

Am I right to presuppose this ? To demand this ? And let me ask furthermore: does this precept apply to every religious Jew ?

In the preceding pages I have repeatedly written about the religious make-up of Israel's population; and I have on more than one occasion made mention of the Haredim, the ultra-orthodox component of Judaism. I shall, therefore, restrict myself to the few additional remarks which, I think, will have value in the arguments I am ventilating just now.

But before I go on, a short remark is appropriate: I am well aware that I exhibit often a very critical attitude to the haredi community, but this is not based on a low esteem for their Jewishness, nor as disrespect for their belief system. I am opposed to their ways of acting and behaving towards each of the other currents in Judaism which only causes disharmony and strife among the members of the Jewish family.

Most of the Haredim - the anti-modern ultra-observant Jews - are anti-Zionists, or at best non-Zionists. Their long-standing and deep-rooted aversion against everything Zionism means, represents and achieves had started long ago and continues to this day in Israel. However, whereas they did not and could not cause much damage while living in Poland or Russia, they can and do so now by interfering in Israel's politics, administration and religious life. But not only in Israel; they make themselves also - often negatively - felt in the communal life of the Diaspora.

For centuries the Haredim had occupied an unassailable stronghold in the communities of Eastern Europe. Small groups of the ultra-orthodox communities of Eastern Europe have survived the Shoah; and - having been transplanted mainly to Israel and the US - formed the nuclei out of which they have regrown. And they are growing faster than the other,

There have never been so many "Haredim" as now. Neither has there ever been an organized haredi movement or community. In times past the term "haredi" was only used when eulogizing saintly personalities; or when addressing them in a correspondence about halachic matters. The Haredim of today have little right to designate themselves thus, as this term is meant to imply a superior personality. It implies not only a person's unquestioning obedience of the mitzvot, but also his total abstention from fights, litigation and violence. It demands total avoidance in business deals of anything which only might

seem dishonest. It presupposes love for all Jews whatever their ideological direction. And it excludes all and every involvement in politics.

On the other hand, the Haredim are by far not a monolithic group. They have their right and left wings, their moderate and extremist groups. Their various sub-groups have individual customs and theories. Also the fact is often overlooked, that a significant number of their yeshiva youths serve in the Army.

For instance, the HADAI ultra-orthodox group embraces Zionism but rejects accepting western ethics because they are persuaded that the solution of all of life's problems is to be found in the Torah. The ultraorthodox of Mea Sharim, especially those belong to the "Toldot Aharon", have solemnly to promise once a year that they will not change a single item in their "holy garment", made up of their streiml, the long kapot with silver and gold stripes, their heavy overcoat, which once upon a time had been adopted in their galuth habitat.

But all Haredim have respect for the YICHUS in common, that is the respect for a respect for a honoured family background, especially one made up of scholars. The wealthy man's son is married off to the scholar's daughter. A newcomer without yichus cannot enter a haredi family. A Jew or Jewess, even after having turned observant, is not acceptable if the father had not been Jewishly learned; if the mother did not go regularly to a mikveh, as in this case the individual had been "conceived in impurity".

In Israel Haredim constitute about 10% of the population; but their political strength is disproportionally greater; and their influence goes much deeper than their numbers would warrant, because the two main parties occupying the centre of the political stage - Likud and Labour - are about equal in strength. They will go to any length to capture any of the religious parties into their own coalition net. The Haredim - with their politically rather undifferentiated or at least aspecific - philosophy, can and do choose the partner who has materially most to offer. They make good use of the advantage they thus enjoy; and whenever they are accused of misusing their political clout, they have an answer ready: that they are only making use of the democratic rights to which they are entitled.

Jerusalem's haredi population increases year by year. Politically and administratively the town is steadily passing into the hands of the Ultra-Orthodox, because in the ever-changing

composition of the town, the number of those leaving are mostly non-orthodox elements; and the newcomers who settle anew in Jerusalem, are mostly orthodox Jews. Official statistics show that some 16 000 secular and modern-orthodox Jews moved away in 1993, while some 10000 mostly ultra-orthodox Jews arrived.

Since the last mayoral election the ultra-orthodox groups have formed a coalition with the Likud Party. This has further reinforced Jerusalem's trend towards a further "haredisation". According to the Institute for Israel Studies 38% of Jerusalem's population will in 2010 be overwhelmingly ultra-conservative. This has filled their community with the hope, to see their demographic ideal realized in the not too far future. That is to say, they believe the time will soon come, when it will be impossible to prevent Jerusalem from having - and from being dominated by - a haredi majority. This will inevitably have profound political and social implications; and this will for many a reason endanger the future safety not only of Jerusalem, but also that of the Haredim themselves.

However, such a development should not a priori be seen as an unwelcome or even an unacceptable development - and from many a point of view one may consider it even an appropriate one - were the Haredim capable and willing to change their attitudes and outlooks; would they show tolerance towards other religious conceptions; would they accept the blessings of pluralism in religious matters.

I perceive as pluralism the acceptance of - and the willingness to live with - the fact, that other religious currents and forms of expression, often exhibiting deep differences from the mainstream, exist and have a right to exist in Judaism; that these various currents continue to have a definite degree of common interests with every other jewish-religious current. The principle of pluralism protects and accommodates even the smallest and most outspokenly dissident minority; grants every intellectual or ideological current space equal to those occupied by established and ruling currents. And finally it should be understood, that pluralism does not necessarily have to mean also a multi-culturalism.

The ultra-orthodox Jews of Israel - and in particular those living in Jerusalem - have no reason to fear that their political and numerical predominance might not continue; that next to these prerogatives also those in religious matters might not remain assured. Their power base is in any case unassailable: every haredi family in Israel - with very few exceptions - has a large number of children. Regularly, in every year without exception, the size of the haredi community of Jerusalem shows a numerical increase. And already now, fifty percent of the school children of Jerusalem frequent religious schools.

The eternal confrontation between the conflicting interests and life styles of orthodox and secular Israelis has since long been one of the root troubles of Israel's society. It has been a long-standing source of friction between the communities. Whereas the Ultra-Orthodox do not hide their intention to make Israel into a halachic state, the Secularists no less openly and actively fight all and everything they interpret as only possibly an interference in their way of life.

The Orthodox are accused of cherishing and trusting the Tnach less than the Talmud with its rabbinic interpretations of the Torah. And it is a general, constantly heard complaint, that in Israel - and elsewhere in the Jewish world too - the Haredim contribute little if anything to an effort by which their co-existence with other communities might be fostered. Their greatly hypertrophied self-importance and self-righteousness makes them comport themselves as if they were the only true Jews in existence. This is well reflected in their religious zealotry; in their total lack of tolerance for Liberal and Conservative Jews; in their often strident anti-zionist or anti-state pronouncements; and in their unguarded and harmful public utterances.

They do not apply to their fellow-Jews any of that tolerance which Scriptures demand of them to be shown to the gentile. "The righteous of all nations are worthy of immortality", says the Talmud. And in the 2nd century Rabbi Meir added that "a gentile who follows the Torah is as good as the High Priest".

The Haredim are apparently not aware - and if they are, they appear not to care - how much other Jews are antagonized by their comportment. Were they to make a sincere effort to bring their children at every age and school level together with children coming from backgrounds with different grades, forms and shapes of religious observance or non-observance; were their adults made to meet on neutral ground with others of various antagonistic or otherwise incompatible backgrounds; were it made possible for Jews of all religious currents to meet for once without preconceived ideas, each and everyone of the - as a rule and in every aspect dissenting - participants in such an encounter, I am sure, would detect in each other many not only acceptable but also welcome characteristics; and would not, I am certain, discover in each other anything which they could consider dangerous or threatening. But, alas, Rabbi J.B.Soloveichik, one of their luminaries of our time,

has forbidden orthodox rabbis to discuss religion with those of other streams of Judaism.

This century is about to end, and religion appears to be losing much of its meaning in the life of the western nations. There is also in Israel a marked anti-religious trend today. But we should be aware that this turning away from religion is by far not of recent origin.

Religious and spiritual leaders complain, that religion has lost much of its influence. They worry, that the country is now in a steep spiritual and moral decline. They maintain, that this is mainly due to a steady and progressive secularization of the country since the Six-Day-War of 1967.

This trend has extended even to funerals and cemeteries. In the kibutzim funerals had since long been totally without a religious character; but now also reform and conservative communities have successfully objected - with the help of the Supreme Court - to the orthodox-traditional funerals and to the haredi-controlled cemeteries. They have succeeded in getting land allotted for their own cemeteries.

It cannot be denied, that religious establishments in Israel, whether ultra-orthodox or "modern orthodox" have become more and more extreme. But neither can it be denied, that modern life in Israel has also taken on progressively a deeper secular shading. Indeed, religion has not much to say to the young secular Israeli of today. One hears them shrug off anything which has to do with religion, because all religion stands for has lost importance for them. They say, this is so because religion has been turned into a weapon of blackmail.

The atmosphere of religious coercion is particularly noticeable in Jerusalem. This makes many of the non-orthodox residents feel that they do not belong; that they are out of place. They leave the Capital - as I have already mentioned - and settle elsewhere. In the not so long run this trend will lead not only to an undermining of the financial support; and to the weakening of the cultural basis which Jerusalem so greatly needs; but it may also bring about other - neither expected nor desired - demographic changes: the Arabs with their children-rich families will inevitably become the majority in Jerusalem.

The Haredim evoke much resentment because the majority of their youth - that is of the yeshiva boys , and none of the girls - are allowed to avoid military service. Their excuse, that yeshiva studies are as important as military service for the protection and preservation of the State; and their apparently sincere belief, that the world would cease to exist the moment the study of the Torah ceases for even a minute, can only further increase the antagonism they encounter not only among Secularists, but also everywhere outside their community. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Haredim are so often accused of hypocrisy, because - as the philosophy and theology of the various anti-war and anti-military hindu and buddhist sects, and also that of certain christian denominations, have shown - such an ideology is only compatible if associated with the abstention from all and every public-social involvement; and if underlined by the avoidance of all and any political activity or even identification.

I might on the other hand be willing to accept the Haredim's argument, that maintaining a high level of the knowledge harboured in Scriptures and Talmud by intense and uninterrupted studies is indispensable for the welfare of the world, if this is meant as a paraphrase for the thought, that the world would sink into criminal chaos the moment the commandments of the Torah - of the so-called "jewish-christian ethos" - cease to have value; if it means, that Judaism would cease to be the custodian, the responsible instance appointed to, and engaged in, upholding the laws of the Torah. But this is surely not what the Haredim have in mind; or what they want to convey.

The argument, that the haredi youth is permitted to avoid military service, serves still as the heaviest ammunition used against the Haredim, even though it should have lost much of its weight in these days, not only because considerable numbers of the orthodox youth do serve in the army, but also because the yeshiva boys' refusal to don a military uniform does not anymore place - as was the case only a few years ago - an increased burden on the other segments of the general population. For, due to changes in military needs and in strategic thinking; and thanks to the new immigration waves, the army gets more recruits than it needs. It would, however, have been a prudent, and a psychologically and politically valuable move, had the haredi youth offered to do some kind of social service instead. The Haredim crave respect - and such a gesture would have gained them much respect.

I think the Haredim would also gain respect - and in addition also possibly many followers - were they to give up their dictatorial demands

regarding the kind of life they want to see conducted by the population of this country; were they to take in consideration the sensitivities of the other religious sectors in Jerusalem and in Israel; were they to concede that each of the other currents in Judaism has also the right to exist. Instead, the Haredim continue in their unfortunate attitude, that they are entitled to accuse the Conservatives and the Reform Jews of not being different from "other non-Jews". They go on believing themselves entitled to force the large non-religious sector of Israelis to follow their orthodox way of life. And they go on usurping for themselves the divine empowerment, to force the unwilling public to strictly obey the halachic laws.

One of the many examples I could cite of the Haredims', if not illegal at least inappropriate, exertion of power, is the newspaper vendor in Bnei Brak, who was warned not to sell secular newspapers; who was badly beaten when he did not obey the Haredims' demand; and whose kiosk was finally burned down. And also in Bnei Brak the Haredim extended - on orders of their rabbis - the segregation of the genders on public transport too, by making women sit in the back of the buses. I shall also point to their disconnecting the metal detectors at the entrance to the Western Wall on Shabath so as not to have the religious Jews carrying a gun violate the holy day by setting off a beep.

The main cause underlying the existing religious-cultural strife in Israel is, alas, the Haredims' steadfast refusal to enter with non-orthodox Jews into a balanced discussion about religious matters. They will never make themselves available for a give-and-take discussion with Jews who follow other concepts of Judaism. It is a generally shared experience, that they turn belligerent whenever they do not succeed in imposing their will. And their belligerency is as a rule anything but a pleasant spectacle.

To give an example of many with which the public of Israel has become familiar: in order to raise money for their settlement and for the servicing the Machpela Cave, the religiously certainly at least "modern orthodox" Jews of Hebron decided to organize a concert, with a well-known hassidic singer as the star attraction,. The Haredim in Jerusalem were enraged. They reacted by placing large advertisements in their newspapers, in which they condemned this kind of concerts and its purpose as "a chutzpa and an abomination".

These are only a few instances and only some aspects of the often very depressing and also degrading spectacles the haredi community presents with their ways of protesting. And they often do protest. Against anything they perceive as a violation of the Shabath they protest

in the streets with stone-throwing orgies, which are no less blatant violations of the very Shabath rules they deem holy. Habitually they accompany their protests with orgastic emptyings of garbage containers onto the street. Their demands of strict Shabath observance; their objection to El Al flying on Shabath; their unrelenting insistences that certain streets and all cinemas, restaurants and coffee-houses be closed on Shabath; their refusal to allow the cities' busses to travel on Shabath; their turning up at archaeological digs and their uncalled-for and often destructive interference with the excavations, cannot but still further contribute to their alienation from the general public of Israel. For whether they like it or not, they have, after all, to live along and among the other Jews.

They inevitably cause bad blood every time they refuse to follow the customs established and sanctified for the days in the year when the fallen soldiers and the victims of terror are commemorated. When the establishment of the State is feted, they ostentatiously do not observe the minute of silence but continue walking when the sirens sound. Their houses never exhibit an israeli flag. And they behave and react also otherwise as if anything associated with Israel as a nation does not involve or affect them, nor their schools nor their children.

I could still further enlarge the list of complaints the general public raises against the Haredim; but it would be too tiresome to recite them all. Many of the complaints are interpreted as indications of haredi hypocrisy. Many are brought forth many a time by many of the women who undergo halachic-ritual conversions. But though, in my view, these incidents indicate nothing more than a not so uncommon human weakness, there is the definite difference, that in these cases it is not shown in the proper place; and not by people who should in any case not be in such a place.

With these sentences I have in mind the dip in a Mikveh - the essential part of the final ceremony of conversion - which has to take place under the supervision of three rabbis. The rabbis are supposed to keep their eyes closed all the while a woman stands naked in the water basin. But, the women complain, the eyes of these rabbis are wide open, wider than usual.

It is a sad and depressing phenomenon, that there is not much of a religious peace among Jews anywhere in the world. This unwelcome and unfortunate state of affairs is more marked - and the more noticeable

- in Israel. The Haredim are responsible for a major share of the tension which prevails in the religious camp. Jews of every possible intellectual, political and religious direction perceive in this eternal strife and continued bickering a more than necessary addition to the difficulties the country has to face. And all of them - except for the Haredim - blame the Haredim.

And indeed, their's is most of the responsibility. Their's is also most of the responsibility for the festering division of Israel's society along ethnic lines. This all pervading separation, which appears to have become a fixed institution, augurs badly for the cohesion and the ethical structure of the country. It eats away the ethical standards of the country.

The general israeli public - and this includes the non-haredi orthodox sector - has little love for the Haredim. This is a fact of life in Israel which is expressed in often unpleasant - and from every point of view unacceptable - verbal and physical manifestations. But even though the methods used by their non-orthodox opponents may at times be unpleasant; and even though the behaviour of their secularist adversaries may often be objectionable, the arguments the Haredim use in their defence; the facts and polemics they inject in their debates, are mostly unacceptable to the western-trained mind. And whatever the explanations they give to the non-orthodox for their often antagonizing actions and deeds, these are - though as a rule theology- and halacha-based - are not justified anymore in the light of modern concepts of moral conscience and ethical values.

In no way do all the arguments and all the polemics, all the learning and all the halacha, free the Haredim from their share of responsibility for the prevailing inter-communal tension. For instance: on Shabaths and Holidays they omit in their services the "Prayer for the Welfare of the State of Israel" which is recited in all the synagogues in the country and in most of the world. Were they to recite this weekly prayer, they would not only remove a large stone of contention, but would also draw greatly benefit for themselves, as in due course they may take to heart the prayers' words and meaning ".....plant within us love, friendship and mutual acceptance; uproot hatred, hostility and jealousy from among us".

