

AN IMAGE OF A JEWISH TOMORROW

by

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We Jews have had our prophets of doom; we have also had our prophets of hope. Jeremiah preached doom and proved to be right; the second Isaiah preached hope, and he was right. There are those who look at our world today and recoil with despair. And they have good reason; India and Pakistan flirt with war; violent passions tear Ireland apart; Israel's security is still not assured; the debate waxes and wanes over the appropriate size of nuclear arsenals. Our cities are blighted; our air is poisoned; our trees and forests endangered; our food supply contaminated; our oceans bulging with waste. Our youth is alienated; our minorities embittered; our streets filled with violence. Capping it all, our economy is uncertain, our trade and financial policies threaten Europe with depression, and our balance of payments shows red, not black. And we Jews look at the surface of events and feel uneasy, for are not these the signs and portents of grave days ahead, sure signals that Jews be on the alert lest once again they fail to read the signs aright in time? Little wonder then that the prophets of gloom voice their fears and seek to arouse their people to the dangers lurking in these ominous trends.

I come to you this evening, however, as a different kind of prophet. When I look at these signs in historical perspective and try to discern other signs which are overlooked, I see that they do not spell out doom, but promise. They do not point to dark horizons, but horizons rimmed with hope. The pain, fear and anxiety are those of birth and not of death. The old order is dying and its death rattle frightens us. A new world is being born, but the pain and agony of the process of transition blinds us to its possibility,

What we are witnessing is the awesome transition from an age of nation states to a global community—from a world wracked by wars, poverty, discrimination and blight to a world of peace, abundance, brotherhood and beauty. We are on the threshold of the age of humanity. I see not a descent of man but an ascent on a spiral of development. I see a ladder reaching up rung by rung leading man ever upward to humanity. We, however, do not recognize this developmental spiral in the agony of transition.

This developmental spiral-ladder has become visible only in recent years when the economy of the United States began to reveal what I shall call, the advanced developmental profile. This is an economic pattern characterized by (1) the steady decline of the agricultural population—in the United States only seven per cent of the American people are farmers; (2) the leveling off of the blue collar working class; (3) the rapid expansion of the so-called service sectors of the economy: banking, insurance, retailing, the professions, and especially the knowledge industry; (4) the emergence of a sector of technological innovations characterized by such monumental breakthroughs as atomic energy, jet propulsion, computers, and now the laser. These technological frontiers give no sign of exhaustion. If anything, the tempo of technological creativity has been speeded up; (5) the increase, year in and year out, of multinational corporations whose base may have been American, but whose operations girdle the globe. This

economic profile is characterized throughout by a directional thrust upward from brawn to brain, from labor intensive to capital intensive, from repetitive and replicating labor to creative and innovating labor, from conformity to individuality, from national to global horizons.

These are the economic developments which are pressing inexorably for a world community of peace, abundance, and individual self-development. These economic forces have already shaped for Europe a common market, and compelled England to abandon an empire and hitch its destiny to a developmental Europe. In one way or another, these economic forces are impelling a Nixon to fly off to Moscow and Peking.

The developmental spiral is thus very real indeed; the developmental ladder is no fevered fantasy. It is confirmed by every innovating technological process, by every new global corporation, by every shift from brawn to brain. It is this developmental spiral which is winding upward to humanity, and it is this developmental spiral which has unleashed for Americans in general and for Jews in particular an identity crisis of staggering proportions.

We Jews are reeling from this identity crisis more so than even our fellow Americans, because American Jewry displays a profile far more developmental than does the native-born, non-Jewish American population at large. We have virtually no Jewish farmers; we have only a small number of working class Jews; we are steadily phasing out our lower middle class. We find ourselves predominantly in the advanced developmental sectors of the economy: in retailing, in the professions, in the knowledge industry. And what is even more significant, our young people will in a few years be almost exclusively on the very highest rung of the ladder, at the very edge of the spiral; for at least eighty per cent of all Jews of college age are in college. This is forty per cent more than that of the non-Jewish population. We American Jews display the most developmental profile in the entire world. Our remarkable and peculiar history has destined us to the developmental frontier; has pushed us to the cutting edge of the new world.

