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*The Diaspora:
Its Historical Significance*

I

JEWISH HISTORY is a unique history. It is like and yet unlike the history of any other entity. It involves the vicissitudes of a people, a nation, a land, yet it is more than a national history. It includes the evolution of a world religion, yet it is not simply the history of a religious faith. It has persisted through time as distinctively different, yet it is the history of continuous adaptation. Jewish history is unique, for no other history is so long and so complex. This is an assertion of fact; not of value.

The Diaspora has had much to do with this complexity. It did not create the complexity, which existed long before the Dispersion. But it did extend its range and intensity. Without the Diaspora, the history of the Jews would have been less involved, have had fewer problems, and more restricted experience. Whether the Diaspora was good or bad for the Jews may be a matter for endless debate, but that the Diaspora made for a more complex history is a matter of record.

This paper is an analysis of this complexity. It is an attempt to *understand* the phenomenon of the Diaspora, not to *judge* it. As a unique outcome of historical processes it is of great interest and value to the historian. It permits the analysis of historical forces as they interact with an entity whose history is not restricted to a segment of time, nor to a geographical area, nor to a single civilization. The

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Diaspora affords the historian a rare laboratory specimen of an entity that is small, but significant and dynamic. The Jews were actively drawn into the historical continuum; they were no passive bystanders. As such their Diaspora history can shed much light on the nature of the historical processes.

When we approach the Diaspora with analytical questions foremost in our minds, then the simple dichotomy of Land versus Dispersion, of Nation versus Galuth, of normal versus abnormal, dissolves and gives way to an awareness of a process that transcends the concepts that it creates. Jewish history intertwines the Land and the Dispersion so tightly that all efforts at separation are doomed to failure. The Diaspora is an historical consequence of attachment to the Land, a resolution of concrete problems, a mode of survival. It did not emerge as a metaphysical concept, but as a response to disruptive experiences. It did not represent a radical break with the history in the Land, but merely a continuation of problem-solving modes that had been developed to survive within the Land. The Land was the prototype of the Diaspora, for it was in the Land that the process of complexification had its origin, and that the dynamics of integrative elaboration first evolved. The Land gave birth to a process that has not as yet worked itself out: a process of integrating novel experiences by an elaboration of the concept of unity, of absorbing alien, external stimuli by developing new forms, of preserving old forms as viable elements within the new, of resolving problems through the affirmation of identity and continuity.

The Land is the prototype of the Diaspora. Palestine was and still is a small land. It is small, but it is strategically located. It never could, nor can it now, escape the political consequences of its geographical position. It is a land that history could not by-pass. As such, the Land could support political independence for only brief stretches of time. No amount of determination, courage, shrewdness, or faith

could offset the inevitable consequences of smallness--defeat, subjugation, dependence on others. The history of the Jews and their Land is overwhelmingly a history of subjection. The periods of independence were brief, and occurred only during phases of imperial interregnum. The Jews lived in the Land much as they were to live in the Diaspora: a subject people attempting to maintain a distinctive identity within the matrix of larger cultures and civilizations. In the Land, as in the Diaspora, they had to carve their survival out of experiences with entities more powerful and towering than themselves. And this was true, even when they could don temporarily the trappings of sovereignty.

The interdependence of Jewish history with world history was certainly unknown to those seminomadic Israelites who first settled in the land of Canaan. They had no awareness of the history of the ancient Near East; they had no inkling of what the history of the future might be. They did not see the Land as an area of imperial ebb and flow, nor did they realize that, as roving seminomads desirous of a land flowing with milk and honey, they were exemplifying a pattern of action that was recurrent in the history of the ancient Near East. They did not see their conquest and settling of the Land against the backdrop of the rise and fall of empires and civilizations.

The Israelites interpreted their experiences by means of the concepts that were to hand. To them the Land was the gift of their deity, Yahweh. He was fulfilling a covenant made long before with the Patriarchs. He was a deity possessing the power to effect His will. He could give the Land, if He so willed it. He could, in fact, do as He pleased. He had taken the Israelites out of Egypt; He had defeated whatever enemies had stood in the way. The Land was as much His as the wilderness, and the successful conquest had proved this beyond question.

This belief in Yahweh's power to give His people a land,

determined the manner in which the experiences on the Land were assimilated. Events were interpreted in such a way as to preserve this belief. All new problems were solved to comport with this assumption. When the seminomadic, tribal way of life gave way before the emergence of agricultural, urban, and monarchical modes, Yahweh was not abandoned, even though He had never previously exercised sovereignty over such institutions. Instead, by being assigned a wider field over which to exercise His authority, He was accorded greater powers; more was assumed of His competence. He thus became the patron deity of a monarchical system that replaced the seminomadic tribal system, even though the latter had been His prime, indeed His only concern, in the patriarchal period, in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the days of the Conquest. The deity Who had been the protector of a tent-dwelling, well-seeking culture was accorded an equivalent role over agriculture, over cities, over sedentary life, without any lessening of His previous function or detracting of His competence. He was preserved as the deity of seminomadism by the selfsame process that was dissolving this mode of life.