They could further contribute an important share to the creation of a state of harmony among the various religious establishments, were they - who are mostly Ashkenazi Jews - to realize, that the Sephardim

idealism in any form or shape, but by the principle of "Shillat ha Gola", which implies, that Diaspora Jewry's ultimate task is to abolish the Diaspora; to close down the communities outside Israel; to dismantle all the Jewish organizations in the Diaspora; to come and settle in Israel; to never forget, that those who remain outside in the Diaspora will inevitably disappear as Jews either as the result of a murderous antisemitism or due to a steady assimilation. This purely ideological principle may be the explanation, that the aliya of the Belzer and certain other Hassidim had taken place already some 250 years ago.

Also the Lubavitscher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who throughout his life had undeniably been a Zionist in its truest meaning, had instructed his followers to settle in Israel.

But he himself has never set foot on Israel's soil. One of the reasons he gave for this omission was, that once he had been appointed the leader of his sect he could not anymore leave the "confines of Lubavitsch". When it was pointed out to him, that he traveled every Friday to Queens, there to pray at the graveside of his predecessor, he revealed that his Hassidim had created an extra-territorial corridor between his residence in Crown Heights and the cemetery in Queens.

And finally I have to raise the point, that patriotic and humane Israel is steadily losing interest in its religion; that it is gradually moving towards an ever greater degree of secularization. The forceful Shabbath observance; the antiquated marriage laws and so many other halachically created rules are the main reasons for the progressing religious alienation of a large sector of Israel's Jews. The most heard explanation of these individuals is, that living in Israel and being Israelis makes them feel as truly Jewish as any religious person could ever feel. Others love to cite Rav Avraham Yizhak Kook who saw in secular Jews a divine instrument for the Jews' redemption. But it is to be regretted that dialogues between religious and secular Jews have mostly ceased today.

It is my firm conviction - and much of my personal experience - that liberal, secular Jews would be more amenable to; would be more tolerant of; and would show greater understanding for, the Haredim's demands, were these demands presented in a more dignified and pleasant manner. The former are embittered by the latter's claim, that they are the only carriers of Jewish tradition; that they are the only carriers of Jewish ethics; that they are the only ones living in accordance with the moral principles of the Torah; that they are, in short, the only true Jews.

are no less good Jews than they themselves; and that the ethiopian Jews are no less good Jews than they themselves. There was no excuse for the Ashkenazim to have considered the early sephardi immigrants of the '50s; and to see in the ethiopian immigrants of the '80s; and to judge the russian Jews of the '90s, socially "less than equal" Jews, and their religious rites and concepts at best only "unacceptable".

There is no excuse whatsoever, that this mistaken and humiliating attitude continues to persist. The Haredim should realize, that the Sephardim are today - and soon also the Ethiopians and Russians will be - numerically and politically, socially and financially strong enough to be counted more than their equals. But, regretfully, the separation along ethnic lines has become an ingrained feature of Israel's society. This augurs badly for the cohesion and ethnic structure of the country.

The Hassidim should not a priori be placed into the same basket as the Haredim, though they may be no less religion-directed and halacha-bound than the latter. On the contrary: the Haredim have no love nor respect for the Hassidim. The Gaon of Vilna had already in 1772 called on his Haredim to excommunicate the newly evolved hassidic sect. He termed Hassidism a dangerous innovation; its doctrine a deviation from historic Judaism; its texts a blasphemy.

Today's Hassidism is a rather modern creation. Its adherents are in no way identic to, or otherwise associated with, the Hassidim which represented a greatly respected community in talmudic times. In modern times the term refers to the religious-mystic movement formed by the Bal Shem Tov.

The hassidic "Rebbes" and their communities, from what I learn, lead a more dignified life. And they represent also a less controversial element in and for Israel. This is possibly so, because with few exceptions they are anti-zionists; and because only few of them have, therefore, settled in Israel.

The Hassidim of the Satmar Sect are the most outspoken jewish enemies of Israel. Even though they have a large community in Israel, they refuse to acknowledge that a Jewish State could and should have come into existence before the arrival of the Messiah. They not only do not recognize Israel but, whenever they have the opportunity, they actively and bitterly attack the Jewish State, its institutions and whatever its stands for.

On the other end of the scale we find the Jerusalem-based Belzer Rebbe, who long ago had issued a call to his Hassidim in the Diaspora to come and live in Israel. He was by no means motivated by zionist

Unfortunately there are large numbers of Secularists, who in turn make a peaceful cohabitation with the religious sector equally impossible; who think they can by their provocative writings, talking and acting bring about an egalitarian, or at least some kind of an equilibrated, society.

The Leibowitz-types I have mentioned on a previous occasion, are among the most vociferous Ultra-Secularists. They describe the Jewish faith and its ritual system as a sterile "unrewarding, unquestioning obedience to the incomprehensible commandments of an unfathomable God". Pseudo-religious "Secular Humanism", a movement which denies all that religion stands for, refutes all justification and every reason for a true and real Judaism to exist. To the secular humanistic Jew the Jewish people, its history, traditions, language and celebrations are relevant and not God and prayer. And still ! I cannot even, with the best of wills, conceive how they and other atheists can call themselves "atheist Jews"; how they can make Atheism and Judaism compatible.

I am happy to learn from a series of surveys reported in the media, that atheistic secular humanism and ultra-secularism have only a very limited following. For without the conjunction of Jewish tradition and Jewish history with the Jewishness as it exists today, Judaism and with it Israel will certainly perish.

But - this is my firm conviction - Jewishness' nationalism cannot exist and persist if it does not also contain a religious component.

After all I have said and discussed so far, I feel entitled to raise now the question, whether today's State of Israel represents the proper establishment and the right environment for a "chosen people" to live, develop and function as a model and as the mirror for all the Jews in the world ? Whether established in Israel, and the Jews as Israelis, the Jewish People can also be a model for, a light to, the world at large ? Or would they, while dispersed all over the Diaspora, be in a better position to fulfill this function ? Or, wording my question differently, can the Jewish People be more effective; and can it be more efficient in its actual form as a national structure and as a compact social organization ? Or would they be more successful in fulfilling their mission as individual communities dispersed over many host countries ?

I am willing to offer the following answer to these questions: the Jewish People can best function as a firm social organization within a defined national frame, provided that cognition of the Jews' specific

tradition forms the platform; and provided that the Jews' unique history forms the frame; and provided that Judaism's religious-ethical precepts supply the life-giving essence; and provided it is realized by the Jews everywhere, that the many symbols of nationhood today's Israel exhibits; and the many trappings of statehood today's Israelis enjoy, play only a secondary, an associate, a supportive, an interpretative role; that the ethical Jew and the moral Israeli are the true catalysts .

AN OPTIMIST PONDERES
ABOUT
HIS PEOPLE'S SURVIVAL.

PART TWO

Part II.

16.

Will God and not man ultimately decide our survival ?

First a concursus.

I fully agree, that the questions I have raised in the preceding chapter about God's place in the future fate of the Jewish People; that my asking, whether God is ultimately going to decide the fate of the Jews; that my rumination, whether we can in general load on God a special responsibility whatsoever for the wellbeing of the Jews, must sound rather strange to any reader of whatever nature his philosophical outlook or his theological inclination may be. I likewise do concede, that it may even be called a silly question. I shall however, not make the effort to paraphrase this question into a plainer and simpler formula, but answer my question with the following simple and uncomplicated few words: whereas neither the world our senses perceive; and whereas whatever lives and thrives on our planet earth, can hardly have come into being by pure chance meetings of the unusual coincidences and developmental processes which we hear our scientists cite; and whereas the world and this planet have continued to function by the immutable laws of physics, chemistry and biology of which we are aware; and whereas all these processes to all appearances are not only going on since eternity but are also well symphonized; and whereas this simple equation cannot but presupposes a Creator, an Adjustor, a Supervisor - in short the undefinable power to which we have given the name "God" - it has to follow, that neither any destructive doings or malicious plannings of man; that no unnatural confluence of "natural events"; that no sequence of apparently unusual concatenations of uncommon happenings will decide, whether or not Judaism will also in future survive; and whether or not Israel will continue to exist.

Hence I feel entitled to go further and to conclude, that no single man has the power; that no association of nations has the strength; that no political philosophy has the right, finally and ultimately to decide, whether Judaism - and for that matter mankind

- will continue to survive.

May this statement suffice now. I may later on expand on it.

I realize only now, that I have in the above few lines only repeated what I have already hinted at in an earlier part of this essay, viz:- that I have not the slightest doubt about the survival of Judaism.

In a previous part of this essay I have very clearly expressed my conviction - and I will repeat now in no less definite terms - that even though outside factors may have an impact on the wellbeing and security of Israel, a disastrous finale to the existence of Israel will not be orchestrated in the councils of its enemies. Nor will it be decided by the will of men - unless they are tools so directed by divine determination.

Since a number of years I have formed the opinion - nay, have reached the certainty - that there is an ultimate sense and a definite purpose, a clear idea and an undeniable logic in whatever goes on in this world of ours. I have been induced to form this conviction by what I have observed, learned and experienced in the course of my life. I will go even further and say, that I have been compelled to come to this conclusion by all I see; by all which goes on around me; and by all I have personally experienced. And if there are things and events, happenings and incidents, peoples and people in which and in whom I do not find a sense; or if I face situations or evolvments which seem impossibly to have a logic or a worth or a purpose, I have learned to conclude, that my obtuseness is the reason; or that my insensitivity is the cause; or that my limited sense of perception is to be blamed.

Can what I sense as an aim and a purpose in all which has been going on in the history of mankind; can all which I perceive as demanding a definite sense and meaning; can all which is and was so far in the evolution of this planet; can what is going on now, and what has ever been happening in the world, indicate anything but a supernatural force - and ultimately a divine direction ?

I will clearly and without vacillation and tergiversation state, that I have - I must confess only after much pondering and searching - come to an affirmative answer.

Does it follow then, that the decourse of the world has from the

beginning been predestined ? And therefore also, that the final stage of the world - or at least that of mankind - has been predetermined to the minutest detail ? I will ask also whether predestination is an acceptable philosophical concept ? And I will go still further and ask now whether predestination is at all a jewish concept ?

I know that the Essenes of Qumran were the first in world history to uphold this principle; and that it has later become a characteristic of christian doctrine; but am I right to say it has never been incorporated in rabbinical teaching ?

To prevent a useless discussion; and in order to forego an empty argumentation, I will without delay present my conviction, that I cannot accept either a predestination nor a predetermination in anything that has happened in past history; in anything that is happening in the world today; and in anything that will happen to mankind in general; and in anything that in future will happen to me personally. It is totally unacceptable to me, that God or Fate or Destiny have planned and predetermined every step we do; every disaster which occurs; "every sparrow which falls from the sky".

It is my conviction, that man has the free will to act. That it is left entirely to him how he fills and forms, how he manages and directs his life. It cannot be otherwise. In my philosophy mankind has been given the directives to reach the goal; has been given the outlines of the permissible; and, within the directives of leading to ever greater completion; and armed with the exactly outline of the divinely ordained moral laws, mankind has been given all freedom of action.

In other words: man is autonomous in the sense, that whatever he does and how he behaves; that what he plans and how he reacts, is not predetermined. Man has absolute freedom of action. He alone is responsible for whatever he does. There is no other censor than his own ethical control. Thus he is tested; and his karman is the testboard registering the outcome.

This is possibly what Edward O. Wilson meant with his words: "Although people have free will and the choice to turn into many directions, the channels of their psychological development....are cut more deeply by the genes in certain directions than others".

However, a word of caution is appropriate: notwithstanding what I have just now stated as absolute and unalterable elements in my Weltanschauung, I have to agree, that in view of the tremendous events

which have from time to time interfered in the development and evolvement of our world; which have brought on, or have at other times prevented, disastrous changes in nature; which have here and there caused a sudden turn in the history of mankind, of large sections of mankind, or of only a group of people; which have prevented irreparable damage to the Jewish People against all possible odds; which have brought back into existence the State of Israel, there cannot - **in certain circumstances and under special conditions** - but be some form of interference from outside; there cannot be at least some degree of a guiding direction from some outside source. And this can and must have been an effective intervention also in certain individuals at certain times.

Or let us say from above - wherever that "above" may be. But whenever this guidance, this direction, this interference occurred, it can only have been - and in future cannot and will not but also be - rather vague in extent though well perceptible in its effect. Any such a move, whether corrective or redirective, can only have been in some form of an occasional change of direction when mankind found itself at a crossroad - and when a wrong step might have involved all or part of mankind into a catastrophic turn of events; or would have put an end to its further evolution. Apart from such rare interventions everything in the history of nations - and in the fate of individuals - points to a total freedom of action given to man to chose his way; to plan his actions; and to influence the life of his community and nation.

Does such a correction or such change in direction from "outside" really, though only occasionally, not also occur in the life of some individual or other here and there ? For his own benefit ? Or for the wellbeing of his community ?

Indeed, I do believe that this does happen.

It would - according to my way of reasoning - contradict every sense and logic to deny, that the life and existence of each one of us must have a purpose. I perceive this purpose in the testing we undergo at every stage in our life and at every moment in our existence. For the way I behave in life; the way I respond to what I perceive within me; the way I react or do not react to whatever even vaguely refers to myself; the way I do or do not control myself and my instincts, all this I interpret as the response of a finely tuned, enormously delicate, computer-like guidance system within me. It is built into our karman. It is our karman. How we react to a stimulus; how we take part in a situation or in a conglomeration of situations - out of untold billions

such possible - which develop in an apparently logical sequence from the one of which we are aware; how we react to the opportunities we miss or the dangers we avoid; whether we react positively or negatively to the temptations we encounter; what our attitudes are to others, and what is our behaviour as members of our community and society, all this is entirely decided, done, committed, omitted by ourselves; on our own responsibility; at our own volition; without an outer guidance or interference.

We are automatically and instinctively guided and influenced by the effects our education has on us; by the lessons we have drawn from our experiences, our victories or failures; by our inherited strength of mind to withstand the withdrawal into self-delusion; and by the force and preponderance of the ethical directives allowed to grow up unhindered within us. A temptation will be handled under karmanic influence in one sense only but in different ways, whether it be by a indian coolie or an american professor. An individual's drunkenness and pettishness; his relationship with the surrounding world and his instinct-directed reactions to whatever stimuli bombard him, may depend either on genetic or on biological factors, but the individual's responses of these are the tests whose outcome is registered in the karman. Criminality is not genetically caused; it is the outcome of the individual's education and of his social environment. And the individual's reaction to these influences represents the test, to the positive outcome of which the soul aspires.

I have found most of the answers I crave by indentifying with the karman principle.

It is worth outlining further what follows logically follows from the above: it depends only on ourselves how we react in whatever situation we face. Our reaction is guided by the power of the ethical control we possess. Our destiny is determined by the moral strength we have permitted to be our guide; by the ethical control with the help of which we do not allow comfort or discomfort to interfere in our actions or decisions; by our complaisance or by our cowardice.

Throughout our lives - I am even ready to say at every minute of our lives - we have the opportunity to learn how to develop our moral strength; how to absorb the knowledge to reinforce our ethical standards and to apply them whenever we are provided with an opportunity. We are expected to apply them not only in contacts with our neighbours, but also in our own thinking and pondering; to what we do and in what we do not do; to the way we judge ourselves and think others should

judge us.

By our positive or negative reactions; by our friendly or hostile attitudes; by our honest or dishonest behaviour, we are tested. And the outcome of these tests will determine a further advance or a new recession in the cycle of our dharman.

Recalling a remark I made a short while ago, you will most likely want to know, what place I see the Divinity occupies in the scheme I have outlined. You will most likely want me to define in clearer terms, when and why and how - and when not and why not and how not - I imagine God does interfere in a human's life; in humankind's fate; and possibly also in a nation's destiny. And in particular you will surely want me to find a convincing explanation, why God did at no stage interfere in the Shoah - the paradigm of human evil - at a time when the Jewish People was in utmost danger.

Of course ! God could have intervened in the Shoah - and I dare to think, that I well understand why he did not.

I believe I have also found answers to some at least - though by far not to many - of my innumerable never ceasing questions. I fully accept and agree, that these answers will - next to myself - most likely not satisfy, or even interest, anybody else.

I cannot assume, that Kate's fall and her ensuing progressive mental deterioration had been predetermined. But, on the other hand, her mental and personality changes have to have been part of a series of events in her actual life; of a concatenation of circumstances in her dharman. It was a digit in the calculus of her karman. And in mine too. She might have been spared this specific development, had we changed house and entered a Home, as we once intended; but such a severe test would therewith not have been avoided. It would have occurred in a different form. It would have taken a different shape. It would have happened in a different place. Her karman had to be presented with a severe test of such a magnitude. Her reaction - and mine - had to be tested in a situation which conformed to one she and I had once failed at some time in our past. And others, even in distant contact or faint association with us, were also somehow tested.