Frontiers, like edges, are scary places, even if they are exciting and exhilarating as well. Frontiers, like edges, arouse intense anxiety, but they are no less the outposts of hope, of possibility, of dreams fulfilled. Little wonder then that we American Jews, thrust out onto the frontier by our developmental profile are frightened and anxious; for we Jews are destined to grapple before any other people, with the questions of who we are, why we are, and where we are going. We are confronted with an identity crisis, for which, looking backward, there is no solution. No man—Jew or otherwise—has ever been on this frontier before. We are confronted with an identity crisis which can be resolved only through futures yet unknown. The answers are only dimly visible on distant horizons. Because our identity crisis stems from our developmental profile it can be solved only in relationship to the expansion of new knowledge, to the emergence of a global community, to the bursting forth of the free-choosing individual. Its resolution demands of us an identity which is responsive to man. In a word, we need a developmental identity to go hand in hand with our developmental profile. We need a developmental Judaism to lead a developmental people into a global community, of free-choosing individuals,

What would such a Judaism teach? It would teach that developmentalism is good, underdevelopment evil. It would spiritualize and sacralize the spiral development, for such a Judaism would proclaim that God has created a developmental universe, not a

stagnant one; that God endowed man with an innate drive towards perfection and self-development; that God has not condemned any of his creatures to stagnation and despair. Whatever energizes the spiral; whatever helps man to climb a higher rung is Godly; whatever obstructs him is sinful.

Such a Judaism would look at the world about us in a highly novel and creative way, for it would adapt and fashion its teachings in direct relationship to wherever on the developmental spiral a man, or Jew, or a society may happen to be. It frankly recognizes that the developmental profile determines the kind of Judaism to which a Jew can respond, and the kind of Jewish identity which is Constructive for him. Just as there may be a man for all seasons, there should be a Judaism and a Jewish identity for every rung on the developmental ladder. Our concern would not be that all Jews have the Judaism of the frontier, or the Jewish identity of the cutting edge. Far from it. We most of all would recognize that there will be as many Jewish identities as there are Jews on different rungs of the ladder. Our only concern would be that every Jew, indeed every man, be swept into the spiral, be on some rung of the ladder. Such a Judaism would be hostile only to underdevelopment. Its basic goal would be to encourage Jews, and man, on every level, to clutch for the next rung; to ascend upward on the spiral. And we would proclaim frankly and boldly that "man's highest destiny is the flowering of freedom, of the unique individual.

What are some of the practical implications that flow from the notion of a developmental Judaism and a developmental identity? First let us consider those on the developmental frontier, American Jewry in general and American Jewish youth in particular. For these Jews, we offer a Judaism which affirms the individual's right to develop his personal autonomy to the full. We encourage his strivings for self-fulfillment. We convey to him our reassurance that a self-determining individual is the highest and most noble religious attainment. We support him in his efforts to shape new religious forms which will be expressive of his aspirations and yearnings. We collaborate with him in the building of plastic and flexible communities which respond quickly to his ever-changing needs. We search along with him for the resonating rhythms of the freely moving spirit, and we listen with him for the echoing of the divine throughout all creation. We urge him to look deep within himself and far beyond himself. We strip off with him the veils, the covers, the shame, the hypocrisies that close out man from himself and from his fellow man. We help him recover his authentic self by assuring him that nothing in God's universe is alien, neither the tiniest particle, nor the most massive star.

We still his fears that behind a black, or brown, or yellow or white skin lurks hatred and malevolence, or that seemingly alien cultures and mores threaten him. We inspire him to help fashion a global society of self-determining, self-developing, and self-fulfilling individuals who feel themselves at home wherever they are or wherever they go or wherever they settle. We prod them to make war on war, to humble poverty, disease, and discrimination, to vow that they will know no rest, no peace, no serenity until every Individual everywhere can hold his head high, walk erect, display proudly his divine and noble image.

Ideals, such as these, would be the stuff of developmental Judaism. But along with them would go equally powerful teachings. The individual, to be sure, should be free, self-determining, self-fulfilling, self-developing, but his freedom cannot be total. God gave man autonomy, not license. God is preeminently a God of law. His universe is