This elaboration of Yahweh's functions was not the only means available for coping with new phenomena. It was not only possible to assign to other deities sovereignty over fertility, urban activities, and monarchical institutions; this method was actually tried. Baalism represented such an attempt. It called for separate deities for distinct and separate economic and social functions. Yahweh was entitled to that realm where His competence had been manifested; but not to realms where He had had no experience. The Baals were masters of the fertility cycles; Baal Melkart of commercial activity. The relationship between sovereign states necessitated some recognition of foreign deities. The history of Israel on the Land was no simple triumph for the principle of Yahwistic elaboration. It was achieved only after intense struggle with powerful forces that persistently generated polytheistic modes for assimilating ex-

perience. Nevertheless, it was a principle that was never abandoned, for the prophets stubbornly refused to dilute Yahweh's power. They insisted that a deity Who could protect the Patriarchs, Who could execute the exodus from Egypt, Who could traverse a wilderness, and conquer a land, could also cause the rains to fall, the land to yield its increase, the people to prosper in town and country, the king to trample his enemies. The prophets insisted that there was no problem that Yahweh could not solve, no function that He could not perform, no difficulty that He could not master. And it was their concept that ultimately triumphed.

Paradoxically, the victory of the elaborative principle was achieved through the loss of the Land. As long as Israel and Judah existed as sovereign or semisovereign states, the pressure of agricultural functions for deities independent of Yahweh was irresistible. Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Book of Deuteronomy, all testify to the hold that Baalism exercised on the peasantry. Only the shock of Israel's devastation and Judah's exile, as this shock was interpreted by the prophetic champions of Yahwistic elaborationism, eradicated polytheism once and for all.

The destruction of Israel and the defeat of Judah were the inevitable consequences of the smallness of the Land. Palestine could sustain two kingdoms when the great imperial powers were dormant. When, however, Assyria was on the march, Israel could suffer nothing but defeat. When Babylonia was in the ascendancy, Judah could defend neither Temple nor Kingdom. The Land was enveloped by powers that brooked no opposition from the weak, however strong they believed their God to be.

Here were indeed novel experiences to cope with. It was one thing to extend the power of Yahweh; quite another to account for its withering away. Yahweh had given the Land, but it seemed that He could not hold onto it. How was this manifestation of His helplessness to be explained?

The answer had been given as early as Amos; it was reit-

erated with each succeeding disaster. Yahweh's power was not only intact, but operative on a cosmic scale. His desire for a particular kind of conduct was His overarching concern. He could not tolerate either false worship of Himself or worship of gods other than Himself. His giving of the Land was a conditional giving. It could as easily be taken away for good cause. And Yahweh had the power to take the Land away because He could summon the most fearsome nations to destroy His people, devastate their land, and cast them into exile. The destruction of Israel and Judah was thus integrated into the concept of Yahweh; it was interpreted as new evidence of Yahweh's power. Yet since He who destroyed the Land was the very one Who had originally given it, Yahweh could restore the Land once again to His people.

To achieve this extension of Yahweh's power in a world that had taken on cosmic dimensions was no mean accomplishment. It demanded an integration of Jewish history into world history. The experiences of the seminomadic Patriarchs, the trials and tribulations of wilderness wanderings, the vicissitudes of conquest, settlement, destruction, and exile were attributed to the omnipotent workings of a cosmic deity, Who moved history to teach His people. The defeats as much as the victories were His design. The concept of Yahweh was thus elaborated so that it could integrate every possible experience, however negative it might be. The empirical realm was thereby subordinated to the conceptual.

The Pentateuch is the outcome of this integrative process. It was given its final form and achieved canonical status sometime after the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah, and after the Babylonian exile. It is, we now know, a composite work. It functioned, however, for millennia as a unified book, written by a single author. The Pentateuch for most of its history was believed to be what in reality it was not—a work written in the wilderness, long before

the Land was settled and the institutions of the Land established. However, those responsible for its unity lived after the king and people had gone into exile. They were not only aware of the complex history that had gone by since Moses' day, but they were concerned that this history, and all subsequent history, be construed as the purposive activity of the God of the Patriarchs. This God, however, had come a long way since the days of Abraham and Moses. He had assumed a continuous aggrandizement as He undertook new and unanticipated functions. He had grown with the historical experiences of His people in a Land that neither He nor His people could preserve in the face of imperial powers. The unifiers of the Pentateuch therefore had to conceive of Him as having been at the beginning what He had ultimately become: a cosmic God, Who had selected a people with cosmic potential. The history of the Patriarchs, of the sojourn in Egypt, of the wanderings in the wilderness, of the theophany, of the promise of the Land is embedded in a cosmic matrix. God first creates the world and man before He chooses a special people and promises them the Land.

The Pentateuch is a most remarkable document. It combines within it every phase of Israel's history from the migrations of Abraham through the Babylonian exile and the Restoration. It intermixes every stage of development and growth. The tent-dwelling migratory culture of the Patriarchs is preserved in vivid imagery. The simple concepts of Yahweh as the God in the cloud, now descending on Sinai amidst thunder and lightning, now peacefully hovering over Moses' tent, is rendered without distortion. Yet this concept is ringed about by others that betray the sophistication of a long, historical evolution. The simple Yahweh is also the promulgator of laws presupposing a sedentary society. He is a God terribly concerned that He be worshipped in a sanctuary of lavish splendor, with sacrifices brought at proper times, in proper proportions, by proper

priests. He is a God Who is aware that a land will be conquered, settled, and lost. He is also a God Who commands contradictory laws, sustains contradictory attributes, underwrites contradictory doctrines.

The Pentateuch is an effort to concentrate a complex evolutionary development into an historically limited period. It attempts to attribute to the time of Moses all the subsequent extensions of Yahweh's powers and functions. It intermixes all phases, because the later phases did not obliterate the earlier ones. The process of complexification did not annihilate the earlier and simpler modes; it preserved them. The unifiers of the Pentateuch held tenaciously to the integrative principle, and as a consequence forged a unity out of discordance and out of contradiction; for that is precisely what the history had been, an elaboration of Yahweh's powers and functions in response to new experiences and novel problems.