Quite rightly the question arises from all I have said: if along with the creation of our world there had not also been a purpose, or at least a program; and if with the creation - or better with the

development of mankind - there is not also a predestination regarding the fate of man, what then was the purpose of the Creator to create this world, this planet and all the living beings ?

Atheists and believers alike pose this question.

I agree. The Creation must have a sense and a predestined purpose. And whereas I do not know that sense and purpose; and whereas nobody else knows, or can ever know, that sense and purpose; and whereas we cannot doubt that there must have been a sense and a purpose, we have to create for ourselves an explanation - are even invited and asked and demanded to find for ourselves an explanation - which at least to some degree will satisfy our curiosity; which somehow can be made to fit into the structure of whatever faith we confess.

We may, for example, embrace the explanation the Rabbis of old have offered: that God wanted company and thus he created man. I myself feel perfectly comfortable with the explanation, that the Creator wanted to create a world of physical perfection; that he selected the planet earth on which to develop an ethically balanced society; and that he selected mankind - which is only one set of his creations - and endowed it with the knowledge of the high ethical principles according to which man should develop and live. The Creator could, of course, have straight away created such a perfect world populated by such an ethically highly developed race of men; but the undeniable fact, that he did not do so indicates to me, that he wanted mankind to develop its own perfection; and therewith the desired perfect world, by its own efforts; by a series of trials and errors; by breeding individuals with an ever higher intellect; by eliminating not only the physically and mentally unfit but also the morally defective; and by evolving a structure of ever better defined and refined ethical principles without which survival was not going to be possible.

And - this is my understanding of the particular Jewish history - at one stage in mankind's development the Jewish People have been appointed to carry and to safeguard; to cultivate and to propagate these ethical principles which are indispensable for mankind's survival.

I hope the reader of these pages - should there indeed ever be one - does not feel lost in the densely formulated summary of what I call so grandiloquently "my philosophy of life". But within the framework of this essay; and in order to make the heading of this chapter, along with my answer, better understood, I had to insert such an outline of my Weltanschauung, of my belief system, of my ideas, call it what you wish. I apologize that I had to try and compact my philosophy into these few sentences, but an extended explication would have taken up too much time and space. I have in any case already in

in a previous essay extensively described my ideas about these matters; and I may feel the need to come back to them when in the following chapters I have to underline the one or other idea.

However, I must also add a precautionary warning: I do not intend to say I have found **the** answer to any of the questions which I have touched upon. I will not even pretend to myself to have found **any** kind of answer. For in order to console my curiosity with any even only supportive answer, I would have had to take up a position behind the curtain which separates me from the world of metaphysics. And this I do not want to do. I prefer to live on without fictitious supports for what I might wish should be the answer.

Mind however: in this context "answer" is for me not synonymous with "truth". I would only need and offer a fool-proof answer - I will in all honesty confess - should I in discussions or argumentations be challenged to stand up for my beliefs. And as I do not care for discussions and argumentations, I do not look out for them. It is not within my character to mount onto a soapbox and to communicate my ideas to others. I have formed for myself this Weltanschauung so that I have a supply of ideological oxygen. And in addition, like Montaigne ".....I would hate the reputation of being clever at writing but stupid in everything else", were I to go in any way or form public with my ideas. Yes, I would hate to get the impression or only the suspicion, that people could think I sound stupid in what I say.

But there are times and situations, like here and now, when I have had to overcome my reluctance - it is in truth not so much reluctance as shyness - because I would like to share, and by sharing to test, my ideas about the matters I have touched upon. But I certainly do not want to impose them on others.

In the course of the last many years I have formed my own hypotheses about many aspects of life and what is beyond. And the conceptions which I am mentioning in this essay serve me well as the source, filter and clearing station from which has emerged a to me acceptable image of my world. Had I not been fortunate in this respect, the image of me and of mankind in this our world would have remained of a boring and bothering mind-starved nebulosity; and I would have found myself without the solid ground underfoot on which I can safely stand; and from which I can confidentially proceed.

Before proceeding I will concede and confess, that I consider it presumptuous of a person with my limited specific knowledge to even think of trying to comprehend the complexities of the Universe; to believe himself fit to understand more than to a limited part what the

scientists' discoveries have revealed of the secrets surrounding the Creation.

There exists a section of mankind, whose mind is capable of having acquired the degree of acuteness with the help of which its proponents can penetrate the physics of the cosmos; by which they may understand to a great extent at least the technicalities of nature. However, we better do not illusion ourselves and acknowledge, that the true facts and the real features of nature; that the deep enigmas and the ultimate secrets of the cosmos remain still hidden to man. And let us concede that in their totality they will always remain hidden to mankind.

However, this in its profundity and truth essential factor of cosmic wisdom does not prevent man from believing, that the more knowledge he acquires about the shape and functions of the Universe, the sooner the day will arrive when he will penetrate - and therewith master - all its secrets. But watching the scientists' endeavours; and observing their daring researches and experiments in their attempts to reach this stage; in their sustained efforts to gain this knowledge, these men and women are liable to forget how utterly insignificant they are in and for the Universe.

Whatever we learn from these researches; and whatever knowledge we acquire through these explorations, fundamentally and in truth it only one thing is left to us: to acknowledge the Creator and to admire his Creation. In other words: to accept, admit and submit.

James Harth of the University of California has given better shape to this thought than I ever can: "The notion of separate laws that exist independent of the law-maker, might have to be jettisoned as so much excess luggage. We cannot build mathematical systems and formulas independent of the knowledge of a Creator."

I know - and also every reasoning person should know - that there is a God. This is all we can know with any degree of certitude. We do not even know his name. To Moses God proposed he be called "Ehye asher Ehye" and there is not even agreement about the meaning of these words; not even of the translation of the single word "Ehye". I like the translation as "eternal" some have proposed; and I like also the formulation I read somewhere of the explanation Moses received from God: "Call me Eternal, because that is what I am".

Among ancient peoples the greatest care was taken, not to reveal the true name of a person, as the knowledge

of a person's name gave the individual magic power over the carrier of this name. This fear of a misuse prevails even to this day among the Brahmins of India, where the true name of an individual is known only to the nearest relatives; and only a different, harmless substitute name is used in its stead. It seems, however, that from a certain stage onwards what was believed the Divinity's true name - Yahweh - was known to the ancient Israelites; but nobody ever dared to pronounce it, except once a year, when - to ask forgiveness for his and the people's sins - the High Priest entered the Holy of Holiest and summoned God by calling out the Holy Name. The people assembled outside "trembled in fear" as this action might indeed summon an enraged Yahweh, and might jeopardize the life of the High Priest, and possibly also of the entire nation.

Neither do we know how God is and what God is - except through our sensing his being with and in us. The individual who truly and steadily searches for God is finally driven into searching and finding him in his own Self. And though God is within us, he is also far away. And though God is by definition inapproachable, he is approachable after all because he is within us. And as he is within us, he is at every moment available to us. And we are granted a further mean of approach to the Divinity by our having been licensed to direct our own fate; by having been provided with the intellect to determine our destiny. We can give not only direction but also sense to our existence by the measure and with the help of that - in its enormity to the human mind unimaginable - computer-like system which I have already mentioned: the karmatic energy which regulates our life and our existence; which evaluates our actions and judges our behaviour.

To traditional theologians God is transcendent; to liberal ones it is Godliness and not God which is of significance. That means, it is the Divinity which is within us. To man's mind and comprehension God is, and will always remain, a concept of something beyond any imaginable physical configuration. But he is a fact and a reality. We are aware of God but have no explanation for his being. Whatever we may imagine of God, he remains a mystery for us. But man is given the liberty to imagine how God is; in what form he exists; what is his association with mankind; and what shape he takes in his relationship with man. Man has indeed often satisfied this need by presenting to himself the Godhead as a transcendent, human-like authority figure. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of a figurative God. This would expose him to the changes man has known to occur of and within himself. Whenever history and legends speak of God having appeared in human shape, human heroes are apparently meant and not a transcendent God.

God - his human qualities, his miracles, his omnipotence - is

represented in the Bible in the only way a primitive and impressive people, who had imbibed the perception of godheads from their polytheistic neighbours can understand. At times God is given a female partner: Asherah, the goddess of fertility venerated in ancient Israel, is often mentioned - by Jeremiah and in Wisdom of Solomon -- as God's partner in Creation, even as his lover.

Until not so long ago - and manifold also today in conformity with the so far prevalent way of thinking - God was perceived as a masculine figure. At a certain stage in human development - or at all times in mankind's subconscious sphere - God contains also a female part, though this is only rarely formulated in words, as e.g. in Malachi where God is depicted as the wife of Israel. And similarly in the Kabbala.

But in the frame of modern cultural developments, the visualization in addition of God as a female figure has gained acceptance. However, this acceptance is neither general nor total. On thinking and talking of God; on approaching God in prayer, we commonly continue to say "he" and to call him "father"; but we do so, as our forefathers did in biblical times, because we are thinking in anthropomorphic terms.

Our antiquated concept of male superiority makes it appear to us only too logical, that God has to be a male. But God is not a human-like Being. He is neither male, nor is he female. He is of necessity not as he is thought of, imagined and addressed. We better think of God as the power which acts through man to create what man can and cannot achieve. Man is not in control of this world, though God has endowed him with the ability to make for himself heaven or hell out of this world.

God is a concept that becomes reality by inter-action with man. The human traits attributed to God are concessions of man's mental inability to reach above the pedestrian level. They are indications that man has been arrested - by his inability to perceive a dimension beyond his own - in his approach to a true indovination of God's Essence. This was the case with the Patriarchs who believed themselves appointed to transmit the knowledge granted to them in form and shape they thought appropriately perceived by them. The perfect human shape and manifold personalities and functions of the biblical God are the images the biblical writers, poets and story tellers had formed about a perfect Godhead whose qualities mankind should aspire to imitate..

I have been told that God exists as long as there are people who

believe that he exists. Is this true? Will God not exist if there are not people who believe that he exists? Will God not continue to exist even if there is nothing alive left in the world? The negativists and doubters have the advantage, that no factual answer is available to such a question, not even if it is presented to a theologian or philosopher.

Man has since ever tried to find an answer to all these questions I have raised. But there is no answer. Faith may not need an answer, because it does not pose such a question; inner certainty provides the answer - in whatever wording it is dressed.

In fondo every thinking person has its own image of God. To Maimonides God is Pure and Active Intellect. "Does thou love and fear God?", asked Welsley, "this is enough. I give you my right hand in fellowship". "Can God truly be confined to the earth?", exclaimed King Solomon. Even the heavens to their utmost reaches cannot contain you - certainly not the Temple which I have built". Martin Buber states in his deistic sounding concept of God: "Everything whatever exists, and whatever comes into existence in nature and history, is essentially the utterance of God". The Kabbala tells us that "God is the Supreme Nothing which preceded the Existence of Something".

And so to us too is given to form our own image of the Unimaginable. In other, plain and simple words: God is to every one of us as we see him, perceive him, imagine him, think of him.

Whatever shape and form God may have; whether he is far or near; whether he is a he or a she or an it, is in any case of no importance, because we are striving to reach the Godhead in whatever way we address him, whether in a direct approach or in any of the rigidly prescribed prayer formulas. However, the personal address is far more fulfilling; and the direct approach far more promising. Everyone of us should learn to have his own personal way of approaching and addressing his God. To a religious Jew the precise pronounciation and placing of words in the transmitted traditional lithurgy is a significant part of, and an essential contribution to his prayers. In the Middle Ages the concept prevailed that God's perfection is without doubt; that man has no personal influence nor direct impact on his own life; that he had only to contemplate God's emminence and perfection. In our age man is perceived to serve God's demands by actively pursuing an ethical life.

But the usual formulas, the accustomed ceremonials,

the traditional rites may not be of need - may even have no place - in personal and private praying; especially not in wordless praying. Indeed, the prayerbook and its formulations are not essential for praying; everyone of us can and should worship God as he or she thinks and feels is the best access. Neither should we think, we are obliged to approach God at specific times; or with a set of pre-ordained words; or with prescribed rites and gestures.

The true prayer is addressed to the God within us, is therefore directed to guide us, to influence us, to change us, to better us, to defend us. Prayers for our health or that of those near us may give us hope and strengthen us. Prayers asking for pecuniary help, for God's intervention in the outcome of the stock exchange or in the drawing of the lottery are a mockery.

Somerset Maugham gave up his belief in God, when his prayers that his stutter be cured, remained unanswered.

Prayers may make man conscious of the responsibility he has for the direction his life is taking. In his prayers man should approach God with respect, submission and praise. But there are others who say, man should not hesitate to argue with God.

Abraham challenged God: "Will the Judge of the entire world not act justly? And the chassidic Rabbi Levi Yizhak of Berishev threatened God more than once he would cite him to appear in front of a Din Torah - a rabbinical Court - for making his people suffer so much. When Tevye the Milkman in FIDDLER ON THE ROOF is about to be driven from his home, he turns to God and asks: "So, this is what is meant to be chosen? Do me a favour, Creator of the Universe, and chose somebody else next time".

Man is expected and encouraged to sense and know the ultimate truth. Some seek their way to the truth with the help of cold reasoning - though being fully aware how infinite the truth is and how unreachable in the end - while others try to approach this truth through prayer. Prayer will open our mind and heart for an understanding of what we can accept for ourselves as truth. We should pray for such understanding and for such acceptance. Prayer should be a plea for a true such understanding; for the guidance to reach comprehension.

Prayer should also be directed to an understanding of oneself. Prayer can lead to such an understanding. "The service to God, said Yeshajahu Leibowitz - who was not always an iconoclast - must be for its own sake. It must be divorced of all worldly aims like human perfection or national redemption. One cannot and should not pray

for these. One can only pray for one's proper contribution to these".

Prayer is the communication with the God within ourselves. Whenever we feel within us something like a resonance to our prayer, we can take this as the indication that we have made the right approach. Everybody can have this experience in the course of his own way of praying. There is no need for an external verbalization of the prayer. Everybody should sooner or later have come to know how best to converse with his God. Provided the presentation is open-ended and free of preconception, praying may take the form of logical reasoning. However, of all the possible individual ways to approach God, the best and truest one - as I have mentioned - is with and through one's entire daily life.

A Jew is mistaken if he believes, that his prayer is more effective or beneficial than those of a sincerely praying Gentile. Neither is it enough for a Jew to confess that he is a Jew. A Jew has also to live as a Jew; to behave as a Jew; and to act as a Jew. He has to preserve and to exhibit the moral integrity which Judaism demands of a Jew.

With all their not inconsiderable number of faults; and underneath all the veneer of "modernity" which I observe in the Israelis, I was happy and deeply impressed to notice, that their inborn or inherited, their acquired or instilled moral censor is most of the time perceivable as fully active and effective. Let me point to what I see as a litmus test: it is true, that like the Israeli soldier also the Swiss one - and perhaps those of many other countries - takes his gun along when on leave, but I cannot imagine there exists any other country, where the Government not only permits but instructs all private citizens entitled to own a handgun, to carry their weapon with them whenever they leave the house. And indeed, in the streets of Israel one can at any time see a large number of people with a revolver stuck in their belt. But there is hardly any mishap or misuse of the weapon. I am sure, that anywhere else such easy availability of a weapon - and the permission to exhibit it - would most likely cause a great number of accidents and victims. I explain it as a tribute to the Israeli's sense of moral restraint and emotional balance - otherwise not always in evidence - that so few murders or revenge actions occur. I am aware that a large number of murders do occur, but relatively - and in view of the "availability" - far less than might be expected. Another

indication of the Jews' inborn values.

This should not be taken to mean, however, that the secular oriented Jews are not also guided by principles of morality. They are never behind their religious brethren in excelling in their moral conduct and unselfish behaviour. The only difference is, that one does not hear the less- or non-religious Jews specifically relate their conduct to the commandments of the Torah.

This is a pity. For the Secular Jews who refuse to be guided by the directives and values of Judaism; and those who have little knowledge of what Judaism implies, will in the course of time cease to identify themselves as Jews. They will not know or care to transmit Jewishness to their children and will most likely, within another generation become "extinguished from the Jewish People".

It happens not rarely, however, that these men and women who are without a positive attitude to Judaism; that those who have never missed an opportunity to deny - or even to denigrate - the value of their religion, do undergo a fundamental change when they are, for any reason, induced to check on their behaviour; or when they are made to look inward under the impact of unfavourable circumstances; or when they are exposed to some grave danger; or when they are under the threat of a missile attack; or when they are gripped by shock in the aftermath of a terrorist encounter. Such a drastic change in the attitude and reaction, in the ideology and philosophy of a person is not necessarily always only temporary in nature; it may well take on a permanent character.