neither haphazard, random, nor accidental. Law everywhere sets boundaries and limits. Even developmentalism is circumscribed by the stage of economic growth, the level of technology, the degree of self-conscious awareness. Neither society nor man can simply leap to the topmost rung of the ladder or the edge of the upward winding spiral, but must go rung by rung, wind by wind. A black who was only yesterday a hewer of wood and a drawer of water cannot—however much he try or we try, however much he be bitter and we feel guilty—in the blinking of an eye become a theoretical physicist or the executive vice-president of a bank. This then, above all, we must teach, that the Individual should enjoy the fullest autonomy but that he can do so only within what God's law allows. To deny that there are bounds, that acts do not have consequences, that causes can be liberated from effects is to court disaster. Heroin kills whether injected deliberately or whether under duress. Flagellating the body or depriving it of necessary nutriment simply because now one is free, does not deflect the inexorable debilitation that must follow. God's law we must, without shilly shallying, but without hostility, malevolence or sadistic joy, proclaim must be obeyed, if we wish to enjoy the full limits of our autonomy and freedom.

This, then, is the prime task of developmental Judaism: to reveal God's authentic laws through study, research, experimentation. Not laws proclaimed in God's name, though made by man. But God's law: the law which is writ in nature; in biology, in physiology, in chemistry, in psychology, in sociology, in economics, in history, in human interaction. This, however, we shall do to expand the Individual's freedom, not to constrict it, for we seek for the individual the fullness of the autonomy which God has made possible. We search for the limits to preserve this autonomy and to protect from self-destruction. Our guiding religious principle must be: whatever enhances the Individual's autonomy is virtue, whatever contracts it is sin; whatever choice opens up wider choices, is good; whatever narrows future choices is evil. Whatever in a word enables the individual to feel himself as a whole person, whatever diminishes chaos and furthers integration, whatever makes for coherence! .for the blending and melding of diversity through the unifying power of the ego, this we proclaim as Godly.

But developmental Judaism neither has Illusions, nor does it propagate them. It is thoroughly realistic. It is fully alive to man's imperfections and the dark forces in all of us which struggle tenaciously for mastery. It is fully aware that the developmental process is slow, painful, and frustrating. It does not delude anyone with promises of Instant attainment. It faces squarely the fact that there can be no development without economic growth, and that economic growth is excruciatingly slow precisely where the suffering is most intense: at the bottom of the ladder, at the beginning of the spiral. Developmental Judaism thus promises no miracles, but it does offer reassurance that, like compound Interest, the tempo quickens as the ladder is climbed. Developmental Judaism likewise teaches that the transition from underdevelopment to development in India, in Africa, in the Middle East, even in Europe and the United States is almost certain to be marked by violent convulsions, as those who are nourished and enriched by underdevelopment and by stagnation seek to protect their age-old sources of wealth and privilege. For those caught up in such convulsions, we make clear our own commitment to those who seek to break that millennial yoke of replicating, back-breaking, mind-stupefying, and spirit-shattering labor.

Thus, for our young people on the developmental frontier, we offer a Judaism that (1) sets up realistic and attainable ideals, (2) teaches lawful and responsible freedom, and (3) conveys a realistic appreciation of the awe-some problems which have to be overcome.

We are thus faced with two stark alternatives: we can venture forth courageously into the unknown and shape novel forms, or we can strive tenaciously to the forms we for so long have cherished. But to make this latter alternative viable, we must dismantle our advanced developmental profile. We would have to urge our young and not so young to go back to the vanishing farm, to re-enter the dissolving proletariat, to seek out the obsolescing sectors of society, to forego higher education and the reaching out for

new knowledge. In a word, we would have to be ready, willing and able to lead American Jewry—and in doing so world Jewry as well—down the developmental spiral and back to underdevelopment and stagnation. Unless, then, we are ready to climb backwards, lead downwards, and seek out the security of impoverishment, stagnation, and Ignorance, we gathered here have no alternative but to venture forth, cross the border between the known and the unknown, and build bridges connecting the Jewish identity that we have known and cherished and the Jewish identity and Judaism that we will shape and fashion.

The program and goals for developmental Judaism and a developmental Jewish Identity which I have sketched out above are deliberately designed for those on the frontier of the developmental process. They are not designed for those Jews whose stage of development has not yet reached this level.

Neither the Jews of Israel or-Russia are on the developmental frontier. They are not yet facing our problems. Our Identity crisis is not theirs. Yet we, with respect to Israel, energize our relationship to her; for Israel is already high up on the developmental ladder, far advanced in the developmental spiral, but she is not, nor can she be on the developmental frontier. At most, eight or ten per cent of her college age youth are in college. She still has a significant proportion of her population engaged in agriculture. A good thirty-five per cent or so are blue collar workers. And then there are the hundreds of thousands who have found their way to Israel from lands which are either on the lowest rungs of the developmental ladder, or are only now reaching out to grab hold. Whereas only a small percentage of Jews in the United States can, by any definition, be assigned to an underdeveloped category, a very goodly percentage of Israelis, however, are not much higher on the developmental ladder than the blacks are in this country.