The Jews accepted the Pentateuch as a Divine revelation given to them by God through Moses. They did not know that the Pentateuch was a composite. They assumed that it was a unity. As such it became the most crucial document for the Jews. All subsequent development had the Pentateuch as its point of departure. Its concept of the Land is therefore of utmost importance for a comprehension of the Diaspora that subsequently emerged; for every Diaspora Jewish community was umbilically tied to the Pentateuch.

In the Pentateuch, the Land is the ultimate gift that God can bestow on His people. It is a land whose beauty and fruitfulness is emphasized. It was promised to the Patriarchs and it was promised to Moses. As a promise given by the one cosmic God, there can be no question of His power to keep His word. He can easily bring defeat on the nations that inhabit Canaan, for there is no limitation to His power. He brought Israel out of Egypt amidst signs and wonders, He split the Red Sea, He fed them in the barren wilderness, He led them by a pillar of cloud by day

and of fire by night, He stirred terror in their hearts when He revealed the Law, He vanquished Og, King of Bashan and Sihon, King of the Amorites.

And once the Israelites settle down in the Land, He can care for them and protect them. He is not only a mighty God of War, but the Creator of Heaven and Earth. It was He Who had created the heavenly bodies, and had called upon the earth to yield its fruit. He could thus give rain or withhold it; bring forth the wheat, the corn, the wine and the oil in abundance, or spread famine through the Land; multiply sheep and cattle, or decimate them. There is nothing that is beyond His power:

"If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit. Your threshing shall overtake the vintage and your vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your fill of bread and dwell securely in your land.

"I will grant peace in the land and you shall lie down untroubled by anyone; I will give the land respite from vicious beasts, and no sword shall cross your land. You shall give chase to your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. Five of you shall give chase to a hundred, and a hundred of you shall give chase to ten thousand; your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

"I will look with favor upon you, and make you fertile and multiply you; and I will maintain My covenant with you. You shall eat old grain long stored, and you shall have to clear out the old to make room for the new.

"I will establish My abode in your midst, and I will not spurn you. I will be ever-present in your midst: I will be your God, and you shall be My people." *

* Leviticus 26:3-12.

The Land is the Lord's to give; it is also His to take away. Yahweh will not spare either His people or His Land if they fail to adhere to His legislation. He will be merciless in His punishment:

"... But if you do not obey Me and do not observe all these commandments, if you reject My laws and spurn My norms, so that you do not observe all My commandments and you break My covenant, I in turn will do this to you: I will wreak misery upon you—consumption and fever, which cause the eyes to pine and the body to languish; you shall sow your seed to no purpose, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you: you shall be routed by your enemies, and your foes shall dominate you. You shall flee though none pursues.

"And if, for all that, you do not obey Me, I will go on to discipline you sevenfold for your sins, and I will break your proud glory. I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper, so that your strength shall be spent to no purpose. Your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

"And if you remain hostile toward Me and refuse to obey Me, I will go on smiting you sevenfold for your sins. I will loose wild beasts against you, and they shall bereave you of your children and wipe out your cattle. They shall decimate you, and your roads shall be deserted.

"And if these things fail to discipline you for Me, and you remain hostile to Me, I too will remain hostile to you: I in turn will smite you sevenfold for your sins. I will bring a sword against you to wreak vengeance for the covenant; and if you withdraw into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into enemy hands. When I break your staff

of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven; they shall dole out your bread by weight, and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied.

"But if, despite this, you disobey Me and remain hostile to Me, I will act against you in wrathful hostility; I, for My part, will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. I will destroy your cult places and cut down your incense stands, and I will heap your carcasses upon your lifeless fetishes.

"I will spurn you. I will lay your cities in ruin and make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not savor your pleasing odors. I will make the land desolate, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled by it. And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheath the sword against you. Your land shall become a desolation and your cities a ruin.

"Then shall the land make up for its sabbath years throughout the time that it is desolate and you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the land rest and make up for its sabbath years. Throughout the time that it is desolate, it shall observe the rest that it did not observe in your sabbath years while you were dwelling upon it. As for those of you who survive, I will cast a faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight. Fleeing as though from the sword, they shall fall though none pursues. With no one pursuing, they shall stumble over one another as before the sword. You shall not be able to stand your ground before your enemies, but shall perish among the nations; and the land of your enemies shall consume you.

"Those of you who survive shall be heartsick over their iniquity in the land of your enemies; more, they shall be heartsick over the iniquities of their fathers; and they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity

of their fathers, in that they trespassed against Me, yea, were hostile to Me." *

The punishment is to be devastating, but it will not be annihilating:

" . . . When I, in turn, have been hostile to them and removed them into the land of their enemies, then at last shall their obdurate heart humble itself, and they shall atone for their iniquity. Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land.

"For the land shall be forsaken of them, making up for its sabbath years by being desolate of them, while they atone for their iniquity; for the abundant reason that they rejected My norms and spurned My laws. Yet even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them nor spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My covenant with them: for I the Lord am their God. I will remember in their favor the covenant with the ancients, whom I freed from the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God: I the Lord." †

The Pentateuch is thus a work which underwrites both the Diaspora and the Land. Dispersion is anticipated, indeed it is built into the very concept of the Land. Diaspora does not carry with it obliteration or loss of identity. Yahweh will never abandon His people, no matter how much suffering He inflicts upon them. The Jews were therefore prepared by the Pentateuch itself to interpret Diaspora experience as a manifestation both of Yahweh's power and

* *Ibid.*, 14-40.