Such a sudden change in a person; such a sudden awareness of one's inner emptiness, were well known to the Prophets of old. They were, after all, the spiritual leaders of their days. They were educators, exhorters, moralists. They were men fit to serve as examples. They were also good politicians and excellent psychologists who referred, when appropriate, to an irascible and eventually condoning God as the final governing instance. They assured the lay people - whatever their social standing may have been - that, unless they repented their sins; unless they improved their style of life; unless they put an end to their transgressions, they were not going to escape divine punishment. The Prophets taught and preached, that it depends exclusively on the individual - and no less also on the nation as a whole - to become freed from whatever guilt they have accumulated.

The biblical Prophets had developed from the early primitive seers, hordes of whom roamed the country-side; who uttered prophecies whenever, after a long period of dancing, they had reached - like the Derwishes of Islam

do - a state of ecstasy. Only later on - most likely around 760 BCE - did the Prophets represent a stratum of men or women not only with a higher level of education, but also one endowed with superior intelligence.

Starting with the Prophet Amos - this was at a time, when the morals of the Jewish People had reached a dangerous low - they preached against the idolatry which had penetrated from outside. They cleansed Judaism of its pagan admixtures. They re-established Judaism's monotheism. They agitated against the nefarious influence of foreign dominations. They consoled the nation in times of stress. They reminded the people of their inherited moral duties. They condemned social injustice. They called the rich to be just and not to oppress the poor. "Seek good and not evil so that you may live. Cease to do evil. Only do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with your God", was the recurrent Leitmotif of the admonitions the Prophets delivered to the people.

There is little doubt that in those spiritually emptied and morally flattened times Judaism's survival had been greatly endangered; and that it owed its survival to the Prophets. Judaism owes them no less also the continued purity of its religion. It owes them also the - in view of the times and the circumstances extraordinary - maintenance of a state of social peace, because they were often appointed advisers to the rulers of the country; because they had great influence on the rulers; because they knew how to speak to the rulers; because they knew how to admonish the rulers. Because they knew how to curb their excesses.

They knew no less also how to address the common people. They knew how to speak to them. They knew to use the right kind of language; they made use of metaphors and of threats which all strata of the people could understand. To this day Judaism continues to keep the Prophets in high esteem. Their teaching continues to have value for our own generations.

These prophets can serve in evidence of the regularly recurring phenomenon, that whenever the principles of Judaism were neglected; and whenever its ethical commandments had lost their value for the people, there was never a lack of leaders to arise from among them, who felt inspired to take control of the spiritual life of the straying people; who believed themselves appointed to bring the people back onto the right track.

These leaders and prophets, these politicians and philosophers, were by instinct well versed in the psychology adequate for the times and suited to the people. They knew how to vary their spiritual approach in accordance with the not always very impressive intellectual level

of the people. They acted, spoke and wrote not differently from the writers of the Bible, who had adapted their lessons and demands, their warnings and orders dressed into the formula of a "Thou shalt not...", suited to the range of comprehension of the illiterate masses making up the ancient Israelis tracking through the endless desert.

This insight in the character of the people made the ancient Prophets use also for their dire threats images from the prevailing culture. And this kind of psychological understanding made the wise Rabbis of the Talmud era formulate their type of homilies; and introduce their kind of easily understood allegories.

Today, when Judaism's structure is in danger of being eroded; when its very survival is endangered, it is sorely in need of leaders of such a calibre; of guides filled with such a spirit; of motivators with such an intellectual power; of prophets with such a psychological insight; of personalities exerting such an overwhelming influence. But there are none. Can our teachers and philosophers, our poets and our writers, our politicians and leaders in any way or sense be compared to the prophets of old? There are today no leaders who are accepted, respected and honoured by all sections, strata and currents of Judaism. In the years of the long-lasting exile, when the dangers were so great, there has always been here and there a generally accepted and widely respected individual. Will such men or women arise among us when again the threat to Judaism's survival becomes overwhelming?

It is not only an important ingredient of Israel's old-established belief system, but it is also an axiom in the world at large - and accepted as such by modern Judaism - that the Jews have to be paragons of morality; and that the Jewish State has to conduct itself according to a very high ethical standard.

What we know as Judaism's values and merits; what we cherish as its ethics and philosophy, were transmitted to the Jews as laws and formulated as commandments. The effectiveness of these commandments and laws was enhanced by the religious leaders who pointed out at every opportunity, that they had been issued by God himself. The final wording of the legal codex was communicated to the Jewish People at Sinai, along with the definite instruction, that it has to propagate them among the nations of the earth.

There is a talmudic midrash, that originally God had not chosen the Children of Israel for this task. The

Torah, it says, had first been offered to a number of other nations. But all of them had refused to accept the Torah and its commandments. Only Israel accepted them. And thus it came about, that it was appointed "the elected and selected people". However, we should be careful not to give to the term "Chosen People" the meaning of a preferential status, nor of a hereditary endowment with special characteristics. It is rather a divine summons, an appointment.

The ancient Hebrews were most likely well suited to function as the unsophisticated carriers of such a selection of complex ideas within a rigid and uncompromising setting. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say, they were better fitted to be used for such an experiment: for they were a primitive, unsophisticated, uncomplicated, uncivilized, uneducated and crude set of loosely associated tribes. They were in addition also a rebellious people. These characteristics allow me the conclusion, that they must also have been a rather intelligent and logically reasoning people.

They appear to have in addition harboured and cherished a hoard of primitive myths. Slowly and steadily these unformed people were made to understand - each of the positive or negative experiences they had in those formative years was made to serve as a further grade in their educational process - that all the laws, commandments and rules Moses imposed on them, had in truth come from the mouth of God himself; and had, for this reason, to be blindly accepted; had to be followed without argument; had to be obeyed without criticism whatsoever.

We Jews of today are a more sophisticated nation. We are a higher educated and a more experienced people. But the appointment we received at Sinai has not been canceled. The list of tasks imposed upon us is still the same. The rules of conduct imposed on us are still in force. Not a single one of the original instructions has been changed.

It is this what Pope John Paul II wanted apparently to state in his unusual book "Crossing the Threshold of Hope": "It must be understood that Jews who for 2000 years were dispersed around the world, had decided to return to the land of their ancestors. This is their right....
...this extraordinary people continues to bear signs of divine election".

Starting from the moment the Jews were elected to carry the burden of the Torah Laws, there is a sequential - I might even say a logical - progression to the modern Jews' fate to serve as scapegoats for mankind's failings. In the perennial onslaughts of the antisemites; and in the -- in some form or shape never absent - hate-loaded vociferous discriminations of such a large number of nations in today's world

against the Jewish State, I am given to perceive clear indications, that deep down in the confines of its subconscious mind, mankind wants - and has the need of - the Jewish People to pursue its destiny and destination. And above all, for the Jews to be a holy people.

We should be well aware of the meaning, this appointment to be a holy people has for us Jews; what the call implies; what meaning the call to holiness has for the life to which the Jews are actively exposed today. We may be tempted - in the hope to escape the duties of our appointment; or at best in the expectation to absolve our duties with a minimal effort - to indulge in dreaming of messianic bounties, even if their grant is projected into some distant future. But this is a useless attempt at an impossible escapism.

In view of the incomprehensible persecutions the Jewish People had to suffer; and in view of the illogical explanations given for these, it is quite understandable that there has always been the wish among the Jews to see the "appointment as a special people" - or better the call to a special task - abrogated. To be a people like other people. To be a nation like other nations.

Those who argue, that these wishes and dreams are messianic goals; that they are only realizable somewhere in the infinite future, will see them come true only at the time the Messiah turns up. Neither is it right, not to see our failings as a causative, if not a contributive factor. Nor is it beneficial to our ethical maturation, to blame our periods of moral decline on the Devil and his hordes; or to escape from our responsibility by pointing to the likelihood of magic influences. Only by forcing ourselves to an awareness of our own faults can we find the peace of mind which a duty properly fulfilled can grant.

We should make every effort not to be led into building screens woven of philosophical schemes behind which we can hide. Let us not be tempted to abuse the word and worth of Philosophy. Let us, instead, appreciate what Philosophy has to offer. Let us understand the aim and meaning of Philosophy.

Philosophia means searching for the wisdom of life. It means the study of matter, which relates to what is positive in the value, in the purpose, in the origin of life. It means the adoption of a posture with which to face the demands and exigencies of life. It means the quest for what is significant and important in life. It is the supermarket of ideas on whose shelves we can search for the answers to fit the questions which torment us. Above all: philosophy demands honesty from its disciples and seriousness from its admirers.

And neither let us mix in scientific concepts. Not always have we in science a reliable collaborator for our philosophical speculations. And certainly not for our theological deliberations.

In this context I want to air the point, that in my questioning and reading I have never discovered a satisfactory answer to the question, whether we are to accept as certainties which the scientists conclude from their "discoveries" in the Universe. Have the conclusions - which are called "scientific structures" - more than the discoveries themselves not been erected on a basis of plain presumptions and pure speculations? The scientists' modern high-byted computers bring forth data which - it is said - the scientists themselves are hardly able to understand, and which even less they can prove. But I suppose we should be grateful, that man has reached the state of development, where he could conclude that energy is equal to the mass multiplied by the square of the velocity of light.

Having taken the courage to indulge in the above reflections, I am going to make use of this opportunity to add some further thoughts. Possibly they are going to add for the benefit of an outsider some more illumination on the path on which my thoughts and ideas have chosen to proceed.

On a previous occasion I have tried to outline what I think about us humans' death; and what I figure man's destiny to be after death. I am not alone in reflecting on these matters; in these years the study of the "problem of death" is given increasing interest.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' definition of death as "but the final stage of growth.....and not even the final stage", reflects the modern age's way of thinking. It makes me wonder why mankind, living with the knowledge that death is unavoidable, hardly contemplates also the possibility that the entire human race - in whatever circumstances and for whatever reasons - may come to a sudden end. I think it surprising, that people appear not to weigh even the possibility, that a natural catastrophe - of whatever nature - might cut down all living beings and among them the generation of his children. It makes me wonder, that one hears and reads now and then of people may worrying about their own life and future, but that they hardly ever appear bothered or depressed by the thought, that humankind or even the planet may one

day perish".

In every religion the contemplation of death, and all it implies, is given much room. In only few of the religions is death considered a natural event. The early Israelites were already occupied with the problem of death but - though in steady contact with the neighbouring cultures - they did not accept the latter's idols along with their concepts of death. In biblical Judaism much thought has been spent on the question of death and the Hereafter, though the concept of after-life, of the reincarnation of the soul in general, is in Judaism less emphasized than in most other religions.

Usually one hears those who lack any religious conviction state, that death means the individual's total extinction; and with this statement all further talk about the issue of death is cut short. On the other hand there are many secular intellectuals who harbour the definite and strong belief in some kind of a resurrection after death; but they are rarely inclined to enter into a discussion on this issue.

An example is Yavlav Havel who is "...convinced that in some way or other I will continue to exist after death",

There is no commandment in the Bible that man has to honour the dead. On the contrary: a person is rendered unclean by contact with a dead body. The human body during lifetime is given greater importance than for just being the habitat of the soul. But the orthodox Jews do believe in a Hereafter, in resurrection, in hell and paradise. Kabbala has added the concept of "Gilgul neshamoth", the transmigration of the souls.

Until the Babylonian Exile Israelites had no notion of having to face judgement in a Hereafter, nor of a resurrection or reincarnation. The concept of a Hereafter was introduced only in the post-exilic age, as we can read in Daniel and Ezekiel. Pharisaic Judaism accepted also resurrection as is reflected in the prayerbook; while the Saducaeans refuted all possibility of life in some form after death because no mention is made of this in the Torah. They saw Sheol as the "endstation". It is the place where the wicked are judged, punished, and when purified admitted to paradise.

But Judaism was in truth never satisfied with the orthodox principles of death and sheol, as it did not explain why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper.

In this connection, and considering that I have in the pages of

this essay - which deal mainly deal with our country's and our nation's survival - made at times mention of the Shoah, the "Holocaust", I think a few further remarks might be in order.

The Rabbis of the Talmud have stated that there is no death without transgression. That is to say, the individual's death is caused by his having transgressed the borders of the ethically permitted. Death made its first appearance after Adam had sinned. Thus has he become mortal. And because of him all mankind has become mortal. This is the basis for Judaism's teaching, that death is the result of sin. The sin/death association, however, is not so much meant from a personal perspective as from a universal-jewish one. And it is also from this viewpoint, viz:- how far it may affect the Jewish people as a whole, that I will deal here with this problem.

Man's lifespan, according to Judaism's conception, is a time of an ongoing testing of his readiness and willingness, of his fitness and his capability, to withstand the temptations which without his willed resistance will inevitably lead him to sin. Thus an individual's life, and all a person's experiences during its lifetime, represent an unending series of tests.

It is in this sense that I interpret Rabbi Yanal's saying, that God makes us suffer so that we are conscious of our misdeeds; so that we may try to correct them and repent. And this makes me ask, whether the Shoah, the terrible sufferings the Nazis have inflicted upon the Jews mean a testing of the Jewish People ?

I do not like to use the label "Holocaust" for those dreadful events. It has always been used to describe the "whole-offering" of animal sacrifices in the Temple. Nor do I appreciate "Churban" which means destruction. I think "Shoah", which means calamity, is more the appropriate term by which to describe what the Germans have inflicted on the Jews.

Calamities, pogroms, persecutions are repeatedly returning designs in the tapestry of the Jewish People's history and fate. The exclusive place the Shoah occupies in modern Jewish history should not suppress the fact, that the Jews have since nearly two millennia had to serve as the victims par excellence for the Christian Gentiles' hatred; but the sufferings of the Jews would be badly banalized were the term "Shoah" also otherwise or elsewhere applied, as is the tendency today.

I have with full intent used the above expressions, for it is the

absolute and undeniable truth that for so many of the past centuries the Church has - to a major if not exclusive degree - to be made responsible for the suffering of the Jewish People. Will this type of church-originated and christianity-inspired hatred of the Jews cease now, because at last and through the mouth of the actual Pope John Paul II, the Church has conceded her guilt? Has the Church, at least to some extent, accepted her responsibility?

The above mentioned Pope has by far not shown the understanding - may I say the courage? - of one of his predecessors, Pope John XXIII, who had unfortunately died before he could complete the task he had taken upon himself. "We realize now", he had prayed, "that many, many centuries of blindness have dimmed our eyes, so that we no longer see the beauty of Thy Chosen People, and no longer recognize in their faces the features of our first-born brother. We realize that our brows are branded with the mark of Cain. Centuries has Abel lain in blood and tears because we had forgotten Thy love. Forgive us the curse we unjustly laid on the name of the Jews. Forgive us that with our curses we have crucified you a second time".

Vicious murderous persecutions of Jews had set in no sooner the Church had become endowed with worldly power. The Crusades would not have had sufficient motivation, and thus not the success, had they not been fired by pogroms.

But it has to be conceded, that the Church has never striven for a total, a nazi-style elimination of all the Jews. The Church was willing to let a limited number of Jews survive, not because she wanted to point to the Jews' divinely ordained destiny, but because she needs the Jews as "living testimonials" for her own coming redemption.

The optimists among us may feel entitled to the conclusion, that whereas the religious zeal is abating among the Christians; and whereas the Church's formerly so overwhelming power is diminishing, also its ingrained antisemitism - and with it further persecutions and pogroms against Jews - will become less. Alas, there is absolutely no reason nor justification to expect that this will be the case.

Have I the right to see in the Church's harsh persecutions of the Jewish people over the many centuries nothing but a Christians' envy-created and jealousy-caused - but otherwise inconsequential - event in the Jewish People's history of suffering? Are the pogroms only episodes, by means of which the way the Jewish People reacts to its enemies' deeds serves as a test for its moral strength and ethical

stamina ? Is, in such a case, Christendom not also tested in this way and in a like manner ? Are the onlookers and bystanders not equally tested by the way they act or do not react ? In other words: has the Church only been made to serve as an appropriate tool in the process of testing the Jewish People ?

I have perceived my concept of the ongoing testing to which we humans as well as nations and peoples are exposed, within the frame of my view of our karma. This very same conception of our fate and future can also find other frames and projections. E.g. the persian philosopher Nasir-al-Din Tusi taught that the human soul - which differs by its particularized faculty of rationality from the animal and vegetable souls - seeks by purification and overcoming seduction perfection during its sojourn on earth. And Benjamin Franklin, who had started a crusade for "self-improvement and moral perfection", kept a daily chart on which he recorded with a check mark his transgressions against the thirteen virtues of Temperance, Silence, Chastity, Order and so on.

The Shoah is seen, described and stamped as a singular crime of the Germans against the Jews. And to a large extent all mankind too is accused.