And then, of course, there is Israel's ongoing struggle for her existence. Survival allows little scope for trans-national visions or global futures. It allows precious little opportunity for a self-developing, freely-choosing, globe-girdling individual. The youth of Israel stand guard on frontiers securing their nation, not on frontiers of a global community. They need a national identity, or they will have no identity at all. Israelis not as yet even have a regional Middle East common market to widen their identity as do the French, the Germans, the Italians, and now the British. Israel has many rungs to climb, many spirals to turn before she can trade in her present problems for those confronting us.

But nonetheless Israel is a developmental society. It demonstrated this when the Yishuv broke the British Imperial yoke and proclaimed her national liberation. She has proved herself since to be. In so many ways, the Japan of the Middle East—a beachhead

of development In a vast continent of under* development. Israel is the hope of the Arab world, not Its nemesis; the model for the Middle East not of its adversary.

And because Israel is developmental, because its nationalism is the nationalism of liberation from imperialism, from stagnation, from underdevelopment—for these reasons developmental Judaism gives her support, nurtures her, defends her against detractors and defamers. We do not demand, nor would we wish the Israelis to give up their national identity now, for it is this Identity .which maintains Israel as the beachhead of development in the Middle East. It Is the reassurance that the ladder will be climbed, that the spiral will move upward not only for Israel, but for her neighbors.

But we also must recognize that our problems are not Israel's problems, and we must no less recognize that hopefully there will crone a day when Israelis—like Frenchmen and Germans and Italians and the Dutch and the English—will have to broaden their notion of an Israeli identity so that they can participate as co-citizens and co-workers in a Middle East regional common market. We must also recognize that a day will come for Israel, as it has already come to us, when Israel's developmental profile will unleash an identity crisis, as her young people opt for a free-choosing, trans-national global Identity. We thus serve Israel best by grappling now with the crisis we face, so that It may be less a crisis for them when their alienated, anti-establish-ment, unpatriotic youth demand the right to do their thing.

But in the meantime we help Israel all we can to liquidate as quickly as possible those festering pockets of underdevelopment which is even now turning Israeli against Israeli; sabra against oriental; Israeli Black Panthers against the Israeli Establishment. We must help her to reach as quickly as possible that next rung of development when the Individual's freedom to have the Judaism of his choice, without penalty, will be viewed as an inalienable, not negotiable, right.

And what of our Jewish brothers in the Soviet Union? Only a glance at the economic profile of the Soviet Union reveals this startling fact? The Soviet Union is far more underdeveloped than Israel. More than forty per cent of the Soviet population is still engaged in agriculture—and what is more, an agri-culture which is by United States and Israeli standards shockingly primitive. The Soviet working class is highly inefficient with a productivity lag vis-a-vis the United States of approximately four to one workers. Indeed, the Soviet proletariat is only now beginning to move from labor intensive to capital intensive production as Italy, West Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States lay the technological foundations for the Soviet chemical, machine tool, and automobile Industries. What the true percentage of Soviet youth in real colleges and universities is, is anyone's guess, but even the Soviets make no claim for more than ten per cent.

One look at such a profile and we would expect the Jews in the Soviet Union to be in trouble. Not only is the agricultural sector primitive, but even with such a high labor input the Soviet Union staved off famine in recent years only because the capitalist West came to her aid. If ever there were clear danger signals for the Jews, they are here. Anti-Semitism thrives on underdevelopment and starves on economic growth. It is therefore not surpris-ing that anti-Semitism is thriving in the Soviet Union.

To Soviet Jews, we say, "get out, if at all possible." The developmental process now under way will take a long time. It will be painful and tortuous under the best of circumstances, and for this reason you will remain vulnerable for a long time. Flee, if

you can to Israel, whose developmental profile is so attuned to whatever talents and skills you possess. If you cannot get out, then pray for a speeding up of the tempo of transition from labor intensive to capital intensive production, from inefficient farming to efficient, from brawn input to brain input. In the interim, your Jewish identity will help ward off despair, will reassure you that we Jews on their developmental frontier see your plight, are saddened by your suffering, are energized to take every step we can to help you get to Israel, and to speed up the export of wheat and capital goods to the Soviet Union so that you may be liberated while your Jewishness still lives.