† *Ibid.*, 41-45.

concern. And since no time limit is given in the Pentateuch for the punishment of dispersion, the span of its duration could never in and of itself be evidence of God's abandonment.

The Pentateuch marks the triumph of the integrative principle. It was the outcome of an historical experience with the Land, its conquest, its settlement, its destruction. It was the successful affirmation of an identity in the face of radical changes of all sorts; an identity achieved through a continuous process of elaboration and expansion of Yahweh's function and scope. It was this integrative and elaborative principle that served as the prototype of the Diaspora.

The Pentateuch is of especial significance because the Pentateuch, and only the Pentateuch, was recognized as the *final* and immutable revelation. What it had to say about Land and Dispersion was bound to have a definitive character. Nevertheless, one must not overlook the fact that its basic presuppositions are both foreshadowed and underwritten in the other biblical books. The prophets, as already indicated, were instrumental in preserving Yahweh's power in the face of the empirical evidence of His weakness. They were responsible for the notion of the Land as a conditional gift. As inspired men of God, these prophets were accorded great prestige after the Restoration, and their teachings on Land and Diaspora were little different from those in the Pentateuch.

Such historical books as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings reiterated a similar message, for in their final form was incorporated the concept of a God Who reigned over the historical processes and Who meted out victory to His people when they obeyed Him and defeat when they proved disloyal. The vicissitudes of the centuries were subsumed under a unifying principle that preserved them in the very act of reconstructing them.

II

The Pentateuch was canonized and became the basis of the Jewish society in the Land, but the Land did not belong to the Jews who followed the Pentateuch. The Restoration took place under Persian auspices. The institutions for the worship of Yahweh were developed with the permission of the imperial overlord. And the years which witnessed the flourishing of the Aaronide theocracy were years without independence. From the return under Joshua and Zerubabel till the time of Alexander the Great, the Jews lived under Persian control. From the death of Alexander the Great till the Hasmonean revolt, they were ruled first by the Ptolemies, then by the Seleucids. The all-powerful Yahweh, in restoring the people to the Land, had not seen fit to restore their sovereignty. He was an omnipotent and cosmic God Who resolved that His people should not enjoy independence. Yet it was within this context of dependence that the Pentateuch was canonized and Yahweh was for the first time secure in His cosmic omnipotence among His own people. The Restoration was a return to the Land but not a return to independence. It was a prototype of what Diaspora existence was to be: autonomous or semi-autonomous, functioning within a larger system.

The lack of independence within their own land did not seem to disturb the Jews at all. They did not take Yahweh to task. They did not question His omnipotence. They were more loyal to Him now than ever before. Aaronide priests ruled over them and performed the elaborate sacrificial ritual that the Pentateuch enjoined. Yahweh looked after the rain, the dew, and the harvest, even if tribute was paid to Persia. Yahweh looked with favor on the sacrifices brought by pious peasants, even if He did not restore the monarchy. Yahweh expiated the sins of His people, even though ownership of the Land was not fully restored to them.

The Aaronide-theocratic phase was thus a novel and successful extension of Yahweh's powers and functions. The God Who had chosen the Patriarchs, conquered the Land, given the throne to David, and expelled His people from the Land, was the selfsame God Who ruled the universe, moved history, and ordained that the Aaronides should rule. Never before had the priests been the ruling power in Jewish society. They had played an important role in the monarchical systems, but they had never enjoyed supremacy. With the canonization of the Pentateuch, the Aaronides became the rulers of society, and seemed to be no whit concerned that the Land was not free.

The Pentateuch proved to be a powerful book. From the moment of its canonization, it was accepted as containing the definitive revelation of God to Moses. Whatever opposition there may have been to its promulgation quickly disappeared, and it became the source of all law, doctrine, and history. For millennia, the Pentateuch enjoyed a status that was unique. Not only did every subsequent form of Judaism give it unquestioned primacy, but Christianity and Islam also affirmed its revealed character. Yet this Pentateuch with its audacious claims for its cosmic God, with its absolute certainty of this God's power to give His people the Land, with its bold assertion of His omnipotence, was promulgated and subscribed to at a time when the Jews were living in the Land on the sufferance of the Persian emperor! The Pentateuch underwrote the omnipotence of a Deity Who had shown Himself impotent, and Who could sustain His people only so long as the great imperial powers allowed. Empirically, Yahweh had been a failure, and on this failure His cosmic power and grandeur was built. The Pentateuch became the Divine revelation for the Jews, and its laws and teachings regulated their lives at that point in their history when they acknowledged the suzerainty and the overlordship of imperial Persia.

In retrospect the history of ancient Israel from its begin-

nings till the canonization of the Pentateuch shows itself to have been the outcome of an intensive interaction with the complex forces that were at work in the ancient Near East. Exposed to processes that they did not understand, seminomadic tribes became aware of a goodly Land which they longed to possess. Taking advantage of one of those recurrent ebbs in imperial power, these tribes conquered Canaan, and attributed their victory to their God, Yahweh; for they did not understand that their triumph was the gift of imperial interregnum. Firm in their conviction that Yahweh had given them the Land because He had the power to do so, they held onto Him even when they began to till the soil, build cities, establish monarchies, and erect temples. They did not know that these were the normal processes of change and development within the ancient Near East, though they did suspect that their monarchical institutions were patterned after those of the surrounding peoples. They responded to acculturation processes much as did other Near Eastern peoples, as is evidenced by their shift from a tribal to a monarchical society, from seminomadism to agriculture, from tents to sedentary and urban modes. As such, the history of ancient Israel conforms to the larger patterns. Even their concept of the Deity is at home in the cultural setting of the ancient Near East. None of the surrounding peoples would have taken exception to a belief in an external deity, possessing mighty attributes, Who fights as best He can for His people, however much they would have denied to this particular deity the power that the Israelites attributed to Him.