The Shoah may be seen as another calamity in the jewish history of calamities. It may also be seen as a further evidence of man's cruelty to man. But the Shoah was a unique event. It was unique as it was not the old "common" practice of conquering armies to slaughter the defeated, but the calculated policy of a modern civilized nation. It was a carefully planned and executed policy. It was eagerly applied by the majority of the consenting german people.

The Shoah was unique, as it was not a by-product of the war, but was played out against the backdrop of historic antisemitism.

The Shoah ranges as a unique event by virtue of the fact, that for the first time in history a state has made it its program and purpose - purely as a matter of principle - to physically annihilate an entire specific people, men women and children without exception. The victims were transported to specially prepared places of extermination, there to be killed with cold, systematic, and technically precisely calculated methods.

It was the first time in history of mankind", as Cardinal Lustiger said in Jerusalem, "that God has given man the power to destroy humanity".

We may count it as a blessing, that the civilized world has now at last come to the realization, how much the Shoah represents a

watershed in human history.

Shoah is a unique episode in human history, even though for years german historians contended that the extermination of european Jewry was "a rather banal affair". It has become a habit to call - or even to compare the Nazis' extermination of the Jews - the mass annihilations we have learned of or witnessed, with other mass-extermination events of the past. But no historian has been able to find an example, where certain groups of people - once upon a time the slaves or the witches or the homosexuals had been selected as victims - were killed with the aim to totally exterminate their kind within a short period of years. Also the Khmer Rouge killed millions of Cambodians. Stalin killed still more in the course of his political purges. The Japanese have killed untold millions of Chinese. The Turks have annihilated hetacombs of Armenians. Also the two atom bombs over Japan have caused a great conflagration and many victims. But all these events; and all the other large or small murderous episodes in history recent and past, cannot be called a Holocaust or a Shoah. To call these events, these murderous events, holocausts is sacrilegious - as it is to compare the jewish policemen in Israel to the Nazis.

The Shoah is unique, as the Nazis introduced for the first time the racial concept - in place of an ideological one - as a reason for the extermination of an entire people. Stalin and Mao murdered many more people; but their crimes differ insofar as Hitler's Shoah was an ethnocide; was the intention to eventually eradicate the entire Jewish People.

Has the world still to be reminded, that the horrors of Nazi Germany are not the outcrop of Hitler's and the german nation's deceased mind, but the culmination of 2000 years of the Church's arrogance and her false teaching? Do the Christians of today understand that the Shoah has at least as far-reaching implications for them as it has for the Jews? That the fate and survival of the Jewish People has also a prognostic indication for Christianity's survival?

It consoles me; and it has restored my faith in humanity's basic awareness of morality, that all over the world the misdeeds of Stalin have been revealed; that the Americans understand now the Vietnam War as a moral failure; that the cruelties of the Khmer Rouge are globally condemned; that the Turks feel ashamed of the million Armenians they killed; and that among the Americans much regret and shame, and a deep sense of moral responsibility are felt about Hiroshima.

I have reason to think, that most of Germany's post-war generations are aware of the atrocities their parents and grandparents committed. And I am told that most of the young Germans are bitterly sorry for what had been done by their parents and grand-parents; and that many of the young Germans are genuinely ready to share the guilt. However, Germans should not indulge in the illusion - even though they are accepted today on more than equal footing in the family of nations - that the world will ever forget as long as history is written and taught.

What, on the other hand, should we think of the Japanese who refuse to accept guilt and responsibility for their crimes? Does this confirm that mankind is far away from redemption yet!

I don't think I am exaggerating when I say, that most Jews have not forgotten the crimes committed against them by the German people; that they have not forgiven the Germans.

Most of the Jews I have over the years met and interrogated, experience the same sensations and nourish the same feelings as Kate and I did when we first met the Scholls. Kate had no difficulty to accept them and to adjust to them, but I never could feel absolutely relaxed in his company; and also not in that of his wife and children. Although Scholl has never mentioned the Shoah; nor has ever alluded Hitler's policy in general, he has neither openly dissociated himself from Hitler and Nazidom. He showed no reaction, said no word, on the occasion he visited Yad Vashem. Nor ever thereafter. While passing from one exhibit to the other he showed the greatest interest in the maps which recorded the movements of the German troops. This may well have been a cover for his embarrassment. I have no doubt that he was well aware of the Germans' sins.

Talking about Yad Vashem, the "Holocaust Memorial" in Jerusalem: there is much controversy whether a visit to the Yad Vashem Memorial should be made a proper protocol item for a visiting foreign official. It is said that this pilgrimage had originally been made part of the program so that the visitor is made to understand, "that we have not forgotten; that we have not yet overcome; that our wounds are still bleeding". In a certain sense it can also be interpreted as an explanation - or excuse? - for Israel's right to exist.

I am glad the visit to Yad Vashem is no more a must for an official visitor. I consider it also otherwise a great fault in the character of today's Jewry, that it dwells so much on the Shoah. We do not need an excuse or an explanation for our existence. Nor for our survival.

In our - though not always acknowledged - belief, that we are the chosen people; that we occupy a special status; and that we enjoy a special relationship with the Divine, we have become accustomed to raise our hands and lift our voice to heaven and ask God for an explanation whenever our people are struck by a disaster. "Where was God" is the cry we commonly hear whenever the Shoah is mentioned. Do the questioners ever think of the possibility that the Shoah was our punishment? That our people had greatly failed in its duties; and that this punishment was in fact also a shake-up, an admonishment?

By all means, let us ask why God did not intervene in Auschwitz. Everybody I asked has his answer - which is no answer. Is also my own attempt to answer this question not an answer? Possibly! But I know that it is a mistake, a fault, a failing of their test, if people refute God and turn away from Judaism, because of Auschwitz. They have accepted an answer which is no answer. God is not dead. God is not deaf. He is alive and listens. It depends on us entirely in how far we are aware of the God we harbour within us; of the meaning of God's creation; of man's place in this creation - and of our people's destiny and destination. We must be very careful not to find in the ashes of Auschwitz an argument against God's existence or omnipotence or wisdom. And find therein a reason to maintain that God has no care for his people.

On the contrary!

Throughout the millennia the Jews have survived against all possible and impossible odds. Must there not be a reason why they have survived so far? And can this very same reason not apply why they will survive also in future? Why they have been granted the strength to regain their homeland Israel? Why they have now in Israel a fortress, in which the Jewish people can find a home and a refuge?

But all our searching through history; and all our dwelling on pains and persecutions do not provide the answer. We have to start from the fact that we Jews have survived, while no other ethnic unit has survived.

Why have we survived?

To me the answer is, that we Jews have a task, a duty, a destiny to fulfill. We have survived, so that we can fulfill this task, duty and destiny. Study our history and you will find, that whenever we

forgot our duty; and whenever we deviated from our ethical laws and commandments, punishment was the reminder. And when the inducements offered by the Enlightenment weakened the Jewish People; and when the attractions of assimilation threatened Jewish survival like never before, the punishment was the greater.

But what will happen, if again in the near or distant future the Jews fail again and again in their duty ?

17.

Does religion not play a role in our survival ?

Whenever nowadays I hear questions raised about man and his destiny; and whenever I have asked myself these same questions, I could discover, in the course of my related studies, that an attempt at an answer, if not often also a satisfactory answer, is contained in more or less every religion past and present, be it that the basic factors are presented in a well reasoned ideology with clearly outlined dicta; be it - and this is mostly the case - also in form of a metaphorically figured and a metaphysically invigorated theology. It seems impossible for average man to picture with his own knowledge or intellectual means the spiritual element in mankind's past existence; and even more than that to picture for himself its future fate and destiny, without the help of the directives provided in the theological guidelines; without listening to the variegated explanations - usually vested in solemn phrases and wise words - the religions have to offer; without identifying with the teaching, or at a minimum without accepting, at least the basics of one or other religion in whatever shape or formulation these may be taught or reasoned.

I have striven long and studied hard until I could assure myself, that I have in the course of my learning gained a clear comprehension of the true sense and deeper meaning of the religions; of the basics common to all religions; of the methods applied, applicated and adapted - and altered when needed from time to time - by the various specific religious systems to whatever problems they encounter. I have learned that religion shows the way and provides the guidelines to come to term with humankind's frailties and limitations. I have learned that religion teaches to recognize evil and to face death.

I may be thought conceited - or at least wrong - to boast that I have gained a workable knowledge of the various, often widely accepted theological views; and I do not mind saying, that I have succeeded in filtering, out of what I see as a satisfactory formulation, a to me personally meaningful theological view.

In the following pages of this chapter I shall attempt to convey my viewpoints about the meaning of religion; about the significance of religion; and about the philosophy of religion, insofar as they are in harmony with what I have harvested from the books I have read.

Without preconceived ideas interfering, we are entitled to say that religion is an energy source in the evolution of mankind; and although "evolution" has not of necessity to be identical with progress - I prefer to give it the meaning of a change, for better or worse, into a new direction - man's need to involve himself in thinking, acting and planning along religious lines has to be seen as an advancement onto a higher intellectual level.

Here some of the many definitions and characteristics of religion:

* Religion was born when man learned to observe and to register his observations; when his powers to reason about his observations had sufficiently advanced to allow him to make deductions from these his observations; when his analytic mind had developed sufficiently, so that he could build sequential logical thoughts about his observations.

* All religions are made by man; are formulated by man; are given shape by man, in order to satisfy the needs of man.

* Religion is the starting point of man's intellectual evolution. It began with his demanding an understandable explanation for his observations; with his reasoning that nature represented powerful forces which were responsible for whatever he saw, observed and feared; with his looking for protection against nature's dangers and threats; with his perceiving in these threatening forces powerful gods; with his coming to the conclusion that, in order to safeguard his survival, he had to find ways to placate these all-powerful gods whom - in his need for a "logical and ethiological explanation" - he had created and enthroned.

* Religion is not a philosophy. It is a belief system expressed in words - or at last in wordless prayer - accompanied by ceremonies, rites, rituals, postures and symbolisms.

* Religion does not have to be a theology. All religions rest on ethics. Religion's value as a teacher of morality and as the cement of social cohesion is also recognized by the agnostic. Man can identify with the ethics and morality which religion preaches; he has not to be in agreement with the theology preached by religion.

Before I continue with the formulation of my queries, I want to convey some more of the knowledge I have acquired about the religions' origin, development and history, as it will be easier for me to proceed from a mutually acceptable definition.

* An essential feature in the generally agreed to definitions of religion is the presence - in some form or other, but usually in a domineering position - of a superior power which created the world; which controls the universe; and which dominates the fate of mankind. The primary source of this power was the fear of the "Old Man", of the primitives' dead father or the tribal chief. This basic concept is still reflected in the Ancestor Worship practiced in many cultures. Hence it follows, that man has to make every effort to propitiate and please this power.

However, what I have stated just now contradicts the need of a definition to fit every aspect of the subject and its variations, as the above criterium does not apply in every instance. For instance it does not fit Buddhism. Buddhism denies the existence of a Supernatural Being in any form or shape. But, surely, nobody will deny that Buddhism is a religion ! And there are also other such cases: whether we like it not, we have to apply also to "Scientific Humanism" the definition of a religion sui generis, although it denies the existence of a God. I will go further and include also Marxism in this category. Is not to his followers the teaching of Karl Marx a religion, and "Das Kapital" their Bible ?

* Acknowledging these exceptions; and substantiating religion with theology, we can substantiate our definition further by saying, that religion is a thought system carried by social organizations believing in a Superior Being who directs the fate of mankind and the world. We may express this also differently: religion perceives of the existence of a supernatural force, which actively influences events and regulates conditions on earth and in nature.

* Religious systems have acknowledged spiritual guides: Shamans, rabbis, priests, mullahs and similar individuals have arisen or have been appointed as such custodians of religious acumen; as knowledgeable in religious mythology; and as experts in matters of religious practice. And, in the name and with the authority of the religion they represent, these individuals have the entitlement to promise their faithfuls rewards, if not on earth at least in a future life.

* With the help of myths and legends; with an impressive history of its supposed origin; with a series of complex traditions; with an array of sacred ceremonies and rites, more or less every religion cements an otherwise undefined group into a compact social entity.

* Religious practice, ritus and mythos are centred onto or into a sacred surrounding, be it a tree or a forest, a mountain or a lake, a shrine or a temple. Or they take place in a community meeting.

This applies to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but not to Hinduism, where religious functions are performed in private homes; and not to Buddhism, which neither knows of temples - their monasteries should not be counted as such - and has only some kind of shrines which are erected over relics or in places of religious-historic events.

* Religion's function is to direct and guide, to teach and to educate. Arnold calls it "morality touched with emotion".

* Religion is the sanctified formulation of the norms of what is desirable or necessary for man; of what would otherwise not be understood by man; of what, though understood, might be neglected by man; of what, if understood and practiced, will in clear terms transmit to man the message, that ultimately everything derives from a Supreme Being, a Creator.

Thus - to give only two examples out of the many contained in Judaism - a weekly day of rest, which originally must have been perceived as being not only advantageous but also necessary for man to preserve his health, is "sold" by an inspired Moses as having been demanded by God; and, in particular, as being pleasing to God. The Shabath institution brings home also a very important social message: it makes man realize that his servants too are human beings; that they too are endowed with rights equal to his own. In a similar sense also the New Year Festival is endowed with a double purpose and meaning: it is not only the festive beginning of the new year, but also an institution by which man is induced to aware of the gratitude he owes to the Godhead for everything he has and for whatever he has gained.

From the the first days of mankind's advancement into reasoning beings, as I mentioned already, religion has made it one of its tasks - one which originally may well have been its main and only purpose - to explain the ongoings in nature; to explain in particular the floods, the earthquakes and the other natural disasters which primitive man had to face; and to find a reason for the catastrophes he had to suffer, by postulating as the causative and responsible instance a superior and supranatural, mostly hostile, power which to reconcile had to be man's constant and sincere endeavour.

The duties man thought imposed on him by the Powerful Being, was most likely the observation of certain basic ethics: the providing for the needs of his family; the guarding the safety of those under his

protection; the showing of proper respect to the elders of his tribe; the conducting himself ethically towards the other members of his immediate clan.

From the onset myths were introduced; and in due course fables were added. They served the original religion as the tools with which to fortify its borders. They were the creations of those many biblical and historical, mostly self-appointed leader figures, we admire today; and in whom we perceive inspired and guided men.

In the course of humankind's further development also the originally narrow limits of the religion's realm experienced a steady enlargement. The myths themselves were now made to incorporate - and finally to represent - the absolute truth. The religious guidelines - and therewith also their purpose - were extended. The limits of all that which the Divinity conceded as permissible, were outlined in exact word and sentences; in clearly and precisely defined terms. It was clearly and unambiguously stated which deeds earned benefits and which merited punishment. The deviations and contraventions were given the name "Sin". They were sins against Divinity itself which was now called God. For every type and degree of sin the range of divine punishments was codified. And in most instances the kinds and forms of punishment were announced in harsh and often gruesome terms. Based on, and in addition to these absolute and unchangeable divinely ordained commandments and laws, the spiritual and worldly leaders thought it necessary - and certainly so because they saw it as their duty - to issue additional directives of their own, specifically regulating the behaviour of the humans not only in their own community - the social group which in itself and a priori represented the realm of all religious worship - but also in the wider society around them on which they had or hoped to have influence.

The statements, laws and guidelines issued by the religions' founders were in most every instance explicitly made to refer - symbolically as well as practically - not only to the community of the faithful, but also to human society in general. Durckheim goes even further in his demand for a wider horizon. "God and religion belong into the realm of the social sciences", he says.

With these preliminaries stated, I shall continue to enquire: has over the thousands of years man's scientific knowledge advanced to such a degree; has man's cultural evolution progressed to such a degree; has man's morality developed to such a degree, that his fears and his

reasoning, his conclusions and endeavours differ from those of his primitive progenitors ? What does today's mankind - whether educated or not, whether primitive or advanced, which believes it is entitled to think itself so much superior to early man - understand under the "concept religion" ? What underlies our own acceptance of, and our personal submission to, the teachings of religion ?

Most of us have undoubtedly developed personal views in this respect; but there are also generally valid and accepted - and commonly agreed to and practiced - basic views which are meant to define what mankind, civilized mankind at least, understands as religion.

Those who object to religions in general; who decry the postulations of religion; who refute the very basics of religion, usually direct their arguments against the predominance - or even the inclusion - of myths into the religious systems. It is a fact, however, that myths are a main ingredient of every religion. Quasi a sine qua non of every religion. They play an important role in the way a religion is presented and explained, taught and propagated. They are indispensable for the introduction of a religion's historic background; and no less also for the safe anchorage of its theological structure. After all: is not the cementing cohesion of all history nothing but a more or less artificially produced, cohesive series of self-serving myths ?