These, then, are some of the practical implications of developmental Judaism and of a developmental Jewish identity. Far from separating us from our fellow Jews, it binds us more tightly to them because in helping them up the ladder we help ourselves and all mankind as well.

Developmental Judaism and a developmental Jewish identity is thus Judaism fulfilled, and Jewish peoplehood reaffirmed. It is fulfillment and reaffirmation because Judaism has always been a developmental religion; the Jewish people a developmental people. Our religion and peoplehood have been unique because we preserved ourselves through creative innovation and through continuous re-definition. Judaism has, in the course of its history, fashioned four major forms of Judaism and five major identities. Each of these was in its day a creative and ingenious solution to an Identity crisis, equivalent in gravity to that which we are experiencing now. In each instance, Judaism opted for creative Innovation rather than for sterile preservation; in each instance, they shaped for themselves novel identities. The record is clear. The earliest form of Judaism looked to the prophet for the word of God. But the prophet was phased out, and the Jew Looked to the priest, and the priest consulted the Book, the Five Books of Moses, not a living oracle. The priest in turn gave way to a scholar class that proclaimed doctrines hitherto unheard in Judaism:

God had given two Torahs, not one. A written Torah, the Five Books of Moses, and the oral, non-written Torah. These scholars also taught that the Jew who heeded the twofold law, the written and the oral, would receive as his reward eternal life and resurrection. But a Jew who observed only the written law would suffer everlasting punishment. For almost two thousand years this belief in the twofold law sustained our people. Yet even this form of Judaism and this Jewish identity was challenged in the nineteenth century when daring religious spirits proclaimed that the twofold law was not binding; that one could be a Jew and a follower of Judaism, even though he ate non-kosher food or did not strictly observe the Sabbath. The liberation from that law which for almost two thousand years had been essential to Judaism and a Jewish identity launched the Reform movement which has, under Inspired leadership, built Institutions, the College and the Union, which has nourished a viable and creative Judaism in the United States. It is our form of Judaism which was the first to affirm that Judaism could thrive in freedom; that Judaism was compatible with modernization; that Judaism was not a thing, not unbending laws or immutable dogmas, but a principle that shaped the forms which Jews needed to find meaning in the world and in themselves. Our founders were the first to glimpse the developmental Judaism that I have set before you this evening; for they had great faith in progress and great hope that man would find his way upward to humanity. But this glimmer was soon snuffed out. This vision was premature. The western world of nation states sought in, two devastating wars, to solve their problems by

awesome violence. Further development for Jews and mankind seemed to be at end. The holocaust seemed to prophesy a future of gloom and despair.

During those shattering years, the Jews adopted for the first time an identity they had never had before. Rejected by the world about them, dazed by anti-Semitism, they forged themselves an ethnic and national identity. One could be Jewish and yet not identify himself with Judaism. Never before had Jews dared to look upon themselves as Jews first, believers in God and the Torah second, if at all. But, as you all know, this identity was irresistible; and as the external world grew darker, as the fate of the Jew became more ominous; as salvation seemed to lie only in kinship and in efforts to build a refuge in a land of one's own, even Reform Jews found themselves in ever larger numbers opting for an identity which was preeminently ethnic.

There before you is the record. Identity crisis after identity crisis; new forms of Judaism after new forms of Judaism; novel identities replacing the old. To shape a new form of Judaism, now, to create a new Jewish identity now, is to undertake a traditional function of Jewish creative leadership.

And as we cross the frontier to futures yet unknown, we do so with steadfast faith and courage; for in going forward we renew our commitments to our beginnings, for as we open our Bibles, we read once again those majestic lines—bold, affirmative, sure—”In the beginning God created heaven and earth.” He created the world, the universe; not this land or that land, this country or that country but heaven and earth. And, so this remarkable chapter continues, he filled the earth with an abundance of diversity; And he capped his creation with man—man, not Jew; man, not men. He created man an individual and he breathed into him a unique living soul. And, so the Bible tells us. God shaped man in his own image, after his own likeness. He endowed him with divine aspirations, and Godly ideals and bestowed upon him sovereignty over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of heaven, and over every living creature.