Impressed on the history of ancient Israel are the forms of the ancient Near East. When one reads through the Bible, and, when, in reading, one attempts to see the ancient world as the biblical writers saw it, one finds that one is looking at that world with a vision that developed out of it. The biblical writers share the concepts of the world about them. They believe in miracles, in sacrifices, in direct Divine inter-

vention; give sanction to monarchies, priesthoods, and prophetic guilds; remain unperturbed by contradictions and absurdities. The biblical books in form and content betray their Near Eastern origin.

In one respect and in one respect alone the history of ancient Israel is unique. It imposed unity on the complexity of its experiences, wove the patterns of the ancient Near East into a single design, and bent the empirical world to serve its purpose.

III

This absorption into itself of the larger world; this dialectical interplay of a distinctive and differentiable form with the forms that surround it; this process of impressing and being impressed; this building of a wider and wider identity out of the novel creations of historical forces; this utilization of completed modes as the cutting edge for designing modes undreamed of—all were to persist throughout Jewish history, whether that history was being played out in the Land or in the Diaspora.

The Jews in the Graeco-Roman world lived as a small minority within a civilization complex that subordinated them to its overarching structural supremacy. From the time of Alexander the Great till the redaction of the Palestinian Talmud, a stretch of seven centuries, the Jews exercised full sovereignty in their Land for less than a hundred years. As in the ancient Near Eastern phase of their history, they enjoyed this independence only because it was a period of imperial interregnum; the Hellenistic monarchies were crumbling and the Roman imperium had not as yet absorbed the Near East. The kind of problems that the Jews had to solve were not primarily of their own making. If they had had their way, they would have been content to develop their lives along the lines set down by the Pentateuch and would have perpetuated with relatively little

change the theocratic institutions that had proved so durable under Persian rule. They did not, however, have their way. The penetration of Hellenism into the Near East was primarily achieved through the introduction of the Greek type city, the *polis*. This form was highly disruptive of the agricultural and urban patterns that had evolved in the Near East, and compelled the Jews to reorient themselves to modes of life and thought that were new and alien to them. The Pentateuch had been highly successful in integrating, systematizing, and unifying experiences that were relevant for the forms and structures of the ancient Near East, but it was of little help in coping with the *polis* and the radical changes in the economic, social, political, and cultural patterns that it unleashed.

The problem was dealt with in several ways. A small minority of Jews advocated complete acceptance of Hellenism, and an abandonment of the Pentateuch as an anachronistic impediment to the adoption of a more advanced civilization. Other Jews advocated that the Pentateuch continue to regulate the life of the Jews, anachronistic or not. The majority of the Jews, however, were won over to a new and radical form of Judaism that insisted on preserving the Pentateuch as the divinely given law, but proceeded to construct the kind of Judaism that could master the Hellenistic mode by absorbing it into itself. This new and radical form of Judaism was Pharisaism.

The Pharisees arose out of the problems that had been posed by the Hellenistic world. These problems had to be faced by the Jews, because they were embedded within the matrix of the dominant Hellenistic forms. The Pharisees solved them by affirming that God had given Moses a twofold Law, one written, the other oral. The laws and the teachings of the Pentateuch were not self-sufficient. Indeed, their applicability and their meaning could be determined only by reference to the Oral Law, whose provisions were known to and determined by the Pharisees. The assumption

of an Oral Law permitted the Jews to absorb the essential elements of the Hellenistic mode and to reorder their lives in a society restructured by the *polis* form *without abandoning or obliterating* the modes that had been fashioned out of the experiences with the ancient Near East. The Pentateuch was not only preserved, but for the first time was read on the Sabbath, because it was the immutable revelation of God. The prophets were not only venerated as God-inspired, but they were believed to have been transmitters of the twofold Law. The sacrificial cult and its Aaronide priesthood were recognized as legitimate. Yet the Pharisees carried through so radical a transformation of Judaism that it bore only a slight resemblance to the previous mode.

The Pharisees thoroughly revolutionized the system of authority. Hitherto, the Aaronide priests had exercised control over law and doctrine; now it was the turn of the Pharisees. Only one Law had previously been recognized, the Pentateuch; now there were two Laws, the written Pentateuch and the oral teachings of the Pharisees. No legislative body had functioned to promulgate new law; now the *Beth Din Ha-Gadol*, the Great Legislature, was created to perform this function. Pentateuchal Judaism knew of Yahweh, Elohim, Shaddai, El Elyon, but it did not know of the *Shekinah*, the Holy One Blessed be He, He Who spoke and the world came into being. The Jew under the theocracy had his eyes fastened on the Temple, for it was here that the Aaronides offered up the sacrifices that assured agricultural abundance and that brought expiation for one's sins. With the Pharisees came the synagogue, mandatory prayer, an unmediated relationship with God. Pre-Pharisaic Judaism offered the individual long life as a reward for obedience to the Divine command, while Pharisaic Judaism promised him immortality and resurrection.