However, be that as it may: all these objections I have mentioned; all these secondary additions and decorations which may at times have disturbed me, do not diminish my respect for the demands and purposes of religion; for the rules and principles of religions in general; and in particular for all the old-time religious institutions which - while they search to solve mankind's problems and ills with the help of the religious systems - had pointed to human weaknesses and character defects as being mainly responsible for these. I do not even mind the teaching and preaching of so many of these religious belief systems, that whatever ails man is only curable with the whip at best; or will otherwise be put an end to by death.

Humanity needs religion for its survival. Man needs religion as his guiding star. Man needs religion to which he can return when in distress. With the help of religion man can return to himself when feeling lost; when he faces the threat of foundering and needs an anchor.

"Return to what you are; return to who you are; return to where you are", goes a song of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.

As it is, man never properly understands the time in which he lives; and religion may bring him some needed understanding. With the best of will I cannot imagine how man can fathom his personal future; how he can face his responsibilities, without availing himself of the assurances and consolations which only a religion can offer; without religion giving him a sense of his being; and without submitting himself to some kind or other of religious guidance by which to be led through the uncertainties of modern life.

In order for human society to function properly it needs religion. "There is no known society without a religion.religion has given birth to all that is essential in society", said Durckheim.

Religion is not the Torah nor the Qu'ran nor the New Testament. Religion is the living essence and the energy source of daily life but is above the commonness and the pettyness of daily life. And the basics from which that essence and energy derives are incorporated in the Torah and in the Qu'ura and the New Testament. These values remain eternally undiminished values, but their formulation has always to be renewed and their application to man's daily life have constantly to be checked.

Whereas human thought, and man's understanding of abstract thoughts, are ultimately and universally metaphorical, the founders of new religions discard only the old metaphors and symbols, rites and allegories, in order to replace them with a new set of metaphors and symbols, rites and allegories.

However, it has to be pointed out that religion is surprisingly not in itself, nor within the circle of its adherents, a unifying factor. This has been made evident by the monotheistic religions who separated from Judaism, viz:- Christianity and Islam. But this phenomenon has occurred also within the individual religions, as the many divisions in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc. show.

In consequence of these inner-religious and inner-communal hostile trends which again and again become manifest, apparently new religions are regularly created. I nearly said "invented". In truth they are never "new". It usually means only, that sects and cults are introduced or added whenever a religion undergoes a schism or undergoes some kind of reform. These newly created sects and cults are always built on the old, on the existing religion from which they derive; and they only

affirm in different words, and with different ceremonials and rites, the objective values and the fundamental validity of the ethical teachings of the religions into which they have been turned.

The essentiality of religion for the wellbeing of man; the value and significance and value of the religions in general; the value and importance of religion in the harmonization in the human society of spirituality with materialism, is shown by the fact that at no stage in history has there ever been the demand or a proposal to abolish the religions.

Except for mankind's recent history, this statement holds true. We are all aware, that in our life-time Communism has made every effort to totally eradicate all which even resembles a religion. But in reality it has only replaced the existing old-established religions by another far less effective, and certainly less durable, religious system. That is to say, with socialism and communism. These twin belief-systems are still alive in many parts of the world, it is true; but they could only survive the collapse of the Soviet Empire because the promises and assurances they offer; and because the remedial approach to man's needs they have taken, are dressed in the now finally and totally disproved political-economic theories, which the still surviving socialist and communist theoreticians and politicians offer in what for all practical purposes are the trappings of a religious system.

Another factor, which has for so long facilitated the Socialists' and Communists' attempts to replace the traditional religious belief systems, was their adopting psychological and cleverly rationalized ideas to make science one of the pillars supporting their ideological platform.

Religion - whatever its form and tools - will always have a place in human society, because mankind needs religion as a medium for the establishment and maintenance, the validation and justification of a firmly rooted moral code. And religion is no less also essential to serve as a solid platform for the ethical standards mankind has been made to adopt. Without the benefit of religion mankind would not have developed into rational beings; would not have formed into social communities; would not have been guided by ethical demands.

Considering what I have said so far, it should make us apprehensive that religions are endangered today. The more so, as their survival, or effectiveness at least, are nowadays not so much in jeopardy - nor

had this been the case often also in the past - by outside threats or by human indifference, as by the spiritual leaders' unfitness to serve as suitable role models; by the spiritual leaders' disregard of, and their lack of proper understanding for, man's inborn urge to progress to a higher level of understanding, of comprehension, of being. Religion is too valuable to be left to rabbis, popes and maulvis.

Far be it from me to deny, that there are a large number of those who are dedicated appointees to religious leadership; but few among them are cut from the kind material out of which mankind's spiritual guides can be made.

There is no religion without a set of rituals and ceremonials; but it is if not unethical at least fatuitous - and ultimately dangerous - to make rituals central to a religion; and to make ceremonies of essential value in a faith system. And worse still it would be to impose them on reluctant others.

Man needs a "religious program" in and for his life. He is born with a spiritual vacuum. He will go on harbouring this vacuum - at least partially - all through his life, unless he allows religious perceptions to fill this vacuum. But mankind as a whole; or a community or a society of men; or even the isolated individual, may need today, for the same reasons as in the past, a new approach or directive; a new presentation or representation; a change in the formulation or a different inspiration; a changed definition and interpretation, of the essence of what is the essence of religion; of what religion means to man; of what religion demands of man.

Our actual society is not better off than those which preceded ours. None of us is immune from such a need. In our time, no less than was the case in times past, such remodelling and reinterpretation may be needed to fill in the spiritual vacuum perceptively forming in our society. If this is not undertaken now, all that religions have taught so far; all that ethical guidance the religions have imparted so far, will lose their meaning and their effectiveness.

My words of warning should not be taken to refer only to the Jewish People; they apply to no less an extent also to human society in general.

The fading away of the religious impact on society and community was one of the reasons why the Enlightenment had such a deleterious impact on the Jews; why it can be referred to as an example of what

is going on today; and why it should be taken as a warning of what threatens jewish survival: when Enlightenment removed the restrictions which for so long had chained down the Jews into a humble existence, the liberated Jews lost no time to escape from the suffocating ghettos.

When Haskara - the jewish Enlightenment - was born, Secularist Judaism rejected religion as the determining factor in jewish identity. And when it was replaced by jewish nationalism in form of Zionism, the Jews had to face an identity crisis.

And because they did value their inherited traditional treasures less than the incoming cultural wave, they divested themselves also of the essentials of their religion. This misplaced eagerness landed them in a spiritual vacuum. They began to assimilate and to merge with the gentile world. And soon they disappeared into the gentile world.

Again, this is by far not an exclusively jewish experience. The Christians too were similarly affected. When under the impact of the Enlightenment Christianity lost a considerable part of its mystical aura and of its sacred nimbus, many of its formerly fervent followers abandoned their churches in large droves; or they turned to the cults which began to sprout in ever larger numbers.

Enlightenment's grant of freedom of expression; and the reduction in the power of the Church, greatly removed the restrictions which had in the past been imposed on attacking the religions' influence on human society. I was intrigued to learn of Sigmund Freud's disappointment when he realized, that the spiritual developments he had expected from Enlightenment had not materialized in the course of last two centuries.

Let us keep in mind, that although Freud's therapeutic approach may not be "modern" anymore, his philosophy is as valid as ever. Freud had hoped, that the era of Enlightenment would bring about the demise of all the religions; that reason would win over what he designed as "superstition"; that "..... the infantile illusion of religion" would be overcome, as he wrote. To him all religions and their teaching were neurotic relics, left-overs from mankind's past. He suggested that the time had come to replace - with the rational operation of the intellect - the effect which religions have on the repression of man's normal reactions.

"Religion is an attempt to master the sensory world in which we are situated, by means of the wishful world, which we have developed within us as the result of biological and psychological necessities. But religion

cannot achieve this. Its doctrines bear the imprint of the times in which they arose, the ignorant times of the childhood of humanity. Its consolations deserve no trustit is due to the neurosis which individual civilized men have to go through in their passage from childhood to maturity", Freud wrote in his "New Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis".

Freud did not live to see that Marxism-Communism - which shared his view about religion - failed in the end. It might have interested him to learn of - and to analyze - the movements which have entered the world's arena, like the "Born-Again-Christians", Zionism, Reform Judaism and so many other new religion-like currents, which know how to adjust to the changed demands; which perpetuate with new perspectives and in changed form the expectations without which mankind would be lost.

I can easily identify with Jacques Maritain's explanation - in his "Freudianism and Psychoanalysis. A Thomist View" - of the motivations which had led Freud to his negativistic attitude: "...at the bottom of Freudian metaphysics there is the resentment - as Freud himself has explained - of a soul insulted and humiliated since childhood; a resentment, as it seems, against human nature itself".

It is more and more observed today, that intellectuals of this nature and other secularists have a very superficial understanding of religion. They see themselves intellectually strongly anchored and think they do not need religion to face life and its problems.

To prevent any misunderstanding from filtering in; to offer a better comprehension of much of what I have expressed so far, I consider it wise if not necessary, that I amplify what I have written so far with a few sentences in which I give my own view and idea of the way religions have developed in the course of history.

Religion, as I have already outlined, implies; and its formation is dictated by, the belief in a primal, undefined, threatening authority somewhere in space; which authority has granted certain substitutes, selected from among the people on earth, the right to exert authority on its behalf. These human authorities were spiritually powerful individuals who spoke and acted in the name of that super-natural power.

Regularly times did happen; regularly situations did develop; and regularly circumstances did arise, when these human interpreters - mostly zealous men of spiritual power, foresight and intuition - sensed that the prevailing religious system in which they were engaged had become

intellectually inadequate; that it had somehow turned emotionally sterile; that it did no more meet the needs of the times; that it did not anymore fit the conditions of the current life; that it was contradicted by the intellectual advances which had occurred since the faith's last evolution or mutation; that it had become the object of ridicule in face of the up-dated scientific progress. In short: these spiritual and intellectual leaders found that for all these and more reasons the religious faith in its actual form was no more effective. They became reformers. They took it upon themselves to re-organize the prevailing religious system. They introduced the reforms and alterations they thought appropriate and fitting to the changed times and the changed population. They told their peoples - usually and honestly and effectively, I am sure, they believed this themselves - that a Divine Power had appointed them to add to, or to fundamentally reshape, not the basis but the formulations of the religion as practised at that period. By introducing a new imagery enriched with new myths; or by producing new legends woven around newly reported miracles, they produced not a totally new religion in content, but a totally new religion in appearance only.

To some degree, and with various results, attempts have at all times been made at secularizing, at reforming, at rebuilding an existing religion. Such attempts have invited innovations in nearly all the religions now or at any time in existence; they have introduced new religious traditions; they have created new religious organizations. This was the case when Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism splintered off Brahmanism; and this was the case when Christianity and Islam were created out of Judaism.

It is in my opinion amply demonstrated by the material and in the rites of even the religions still practiced in our times, that none of the new sets of spiritual leaders and reformers could have had much respect for the intelligence of their people. They must also have taken special care of, and have calculated into their reforms, the asocial tendencies of the people above whom they exerted influence and possibly even absolute power.

However, in all these reformed religions; behind their newly created facades; and in the transpiring conceptions of the reformers, the true ethic values of the original, inherited religious tradition are always detectable as the skeleton over which the skin of the newly formulated religion had been draped. This is the reason why - next to the basics common to all ethical religions - also so many similarities can be

detected in their ideology and theology, their mythology and symbolism.

The religious basics which are evidenced; the human's spiritual wellbeing which is purposed; the commentaries which had been introduced as explanations; the mythological adjuncts which serve as examples; the psychological and theological approach which were used in the religion's presentation; the interwoven threats and the threatening language which are used, were of course formulated and added, because they were thought appropriate to the time in which they originated. We have, therefore, to see a religion's structure within its historic context; and hence we have to adjust our judgement accordingly. It is useless, as well as senseless, for us today to ridicule - even to discuss and criticize - whatever religion's adjuncts and wordings from our own point of view; within our own range of education.

This would be as inappropriate and even senseless, were we to discuss, criticize and bemoan today - from our actual point of view and in the light of today's conceptions - the methods used by the explorers who, some two hundred years ago penetrated the African continent; and the conclusions archaeologists drew a hundred years ago from their excavations in Greece or Palestine.

I propose to enlarge on this theme in the coming chapter; but at this point I want to raise the question, whether a state and a nation as such can be identified with a religion. Specifically: whether an individual can maintain that he belongs to his people and his nation without also identifying with its predominant religion.

In the Jewish context the problem is not solved by insisting that state and religion should be totally separated. A separation between state and religion is possible, acceptable and practical with respect to the Christian religions. Indeed in most countries the religious institutions are separated from the state. But - it is my firm conviction - in Israel and for Judaism a separation of this nature and in this sense is impossible. Neither can this be the case in Islamic countries. Judaism and Islam cannot be compared with the Christian religion to this effect.

I would go even further and say, that in Judaism such a separation would be impossible; that it would be a contradiction. The Jewish religion is a national religion. It is bound to a specific people. Whatever goes on in Israel; and whatever happens among Jews in the Diaspora, cannot be separated from Jewish nationalism and from the Jews as a religious unit. But Judaism is not a racial religion. Although

Judaism is an accident of birth, a convert to Judaism becomes a member of the Jewish People. In Israel a convert can become a Jewish national.

But can the 40 000 strong community of Black Hebrews who, after the last World War settled near Dimona, become real Jews? Have they the rights accorded to all converts to Judaism? They may not be able to claim such rights if they insist on having descended from the original Israelites.....and of having, therefore, no need to convert to Judaism.

And this applies also to the 200 000 Afro-American Jews in America, made up of mixed marriages, converts, Ethiopian Jews and descendants of other Afro-Jewish sects, Hebrew Israelites and descendants of freed slaves who converted to the religion of their Jewish masters.

18.

How I interpret the religions' history.

Another excursus.

While I develop in this chapter still further, and in greater detail, my ideas about our involvement with religion; and while I attempt to outline my personal Weltanschauung about the place religion has to be given in the fate and destiny of mankind, it will be unavoidable that I repeat much of what I have already said, written and explained at other times and in the preceding chapters. I do not mind doing so for the sake of offering a more compacted exposition.

It is my contention - as I outlined a short while ago - that the reason why most all the religions have so much in common, is not only because they fit into the common definitions of the meaning and purpose of a religion; not only because they all have the ultimate aim to help man achieve a better life and mankind a higher level, but also - and primarily so - because they originate from a common root, from a common original religion which I will call an "Ur-religion". This original, simple and plainly organized religious system, embraced by what we may confidentially describe as the first organized human community or society of men and women, had most likely all the specific characteristics and aspects of a religion, viz:- it was a belief system contained in a frame of rites and rituals, myths and symbolisms. This religious belief system certainly laid stress on the ethic values with which mankind had been entrusted by virtue of its elevation above all other living beings; and it certainly knew of the moral directions and commands which a religion unequivocally orders humankind to follow.

It is this nucleus which has never disappeared from the make-up of all religions. It is the sine qua non which all religions have in common. It feel certain, that were I to set out to filter the true essence and the ethical fundamentals from all the religions which have provided guidance and consolation in the past; and which continue to program their religion-clad moral social guidelines at present, I will

discover what I knew since long: that all religions have this very same original essence, these very same basic values in common.

I have no doubt, that the ideas I am expressing here cannot be new; that they cannot be original; that they are not singularly my own; that there are and have been many among the philosophers and historians of religion past and present, who have been thinking along the same lines. But while I start from the firm conviction, that mankind's entry into this planet's history; that man's steady development into his actual complex biological being; and that man's unique and exclusive endowment with intellectual and spiritual qualities, have been divinely intended; and whereas I believe that mankind's progress has always been - and will always be - divinely supervised, I do not base my hypothesis on the often recited, and undoubtedly true, fear which primitive man had of the unknown; on his dread of the threatening dangers; on his mistrust of unfriendly nature. I start from, and base myself on, the certainty that, when the pre-human race was given the go-ahead to develop into homo sapiens, it was provided - along with the injection of a definite and slowly on its developing set of ethical and spiritual faculties - also with the definite and clear-cut divine directions, how it has to live in accordance with its implanted ethical and spiritual qualities.

And it is in addition my belief, that only the direction was given to man; that he was not forced to stay on a specifically prescribed path; that his path was not closed in by high walls; that it was left to him to chose the paths on which to proceed. In other words: along with the basic ethical demands uncompromisingly made on him, man had been granted the free will to direct his steps; to develop in any direction he liked. He was even granted to decide for himself whether he wanted to remain in the direction defined for him.

Man was entrusted with the responsibility for what he did or did not do. It was and is left to man to decide for himself, what kind of life he wants to lead; whether he wants to live in close conformity with the divine demands; whether and how he forms a mutually compatible existence with the men and women in his community or of his society.

I shall now - where necessary at length - add to what I have already touched upon in the previous chapter, viz:- how I think mankind developed further along the above defined guidelines; how I visualize the history of the religions; how I imagine the development of the many religions past and present; how and why I can detect

in every religion past and present a thread at least of the original ethical directives which mankind had been given.