The Pharisees built a new Judaism out of its previous Near Eastern form and out of raw materials that first the Greeks and then the Romans made available. The Pharisees

themselves were teachers who resembled the Sophists—I us the word without its Platonic overtones—more than they resembled the priests, or prophets, or the older type *Sopher* or Scribe, like Ezra or Ben Sira. They were itinerant teachers of the twofold Law to whom students flocked as to a Protagoras or a Prodicus. They were as intensely concerned with the laws as were the legislators of Greece and Rome. Their notion of an Oral Law has Greek parallels, but neither Pentateuchal nor prophetic. The fact that the Sadducees denied that such a law existed testifies to the novelty of the concept, as does the coinage of such new words for law as *halakah*, *takkanah*, and *gezerah*. The very idea of the power to legislate new law without recourse to Divine revelation is alien to the ancient Near Eastern theocratic mode of Judaism, but was a fundamental principle of the Greeks and the Romans.

Pharisaism's absorption of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, and its subordination of the previous mode of Judaism to Greek and Roman forms are most glaringly revealed in its two major creations: the Mishnah, and the tannaitic *midrash*. The Mishnah is recorded in a form that bears no resemblance to the Pentateuch, even though the Pentateuch is assumed at all times to be an immutable, God-given revelation, and even though its laws are the concern of the tannaitic teachers. The Pentateuch intermixes law with doctrine and history; the Mishnah treats the law as a separate and distinct realm. The Pentateuch makes no effort at rubricizing or categorizing the laws; the Mishnah is concerned with order, arrangement, and categories. The Pentateuch is unconcerned with logical consistency, and is tolerant of contradictions; the Mishnah strives for consistency and is on guard against contradictions. The Pentateuch shows little regard for legal principle and abstract concepts; the Mishnah reiterates such formulae as "the general rule is," "there are four categories of this and forty-nine categories of that." The Pentateuch betrays no awareness

of the reasoning processes, even when it is exemplifying them; the Mishnah is very conscious of sophisticated modes of argumentation.

Or consider legal terminology. The Mishnah abounds in biblical words that are invested with radically new meanings, and with words that had to be coined. The significance of this fact cannot be overstressed, for it demonstrates the need to find expression for ideas and concepts alien to the Pentateuch. We have already pointed out that the three key words for law in the tannaitic literature, *halakah*, *takkanah*, and *gezerah* are non-biblical. But there are others: *kellal*, "a general principle"; *perat*, "a particular instance"; *gezerah shevah*, "analogy"; *kal ve-homer*, "an argument from major to minor"; *aboth*, "principal categories"; *hayyav*, "guilty"; *shetar*, "writ," etc., etc. Both the Mishnah form and the mishnaic vocabulary are interconnected with the Pentateuch only through Hellenistic and Roman forms and concepts.

The tannaitic *midrash* likewise refracts the Graeco-Roman matrix. The notion of a commentary on the Law is not Pentateuchal. Legislation is the promulgation of a Divine lawgiver. It needs no commentary, for it is explicit. The command in Deuteronomy that one must not add to nor subtract from the law gives us a good insight into the point of view that prevailed. A commentary such as the tannaitic *midrash* presupposes a highly sophisticated grasp of the nature of words and sentences. It recognizes the distinction between "explicit" and "implicit." It sees words bristling with multiple meaning, and sentences rich in ambiguities. The eye is alert to detect contradictions and the mind is ready with logical devices for extracting meaning.

Hillel and the teachers who followed him brought to bear on the Pentateuch logical methods that could have been derived only from dealing with legal problems in the Graeco-Roman world. As Professor Daube has demonstrated, the mere usage of reasoning in the Pentateuch is

a far cry from an awareness of its processes. The Pentateuch, the prophets, the historical literature, indeed the entire Bible shows no such awareness, even though it contains the Law and the thought of more than a millennium. As late as Ben Sira, there is no consciousness of logical processes. It appears in Jewish history only after Palestine had been transformed by the *polis* revolution and when Greek legal and philosophic thinking were widespread throughout the Near East. The seven hermeneutic devices of Hillel, the six additional ones of Ishmael, the principle of *ribui* and *miyyut* of Akiba—all were drawn into Judaism from the Graeco-Roman world. Yet the outcome was a distinctive Judaism that could never be mistaken for anything else. The Pentateuch has not only been preserved, but it has been preserved through these Graeco-Roman modes. The ancient Near Eastern experience has not been obliterated; it has been merely added to. The Mishnah and the tannaitic *midrash* are Jewish lawbooks, not Greek or Roman; the Pharisees were Jewish scholars, not Greek and Roman; yet the impress of Greece and Rome has left a stamp that is deep and indelible.

The Pharisaic revolution carried through on the Land was not primarily concerned with the Land, but with the individual. The Land, it is true, could not be ignored, but it was no longer the ultimate goal as it had been in the Pentateuch. The major goad to observing God's laws was neither a promise of a Land flowing with milk and honey, nor the dire threat of exile from the Land, but rather personal, individual salvation in the world to come. The resurrection of the dead was the reward that awaited the Jew who observed the twofold Law. The cosmic God of the Pentateuch Who was primarily moving history in the interests of His people and Who offered long, but not eternal life to the law-abiding individual, now enlarged His functions to become a personal father for every individual in the universe. The Pharisees conceived of God as not only the

sovereign Who disposed of the fate of peoples and nations, but also the God Who had stored up an everlasting reward for everyone who observed the *halakah*, the authoritative rendition of His will. The Land, therefore, could no longer be the center of focus, for the individual was God's concern whether he was living on the Land or not. The destiny of the Land was determined by collective obedience or disobedience, but the destiny of the individual by his personal *halakhic* behavior. In the course of time, though not at the outset, the idea of a Messiah was developed to cope with the problem of the Land without prejudice to the achievement of personal, individual salvation.

The Pharisaic conception of God as a cosmic, yet personal Father Who offers eternal life to the individual encouraged, if it did not compel, proselytism. God's concern was no longer limited to the interest of His people and His Land, but extended to every creature in the universe. The dawning awareness of God and His human creations necessitated the coinage of a word to express this revolutionary concept—*briyoth*, persons created by God whether Jewish or not. As *briyoth* they were His children who might be brought under the wings of the *Shekinah*, God's Divine personal presence—a name for God, it should be noted, that was coined by the Pharisees to express an intimate and personal Father God. In the tractate, *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, all who come into the world are judged by God on the first of Tishri. Not only does tannaitic tradition assert that the two great Pharisaic leaders, Shemaiah and Abtalion, were descendants of proselytes, but tannaitic law abrogated the Pentateuchal restrictions which excluded Ammonites and Moabites from ever joining themselves to Israel. And in canonizing the Book of Ruth, the Pharisees gave sanction to a genealogy for David that made him the direct descendant of a Moabite woman who chose to follow the God of Israel, a choice that was strictly forbidden by the Pentateuch. The significance of this act cannot be overstressed.

The Pharisees in accepting this genealogy were not only reformulating the past, but they were making crystal clear their concept of a future restoration of the dynasty of David: the Messiah, son of David, would be the descendant of a proselyte. The Pharisees had no intention of abandoning their concepts of Judaism in the messianic age! That the genealogy of the Book of Ruth was taken seriously is evident even in our own day, for it is read each year on *Shebuoth*, the day commemorating the giving of the Torah.

The Gospel of Matthew speaks only the truth when it asserts that the Pharisees traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte. And Josephus well expresses the Pharisaic attitude. In his *Contra Apionem*, Josephus concludes a section on the laws with this significant sentence: "These and many similar regulations are the ties which bind us together." He then immediately begins the section concerning proselytes:

"The consideration given by our legislator to the equitable treatment of aliens also merits attention. It will be seen that he took the best of all possible measures at once to secure our own customs from corruption, and to throw them open ungrudgingly to any who elect to share them. To all who come and desire to live under the same laws with us, he gives a gracious welcome, *holding that it is not family ties which constitute relationship but agreement in the principles of conduct.* On the other hand, it was not his pleasure that casual visitors should be admitted to the intimacies of our daily life." *

The Pharisees were responsible for making the *laws* the ties that bind; not race, not Land. Indeed the Land assumes importance only to the extent that laws pertain to it. Since the Pentateuch had framed its legislation with the Land in mind, the Pharisees could not ignore it. The Mishnah

* *Contra Apionem*, II:28, lines 209-210. My ital.

includes the laws for the Land, just as it includes the laws for the Temple. But these laws have no higher status than do the laws of Sabbath, damages, or writs. An individual might find himself bound by the laws of *terumah* or *maaser*, or he might not. For a Jew who did not live in the Land, the non-observance of these laws did not affect his personal salvation. His claims on eternal life were not bound up with the Land, but with the laws. His link to his fellow Israelite was through attachment to the twofold Law; a good son of Israel was one who obeyed the laws wherever he was. The individual no longer had his eye fastened on Zion, but on his personal salvation. The Land had become largely irrelevant, even though it could not be ignored, for the Pharisees carried through a revolution against much that the Pentateuch commanded, all the while clinging fast to it. And the Land had been foremost in the mind of God at that time.

The Pharisees have been dealt with at such length because they not only dominated the life of the Jews from the time of the Hasmonean revolt till the destruction of the Temple, but because their twofold Law and their doctrines determined the subsequent course of Jewish history in much the same way that the Pentateuch affected the history of the Jews in the Persian and in the Graeco-Roman period. The Pharisees, without abandoning the Pentateuch, elaborated Judaism in a way that enabled the individual Jew to master the problem of living under imperial domination in a world of *poleis* so adequately that he was willing to maintain a separate identity and to urge others to share it. The primacy of the Land gave way to the primacy of the twofold Law, and the primacy of the Temple in the Land—the major institutional achievement of the Pentateuch—gave way to the primacy of the Synagogue both in the Land and outside it. The Synagogue was the institution dedicated to the cosmic Father God Who bestowed eternal life on the individual. It had no necessary connection to the Land as did the Temple; it required no special class

for its functioning; it offered the individual a place to direct prayers directly to the Father in Heaven without recourse to any intermediation. The Synagogue was an institution that enabled those bound together by the ties of law to strengthen these ties in a shared spiritual fellowship concerned with the perpetuation of the laws with or without the Land, and with or without the Temple. The Synagogue was the only institution to survive not only the destruction of the Temple, but all the subsequent vicissitudes of Jewish history. And this institution, unlike the Temple, was not created by a Divine command, but emerged in the course of the Pharisaic revolution, out of the gropings of individuals for a direct relationship to a Father God Whose paramount interest was in them, wherever they might be.

Only the Pharisees coped successfully with all the novel problems that living in the Graeco-Roman world raised. The Sadducees who sought to weather the storms of change with the single Law, the Pentateuch, and with a single institution, the divinely ordained Temple, made little headway with the masses, even though the literal Pentateuch had ruled unchallenged from about 450 B.C. till the Hasmonean revolt, and even though it was recognized by all as God's revelation. Once the Temple was destroyed, they lost what little following they had.

The attempt to ride the Graeco-Roman tide, by establishing an independent state, failed three times. The Hasmoneans asserted independence for less than one hundred years, and much of this period was marred by civil strife. A desperate attempt to gain liberation from Rome in 65-70 ended in failure, as did an equivalent effort under the leadership of Bar Kochba and Rabbi Akiba in 132-35. It was quite clear that God was by no means committing Himself to independence for His people, even though His cosmic sovereignty and power had undergone no diminution.