These threads have regularly led me back to one and the same original religion - the one I have labeled the "Ur-religion" - which was made up of a set of fundamental ethical commandments and rules of conduct. From time to time variations - demanded by adaptations to climatic and historical changes; or by individual and psychological differences - were added; and the Ur-religion could go on fulfilling the needs and directing the life of early man. In the course of time, however, some kind of an inertia must have developed in this, generally prevailing, primordial religious system, either because its effectiveness on the people had become less; or because it had been otherwise rendered lifeless; or because it had been made ridiculous by the excesses or the immorality or the dishonesty or the intellectual inferiority of their presiding spiritual leaders. Warned by these developments; and aroused by the threat of dangers ensuing therefrom, men of intellectual strength and spiritual inspiration arose from time to time - reformers, philosophers, prophets - who introduced the changes they thought were necessary; or made the additions which they thought would be adequate.

All the religions "in practice" today - I submit - date back to, and have derived from, that original source; and they all have acquired their specificity and their individuality through such a process.

I believe we are offered in Genesis 6:1-4 the background to such a deteriorating process in the simple ethic rules with which original mankind had been imbued. There was general disregard for even the simplest moral rules of conduct. There was, the Bible reports, sexual involvement "of the sons of God with the daughters of Man". And God had decided - we are told - "...to blot out man whom I have created".

Noah the only righteous man of his time was chosen to survive, along with his family, and to create a new mankind. The Bible presents him as a righteous, godfearing man. He proved his ability to rebuild mankind by taking upon himself the certainly arduous task by caring for and feeding the large number of animals in his ark. By virtue of his persistence in building the ark, notwithstanding the ridicule he was exposed to by the people living nearby, he is turned into a typical Zadik, i.e. a man whose actions and example help to save mankind.

The biblical narrative of his salvation is followed by the codification of the simple set of demands made now on the already more complex society which was to grow from Noah's family. All indications

are, that it was most likely already a more complex society with a higher set of standards, and possibly a more sophisticated culture with a more advanced perception, than the original group of simple and primitive men and women which had perished in the Flood.

However, to prevent posterity from elevating and venerating Noah as a model saint, he is shown in a few psychologically very adapt sentences - and in line with the "policy" of the Bible - as a plain human being affected by human weaknesses: no sooner had he returned to the dry land, than he plants vineyards, gets drunk on wine, and in his drunkenness "exposes himself".

The original Noahide guidelines of what is demanded of man, are reflected, and are demanded, in every religion: that it be a priori an ethical religion; that it teaches the ineffable nature of God; that it sees the Universe as a divine creation; that it perceives mankind under constant divine supervision; that it forms the channels along which God is in relationship with man.

Historians continue to be on the never tiring outlook to find archaeological and other evidence for the Flood. However, it does not matter in this context whether such an all-destructive flood had indeed happened or not. But this legend undoubtedly reflects an ancient memory; namely the memory of a calamitous, of an overwhelming disaster.

The legend of a Flood which destroyed the entire civilization then in existence -- possibly in the wake of a huge meteor striking the planet - is not restricted to the biblical account. Neither are the legends of the survival of a Noah-like person who is the starting point of a new world on the planet earth. Nor are those of a divine demand for a minimal set of ethics henceforth to be followed by mankind. Legends similar to that of Noah and the Flood are mentioned in the mesopotamian, akkadian and other ancient literatures, as well as in indian and greco-roman folklore.

The Ur-religion entrusted to Noah was made up of plain and simple principles. They were what today's theologians define as the "Noahide Laws". These laws embrace the very elementary and most uncomplicated duties imposed by monotheism, humanism and moralism. They demand respect for life; abstention from idolatry; suppression of blasphemy; inadmission of thievery. They prescribe the introduction and unhindered operation of an orderly juridical system. They demand that respect be shown to whoever does not venerate pagan gods.

God, the Bible reports, entered thereafter into a Covenant with all living creatures, and with mankind in particular.

By implication and outright symbolism - possibly to keep the memory, the causes and the implications of the tremendous natural disaster alive among the Jews - Noah continued to play a somewhat significant role in the Bible. The Covenant God made with Noah figures as a symbol of God's relationship with man.

However, it must be remembered that Noah was not the first and only man with whom God made a covenant of some kind or other. Adam had been God's first such partner; and Abraham was later blessed by such partnership with God. But, the talmudic rabbis reasoned, neither Adam nor Noah are to be counted because there had not been any Jews before Abraham appeared on the biblical stage. The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, on the other hand, reason that Adam and Noah were effectively blessed like was Abraham.

God promised Noah in the Covenant he made with him, that never again would there be such a devastating flood. He promised him also, that whoever of his descendants paid full obedience to the simple, divinely promulgated ethical conduct, was assured of a happy life on earth.

However, he was not as lenient; nor was he equally forthcoming, towards the Jewish People to be formed in the future. From them he demanded far more. When he appointed them his "special people", he imposed on them a set of no less than 613 moral commandments and behavioural rules.

That the Bible continued to honour Noah as the embodiment of a new and definite era; that it wanted his impact on the development of religions never forgotten; that it appreciated his undiminishable significance for Judaism, can be deduced by the way Abraham and Moses are depicted as Noah-like figures: the first, along with his family, witnessed and survived the destruction of Sodom and Gemorrah; the latter had to pass through the Red Sea into safety. Also the confinement of Jonah inside the whale appears to aim allegorically at Noah. The Church too appears to appreciate Noah's memory: he is made a symbol for Jesus; the dove is made to represent the Holy Spirit; and the ritual of baptism is meant to symbolize the purified emergence of a new person. The Qu'ran does not invest any special symbolism in Noah. He is one of the prophets in whom Muhammad saw the prototypes for Moslems to follow and imitate.

The set of plain and simple, of easily understood and followed, Noahite principles taught by wise men to the first generations of restored mankind, I prefer to call the Ur-religion that was instilled

in early man as a minimum of moral duties and inhibitions. They were pointed out as essential rules of behaviour and coexistence which were essential for that re-emerged mankind to overcome the many obstacles it had to face in its fight for survival.

When mankind grew in size and diversity; when it began to populate the various parts of the then known world, wise and psychologically finely tuned leaders surfaced here and there in the various parts of the then inhabited world, who thought the inherited traditional religion had become inappropriate to the demands and facts in their life; who were convinced that different approaches were needed; and who in consequence set out to make additions to the prevailing religious system. Or they may even have decided here and there, to create a religion that in content and ritualistic appeared to be a totally different belief system.

I take the courage to interpret in this sense the legend of the Tower of Babel, where "many languages were spoken" at the time it was built: viz:- that at this stage of humankind's development many religions with various levels of value; and of different degrees of understanding, though still of the same traditional, basic, ethical Noahite principles, were in vogue.

I have already pointed out, that the spiritual leaders who formed new interpretations and images; who created new laws and rules; and who founded new religions with a new set of myths and symbols, appear not to have felt much respect for their people. Moses may have been one the earliest leaders in which this is quite evident.

Each of these leaders appears to have developed his own teaching method with which he strove to make people understand and accept the basics of what was to him the essentials of his religious system. The founders added illustrations; and wove in a pattern of miracles and legends. Thus it came about, that many variations of the original religious theme developed. And in time these grew and flourished. Some of them survived for a long time; others did not prove vital. But all of them had sprouted from the same tree - and only the fruits they grew differed from each other. And this process goes on to this day. It is a constantly flowing stream.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new. And God fulfilfills himself in many ways" (says King Arthur in Tennyson's "Idylls of Kings"). In other words: "Le plus ca change, le plus ne rien change pas"

However, some things never change. Some things remain constant.

Some things never change and remain constant because they are facts.

Have I made it sufficiently clear, how certain I feel certain that there had been one single simple religion - I better say a basic form of religion - in which the people expressed their belief; and in which they exercised their attempts at imagining and understanding; in the way they formed their images of the Divine; and in the way they illustrated their myths? It was, as I imagine, a religion with an easy approach to understanding by being a religion which was generous in its interpretations and allegories. Nature was to the people an animated part of this world; and in this perspective they could react emotionally to what they saw and feared. The sun and moon were perceived as deities - and to this day these two celestial bodies have maintained a significant role in mythology and legends, in poetry and artistry; and in the subconscious depths of man.

It is accepted that before the Babylonian Exile the sun was revered; and that sun calendar and not that fixed according to moon was in use. And it is interesting to note, that today neither the sun nor the moon play - I better say do not anymore play - a role in Judaism, except to the Hassidim who pay some respect to the rising new moon. This makes me suppose, that there had been a time when Jews were engaged in cults built around the heavenly bodies; and that, as these cults had led to idolatry, they were abolished by the rabbis, the spiritual leaders.

When the Sophists, the first school of philosophers, made their appearance around 600 BCE, religious expression had still remained on a primitive, better said on a simple level. The Sophists introduced a new approach. They related and explained everything in relationship with nature; and hence they endeavoured to explain man's duties and morals in his relationship with nature. Historians teach, that it was at that point in history when science in its proper sense was born; and when the description and perception of nature and man were for the first time introduced in scientific terms. It was also the time when the various parts of the then civilized world - and in all likelihood independently from each other - registered fundamental changes in the intellectual, social and possibly political spheres of life. Here and there man's thinking began to turn methodical and critical.

These developments finally brought with them an expansion of mankind's cultural and spiritual horizon. Most of what the prevailing religions had taught until then, appeared now to the educated people

rather stale, inadequate and inappropriate. That superior sophisticated layer of mankind cannot but have believed it necessary to make changes in the religions they had inherited.

Around that 6th century BCE - when mankind appeared to have been at a crossroad in its developmental progress - personalities arose apparently everywhere in the then civilized world, who introduced the changes and reforms they thought were needed. Prophets arose in Israel. In Greece the pre-socratic philosophers began to teach. Zoroastrianism developed in Persia. Confucianism arose in the far Far East. And so on.

The changes which the religions had evolved in the course of time - starting from that first Noahide baseline - inevitably reflected in the effect the ensuing reforms and modernizations had on the people. It was an inspired adaption to the mentality of the time; as well as to the people's changed attitude to their environment.

This process is reflected in the changes which occurred also at various other times in various parts of the world, and under various conditions.

In the following I shall cite some such developmental changes.

* In order to preserve its political and social dominance in their rapid changing world, Hinduism's ruling Brahmin class interpreted the Veda Scriptures anew - and to their personal benefit.

They constructed a religious-mythological basis on which they legislated the creation of four varnas or castes: the supreme Brahmins; followed by the Khatryas or Warriors; followed by the Vaisyas or Merchants; and finally the Sudias or Servants. However, this religious social system was not acceptable to certain strata of the intelligentsia. Large sections protested and finally separated from Brahminism. Jainism and Buddhism with their own interpretations, philosophy and myths came into existence.

Notwithstanding the caste system; notwithstanding the dominance in the hands of the Brahmins; notwithstanding the excessive power it granted to the Brahmins and Khatryas, religious interpretation and expression did not remain their sinecure. Nor was it their safeguard. In the second century BCE another reformer came to the surface. Manu was his name. "All traditions and misperceived philosophies which are not found in the Vedas produce no reward after death, for they are founded on death", he preached. He succeeded to have Brahmanism and Hinduism adapt accordingly.

* The world of ancient Rome knew similar reforming currents and changes. Developments occurred which forced the military government of the Roman Empire to search for an adjustment of the prevailing religious doctrine to the changes and fluctuations in the intellectual and political atmosphere; to introduce a new religious perception; to spread among the people and the peoples a picture of the world in which their kind of rule and rulers would be justified; and where the nations they dominated would be satisfied with their fate.

* Also Jewish history has changes to report at that and at consequent stages in the formulations and presentations of the basics of the Jewish religion. These are well documented and therefore easy to follow; but they never changed, or otherwise affected, Judaism's essentials and specifics.

The Prophets of Israel were the defenders and witnesses of this unchanged and unchangeable truth. It should not fail to be clear to us, that the Prophets' ways and modes of speaking - when they disciplined the people in the name of God for their religious deviations or moral degeneration; and when in times of danger and need they intervened with God on behalf of the nation - could not have sounded foreign or strange to the people, because the tone in which they spoke; and the phraseology which they used, relate to the mode and trend of the times in which they lived and preached. It may appear to us that they used antiquated concepts and images; but they spoke most likely the way the people spoke; or at least they spoke in a way the people did not find out of place.

I deem it appropriate to repeat here my advice, that on reading the Scriptures we better divest ourselves of our present day knowledge and tastes, so as not to criticise what may sound to us strange, or what we may find unacceptable. The words and terms, the images and concepts used in the ancient writings fitted well those days and those addressed.

To give some of many instances: the Torah tells us of Balaam's attempts to curse the Israelites. Today he would have exposed himself to ridicule, but at the time the Torah was written down people very much believed in the efficacy of a curse. The same applies also to the value and effect of a patriarchal blessing. My above warning embraces also the "trick" Jacob played on Esau. All of us will certainly judge Jacob's a low and dishonest way to deal with one's fellowman, especially a brother. Most of us will agree, I have no doubt, that Jacob acted like a scoundrel - but in biblical times he was judged, to all appearances, a clever fellow.

* Another fundamental correction followed the changes which developed in Judaism's cultural-religious sphere: by virtue of the newly perceived relationship between man and God; and in the wake of the priests' loss of power as intermediaries; and due to the opening of the direct approach of the Jews to the Divine; and following the increasing size of the Jewish Diaspora, synagogues were established wherever Jews lived in places distant from Jerusalem. However, only prayer services without animal sacrifices were permitted in the synagogues. Although sacrifices remained restricted to the Temple in Jerusalem, this did not diminish the value and the importance of the synagogues, because the sacrificing of animals "to please God" had by that time already lost much of that impact and significance which had in the past been attributed to it. Judaism had already turned into the "Religion of the Bible".

Although following the destruction of the Second Temple the talmudic Rabbis continued to exhibit a certain progressive mentality, they rejected any reform or change of anything which was based on, or which could refer back to, the methodology originally used in the Bible. Even though the traditional reasoning and formulating was used, it is easy to detect in the Sages' rulings and pronouncements - which have certainly to be judged progressive in the light of their times - the source of the progress and the knowledge, of the thinking and of the customs, thanks to which Jewry was kept alive in medieval times.

There was not a time in Judaism's past history, when new theological and ideological concepts were not added, whenever these were thought needed. And there was never a time in the long history of the Jewish People when these changes were not required; when the time was not considered appropriate; when the people were not thirsting for such a form of consolation; and when the existing belief system was not thought insufficient to provide the consolation or hope the Jews needed to survive the never absent stress and strain in their existence. For these reason, for instance the belief in a life after death; the belief in a resurrection; the belief in a paradise, came to be taught.

Also the belief in the Messiah, the son of David, surfaced first in a time of despair; and it continued to survive thereafter. It was born in the wake of the persecutions which the Jews had to suffer during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. Later on the Church was to identify with this idea complex; and to bestow the rank of Redeemer-Messiah on Jesus.

The idea of a divine person making its appearance on earth, was born out of the need for consolation. Even though this connotation has now become an integral part of Jewish belief, the concept of a Messiah who brings salvation to the afflicted people is not a Jewish one. It somehow does not fit into Judaism's theology and philosophy. God is meant wherever mention is made of a Messiah-Redeemer in the Bible or the Psalms; and whenever an anointed king is mentioned, it is a living king and worldly ruler.

Nothing relating to a messianic idea is mentioned in the writings of the Prophets. These spoke of a future king but never a redeemer king. Yes, Isaiah prophesied that "there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse", but he clearly meant a human ruler over a newly resurrected kingdom of David, which will rise upon the ruins of the idolatrous kingdom in which the Prophet lived. The image he perceived of a future king was not that of a Messiah or Redeemer, but that of an ideal king. Neither is the "Redeemer and Restorer of Jerusalem", whom Ecclesiasticus predicted, a kind of Messiah or a human being: God himself is meant to be the Redeemer.

The Book of Daniel introduces the concept of resurrection but never mentions the Messiah. The first real and proper messianic aspirations were formulated; and a messianic movement in a proper sense sprang up only at the time of the Hasmoneans, i.e. not long before the destruction of the Second Temple. The Psalms of Solomon, for instance, a production of those years, condemned the hasmonean kings as sinners, who had usurped David's throne and did not qualify as an eventual Messiah.

* We should not think it is a coincidence, that in the 12th century, at the dawn of the Renaissance - the time when the spiritual world and the religious atmosphere were about to undergo such profound changes - mysticism too was revived; that the Kabbala turned into a great attraction also for the non-Jewish intelligentsia and the mystics; and that the Zohar came to form the basis from where the Jews could set out to find their own approach to the up-welling mysticism of their time. This happened even though this form of mysticism - in contrast to the belief in angels - had in the past been alien and unacceptable to the doctrine of Judaism.

Angelogy - the belief that angels are to be found everywhere; and that they intervene on behalf of man in times of need - has always made up an important part of Jewish mystic belief. It must have been a left-over from an ancient myth the Jews have carried along as an accepted and acknowledged ingredient of their kind of mysticism. Emperor Asoka of India is said to have in the 3rd century

BCE sent emissaries to Israel to investigate this knowledge. The Bible hints that Enoch was taken alive into heaven and transformed there into an angel. Patriarch Jacob prayed to what must have been his guardian angel. To this day angels are the vogue: as protectors of children, as intermediaries and helpers - even at times to the exclusion of God himself.

* Christianity however,, which places such great emphasis on the sinfulness of mankind, was hardly affected by any of the regular recurring cultural, scientific and ideological upheavals. If an onlooker gets the impression that the Church has undergone a change, this can at best have happened to its outer manifestations or presentations. As a rule she knew how to skillfully draw advantages from whatever changes she had to face. But at no time did she alter her guidelines or slacken her discipline. At no time and for no reason were Christians ever granted the expectation, that the sense of guilt, planted into the heart by their churches, is so more effective; and that in due course the way to salvation will be open to them and all other mortals without the intervention of the priests and their incense.

The Church has at no stage changed her insistence, that to mortals salvation is unavailable except through the Messiah, whom she had created and whom she is offering as the sine qua non.

I know that had Pascal reasoned "...it is prudent to bet on the christian religion, just in case it might be true"; but I do not know who said: "Mundus vult decipi - ergo decipiatur".

* With regard to religion, the outgoing Middle Ages brought on a profound reversal in the mind and attitude of all the strata and classes. People who lived in the 14th and 15th centuries did not anymore as easily agree, and as docilely submit, as before to what was conveyed to them "from above". Whatever their education or their social status, they demanded to be presented with concrete and provable facts. They insisted they be shown clear evidence in proof of alleged facts. Ex cathedra preaching and authoritative teaching did not suffice them anymore. The spiritual guidance, unfettered by hearsay and fantasy, offered at the time mainly by poets and monks, found easy acceptance and welcome resonance also among the common people.

But the Church knew how to adapt to the newly developing world. The symbolic tools and spiritual methods she had over the many centuries so effectively used in presenting her lessons and teachings, were accordingly changed and adapted. Whatever superstitious belief in miracles the common people had preserved or newly cultivated, was

furthered and strengthened; the fear of the Devil and of the malicious spirits were declared justified and given official recognition and support. To satisfy the people's ingrained - and now proliferating - preference for visual images instead of the spoken or written words, the Church conveniently discovered splinters from the True Cross, thorns from Christ's crown and shrouds with Jesus' face faintly imprinted; and exhibited them for the veneration of the people. Paintings and sculptures of the Holy Family, of saints and martyrs were commissioned and made available for adoration.

* Humanism's interest in books, which grew up in the christian world during the 15th century, brought on a deeply furrowing religious upheaval leading to a widely welcomed reformation. The clerics lost much of their power. Interest in the Scriptures with their original, unadulterated christian teaching, was renewed. The Church's ritualistics, and her indulgence in splendours and luxuries, were decried. The sciences were used as a powerful weapon. Mysticism - in the form of Kabbala and Alchemy - was revived. Astronomers like Copernicus, Kepler, Gallilei changed mankind's view of the world. The existence of God was doubted. Immortality of the soul was denied.

The Church reacted brutally: Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake. The inquisition was established.

* In the wake of the political and social changes which occurred in medieval Europe; and when the economy changed from a primarily agricultural one to barter and commerce, numerous cities were founded. Nation-states were formed. The merchants and burghers represented now the dominating class. A new intellectual atmosphere developed. All these social changes brought with them also the demand for changes in the form and methods of religious presentation and teaching.

* With the Renaissance evolving, religious interests benefited from the advances in the sciences; from the progressing unveiling of Nature's secrets; and from the sudden flourishing of the arts and of literature. Ancient greek writings were rediscovered, and arab philosophy became the object of intense study.

* In the aftermath of the Renaissance, religion became a less powerful, and also less necessary, a medium. With the evolvement of a powerful newly scientific world a new direction in the preaching of religion; and a new aspect in the practice of religion, became indicated.

The contemporary philosopher Hobbes, to give an example, viewed the surrounding world from a purely materialistic angle. He denied the duality of spirit and flesh, of thought and matter. Descartes, on the other hand, in his "Meditations Concerning First Philosophy In Which God's Existence And The Human Soul's Distinction From The Body Are Demonstrated", brought a new aspect into the world of scholasticism: by philosophical rather than theological reasoning he provided spirituality with a proper place.

* The Jews of Amsterdam who uncritically believed in - and at all times strenuously defended - the literal meaning of what is written in the Scriptures, were deeply offended by the new interpretation, which their compatriot Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) gave to Judaism. Their unrestricted belief in the absolute truth of the Scriptures - for which they had been expelled from Portugal and Spain - never ceased to help, guide and maintain them. Spinoza's philosophy, which not only denied Moses' authorship of the Torah but also refuted the anthropomorphic view of God given in the Bible, could not but shock them. God cannot be separated from the Universe, Spinoza preached. God is the world and the world is God. No wonder, that Spinoza was so severely criticized by his community; and that he was finally excommunicated. Uriel da Costa, his contemporary, who propagated similar ideas, was also excommunicated. He committed suicide.

* New and profound changes occurred when Enlightenment emerged into a time and world threatened by stagnation. People were now told, that there are no gods; that these were - according to Jung - only projections of something the psychologist fraternity had labeled the subconscious mind. Reform Judaism and Mordechai Kaplan entered the fray; and the latter declared that Judaism is nothing but a religious civilization.

Our own century, given the name of Modern Age, saw new religions created by schisms forming into sects. Other cults formed by dressing them up as religious innovations, e.g. astrology, yogi, Christian Science, Scientology and so on. These too can, and many a time did, take on the character of sects sui generis and the functions of these.

* Whenever in times past circumstances and demands made it necessary that the principles of a religion be presented in a new form and with a new insight, humankind had as a rule accepted the newly formulated guidelines in good faith; and had often even eagerly submitted to the corrections introduced. But in these our own days, where unlimited crime and senseless cruelty predominate, it has proved useless and ineffective to preach morals to the perpetrators; to offer them a refuge

in religion; to try to correct them; to persuade them to change their ways; to speak to them of the advantages provided in an ethically conducted life; to induce them to voluntarily respect the law in future. Sustained efforts have been made along all these lines, but hardly has there been a positive result. Those who dispense the punishments; and those who are otherwise deeply involved, confess that they do not know what other approach to take. They do not know how else to handle the problem.

Everywhere the search goes on for an appropriate solution. President Bush thought his "New World Order" was going to be the salvation - but he failed in whatever he had hoped to achieve. The Newt Gingrich era has not fared better.

Will a Reformer, a new spiritual leader, a new religious organizer arise? The time is certainly ripe. Nay, this sounds too optimistic. I better say, the sand is running out.

I have now reached the point where I think I can permit myself to say, that I have provided an eventual reader with a clear description of my ideas; that I have - analyzing all the factors I can think of - expressed my belief in the survival of Israel and the permanency of Judaism, unless.....

However, I do not intend to close this essay at this stage. While I was writing the last pages the thought never left me, that I have not said enough about the religions - viz:- Judaism, Christianity and Islam - which so greatly interact in the questions I raise; and that some more knowledge would be required as a proper background.

In the following few chapters I intend to take on this task, fully conscious that I cannot but make a superficial survey.

First of few additions to what I have written in the previous chapter, as I think it will complete the structure of my hypothesis, or better round it up

It is the generally accepted view today, that in the very early stages of mankind no institution existed which had even approximately the character of what we call today "religion" in any organized shape. Each of the tribes and peoples who had settled in what were then the few inhabitable parts on this planet, had created its own galaxy of gods and spirits whom they feared and whom they tried to propitiate. But the fearful and powerful forces these primitive humans perceived and dreaded, were in reality and fundamentally born from the same perception on which our own belief in a Supreme Godhead is based.

For simplicity's sake I shall use from now on the word "God" for what must have been to primitive mankind an unfathomable overwhelming power and a nameless unescapable threat. All the early peoples must have had the same conception of what a Godhead is, does and can do; what is to be understood under the concept Godhead; what is to be believed of the Godhead; what may be wanted from the Godhead. And it can furthermore be accepted as likely, that all the early beliefs in some superior forces must have had the same aim and purpose; and that all the beliefs must also have cultivated the same values.

In the way I picture the spiritual evolution in times past and among early mankind, there must have come a time, when the inherited and transmitted conception of the Godhead's relationship to man was no more satisfying; when the shamans' and priests' explanations had turned stale; when it had become insufficient to be still efficient; when the powers and images the leaders had painted of the Godhead failed to appear no more real and realistic; when the existing belief system could not anymore offer what the people expected; when the people could not anymore conceive as true and real the for so long and until then trusted Godhead their priests and shamans had been depicting to them; when the people could not relate any more their observations and experiences, what they themselves saw and witnessed, to what their preachers said; and when the awareness came to the teachers themselves, that they had failed to teach and to explain and to illustrate to the masses the basic facts they could regularly observe around them.

This must have been the decisive stage in history, when new leaders and reformers. new teachers and prophets arose from among the people

to provide new explanations and create new illustration; or to add new forms and configurations to the traditional faith. This must have been the time in humankind's evolution and history when new conceptions, ideas and experiences were incorporated into the prevailing belief system, creating that which we call "religion". In due course religion became in its own right a purpose, a fact, a system and a faith.

We are wont to think, that since their appointment at Sinai - if not before - the Israelites knew of one God only. I mean, that they had an awareness of a single overwhelming deity in the way monotheism is original and fundamental in all the gnostic religions. But this appears not to have been the case. It is more likely, that Monolatry - the recognition that next to one's own God also other gods exist and are venerated among certain nations - had often, and over long periods, been the dominant theology among the Israelites.

Before his appointment to the leadership of the Israelites, Moses must have come into contact with various polytheistic cults and their manifestations. It must have been intuition more than reasoning which had dissuaded him from finding merit in polytheism; and his doubts were finally dissolved, when an epiphany brought him to finally identify with monotheism. After he had come to know of One God, he came to meet also the One and Only God. And this inspired him to know, that without the specific knowledge of the One God; and that without an unrestricted trust in the one and exclusive God, the subdued israelitic slaves; and the future Jewish Nation they were going to father, would have no existential plank on which to build; would have no ideal for which to exist; would have to vegetate without a purpose; and would have to live without a positive future. Moses turned this cognition into his life's guideline, and its propagation his task; and he made it his main interest to educate the people entrusted to his care.

However, although he fought with all the means he had at his disposal against the worship of foreign gods, he cannot have harboured the illusion, that the Israelites' belief in the less severe and easier approachable gods they had known before; and their faith in the visible and physically palpable gods they had harboured in their houses, had been eradicated from the mind of the israelite people; that the galaxy of gods did not anymore persist in their memory. In his efforts to educate the people, he excluded all figurative or visible presentation of the Godhead. He laid instead the greatest emphasis on implanting into their mind those very Noahide Laws of which he must have learned

from Jethro, the wise tribal priest, during the years he had spent with him in the desert.

However, the succeeding centuries were to bring ample proof, that Moses had not been successful with his education and indoctrination; that monotheism had not taken root; that the One God was not accepted as the Only God. Nearly every one of Moses' successors in the leadership of the early Jewish nation had to face the same chronically reappearing problem: the people's tendency to relapse into idolatry associated with polytheism. The prophets and other spiritual leaders had to fight this aberration again and again, because other gods, faiths and rites had been able to supercede the faith Moses had introduced. In the wake of the ever greater contacts with often more advanced neighbouring cultures; and due to the slackening of the religious zeal in many of Israel's leaders themselves, idolatry came more often than not to be practiced among the Jews of the First and Second Temple Periods. Those who should have served as paradigms failed in their duty. It is, for instance reported, that King Solomon's foreign wives were allowed to worship their own gods; and that Prophets waged a long fight against the prostitutes who offered their services within the Temple precinct.

It was only in the 9th century BCE that monotheism began to truly assert itself. It was only at that rather late stage in Jewish history that Israel's fight for the predominance of monotheism over polytheism could at last show an appreciable success. But it took another two centuries - i.e. until the 7th century BCE - before monotheism could finally and definitely claim to have become the established faith of the Jewish People.

However, another relapse occurred at the time the Babylonian Exile came to an end. Again and for a long time - quite openly and in many shapes - polytheism was practiced by large sectors of the Jewish people.

As in the past Prophets appeared among the Jews when the deviations were very marked; and it may possibly have been less their threats than the concurring political misfortunes, following the military disasters which brought the Jewish nation back to the faith Moses had taught their forefathers.

Every generation since has greatly appreciated the merits of the Prophets in maintaining Judaism and sustaining the Jewish faith. It can justifiably also be said of the Prophets, that they had been instrumental in introducing theology - the science of God and the reflections about the nature of the Divine - into Judaism;

but philosophy of religion proper - the examination of God and the problems arising therefrom - remained unknown in Judaism until modern times.

The heretic Jew who wants us to defend ourselves against his attacks; the indifferent Jew with whom we have difficulty to approach; the secular Jew whom we have to wean from his defensive posture while we talk to him, are most likely all very moral individuals. Each of them may well be guided through life by an inner ethical compass. Each of them will claim - whether he is conscious of his heritage or not - that his ethical values owe nothing to Judaism; that he has acquired them by way of his profane education; or that he has imbibed them from any source other than from his Jewish background. This explains, why an assimilating Jew sees nothing blameworthy in the step he has taken away from Judaism.

All along the path of the Jewish People's advance through history, evidence of secularism, assimilation and heresy litter the roadside. At no time was this more blatant than at the end of the Babylonian Exile. When Cyrus of Persia, the new overlord in Babylon, permitted the Jewish exiles to return home and to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, only a tiny minority accepted his invitation. The majority preferred to remain in Babylon and to merge with the native population. This must have had a traumatic impact on the returnees to whom the behaviour of those who had stayed back - that is the majority of their brethren - appeared as immoral if not sinful. But, fortunately, they appear to have seen this also as a challenge to their own nationalism. Their re-awakened nationalist fervour nourished their Jewishness. It formed the soil where new spiritual movements began to sprout. It nourished messianic hopes.

But in due course it became also evident, that the nationalistic wave represented no less also a grave threat, because it fractured the nation into parties which turned deeply hostile to each other. The resulting fratricidal strife persisted for centuries. And this grave inner dissension ultimately invited the intervention of foreign armies, which - in the end - brought on the loss of the Jewish homeland.

The Jewish People - living through that disastrous overturn of its fortunes; noticing the weakening of their feeling for Jewish values; and regretting their lack of knowledge of what Judaism is and what it demands - were exposed to further dangers, when the intelligent, the educated, the progressive ones among them were sorely tempted by the influx of the Hellenistic culture; when they were attracted by the pagan ways of life, which followed in the footsteps of the invaders.

The Roman occupation which followed was another, and possibly even greater disaster for the Jews, for Jerusalem and for the Land of Israel. The Jews' religious and intellectual leadership could not find the right words or reasons with which to explain the series of calamities which had smitten the Jews; nor could they provide sufficient consolation to the disconsolate people. The general class of people found little if any consolation in the explanation offered them by the priestly hierarchy, that the disasters which had overcome the Jews, viz:- that the pain and the humiliation the Jews had to suffer, were the divine punishment for their transgressions throughout the last generations. The intellectual class, as far as it had not yet emigrated to Alexandria or Greece, distanced itself from the common peoples' religious beliefs and practices, from its problems and difficulties, and sought fulfillment in the immersion in, and the adoption of, what the hellenistic culture had to offer.

This thought of a load of guilt accumulated over generations; this explanation for the trials and hardship afflicting the Jewish People; this fear attributed to the knowledge of a causative connection between the Divine Judge and the trespassing Jew - it is immaterial whether this reasoning was true - has taken roots in the minds of the ensuing Diaspora. All through the centuries the rabbis and community leaders have in their writings and discussions explained - I nearly said justified - the ever recurring pogroms and calamities with the sentence "...for our sins and those of our fathers we are punished....."

There was always a time when changes became necessary. Political developments, economic conditions, theological arguments, philosophical trends invited a re-examination if not a re-evaluation. The never ceasing discussions among the sages; the often acrimonious disputes among the rabbinical schools, brought on a need for some reform here and there, for different interpretations, for further corrections. The uninterruptedly ongoing discussions - kept placidly flowing for the "sake of maintaining the world on its axis" - went into higher gears when migratory preachers and kabalistic mystics warned of the coming doom and asked for repentance. A wave of messianism pervaded the Jewish communities. Sects formed and entire communities withdrew from daily life - and from reality - to await redemption.