Independence was just not possible for the Jews living in Palestine, because their land was small and strategic. They lived in too crucial an area to be overlooked, yet they

could not successfully assert themselves against mighty imperial powers. Under such circumstances the wish for liberation and independence gave birth to apocalypticism and messianism. The omnipotent God, out of love and concern for His people, would send a savior who in some miraculous way would establish a truly durable and perfect kingdom. Apocalypticism was nourished by prophetic concepts, for these had attributed to God the power to move history in the interests of His people. The salvation of the people and the Land was in the forefront of apocalyptic concern, not the eternal life of the individual.

Apocalyptic visions attracted only a minority of Jews to its fantasies. The messianic solution attracted large numbers only when, as in the case of the Bar Kochba revolt, it was combined with a real, not a miraculous rebellion. And even then it undoubtedly owed its popularity to the support given it by Rabbi Akiba and his disciples, respected leaders of *halakhic* Judaism. Neither in the Hasmonean revolt, nor in the great rebellion against Rome did it play any role. In the former instance, the goal was restoration of Temple and Torah; in the latter, sheer independence.

Of the various attempts at solving the problems on the Land in the Graeco-Roman period, with the Pentateuch as the starting point, only the Pharisaic solution prevailed. Nevertheless, because the Pentateuch was accepted by all but the extreme radical Hellenists among the Jews—a tiny group, numerically—the Pharisees could not exclude the other groupings from the history of Jews or Judaism. The link with the Pentateuch thus interconnects all the movements of this period into a single history.

IV

Whereas in the ancient Near Eastern phase the Diaspora emerged only at the very end of a history spanning many centuries, it was in existence from the very beginning of the Graeco-Roman period. During the centuries that followed,

it underwent a vast expansion, especially after the Hasmonean revolt, and by the time of Jesus Jews were living in virtually all the cities of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and the Aegean Isles. Since this process occurred while the Jews were living in their Land, it is of considerable importance for the development of our theme.

At the outset, a sharp distinction should be drawn between those Diaspora communities that emerged *prior* to the Pharisaic revolution and those which rose subsequently. The former faced the problem of living in Greek *poleis* with only the Pentateuch on hand, while the latter had the support of the Pharisaic twofold Law. The Alexandrian and Antiochean communities are the major ones that developed prior to the Pharisaic revolution. What is noteworthy is that they found it possible to absorb the essential features of the *polis* mode of life by viewing them as already contained within the Pentateuch.

The surviving literature of Antiochene and Alexandrian Jewry reveals the various methods devised for achieving this. Regrettably, we cannot always be certain whether a work is from one community or the other, but the process is clear enough. Symbolic meanings were given to cultic rites; simple narratives were endowed with deep allegorical meaning; superficial texts were plumbed for profound philosophical thoughts. The Pentateuch was transmuted from an ancient Near Eastern text into a repository of legislation and paradigms for the *polis*-living Jew.

Philo was the most brilliant designer of the Pentateuchal-Hellenistic synthesis. Since he *assumed* that all phenomena had to be compatible with the teachings of the God-given Pentateuch, there could be no question of abandoning the Pentateuch for Hellenistic virtues. These virtues, Philo believed, were the heart and essence of the Pentateuch. And how could it be otherwise when the supreme lawgiver, Moses, was inspired and guided by the highest philosophical ideas. Moses, according to Philo, was born with precocious gifts for contemplative thought; he was nurtured on

the wisdom of the Chaldeans, the Greeks, and the Egyptians; he accorded Reason sovereignty over the turbulent passions; he combined within himself the qualities of king, lawgiver, priest, and prophet; he wrote a book of incomparable laws and of eternal truths. Moses, so Philo believed, included history along with laws—an anomalous procedure for a lawgiver—because it gave them cosmic sanction. To use Philo's own words, "He wished to show two most essential things: first that the Father and Maker of the world was in the truest sense also its Lawgiver, secondly that he who would observe the laws will accept gladly the duty of following nature and live in accordance with the ordering of the universe, so that his deeds are attuned to the harmony with his words and his words with his deeds."

The Pentateuch is thus the source for Philo's insistence that the entire cosmos be under a single Divine sovereignty. But Philo's conception of this sovereignty is a product of his Hellenistic presuppositions. Perhaps this is most strikingly evident in his notion of the cosmos as the Great City and the laws of Moses the constitution of a world *polis*:

“. . . Again, he considered that to begin his writings with the foundation of a man-made city was below the dignity of the laws, and, surveying the greatness and the beauty of the whole code with the accurate discernment of his mind's eye, and thinking it too good and godlike to be confined within any earthly walls, he inserted the story of the genesis of the 'Great City,' holding that the laws were the most faithful picture of the world polity.

"Thus whoever will carefully examine the nature of the particular enactments will find that they seek to attain the harmony of the universe and are in agreement with the principles of eternal nature. . . ."

* Philo, Moses 2:51-52, trans. F.H. Colson (Loeb edition), pp. 473-75.

Through Philo's artistry the Pentateuch was Hellenized and *polisified*. Its teachings were viewed as being especially appropriate for *polis*-dwellers, for they were nothing other than the highest achievement of the sophisticated and philosophical mind. The seminomadic wanderings of the Patriarchs, the enslavement in Egypt, the trek through the wilderness, the revelation at Sinai—events narrated in the Bible with naive simplicity and utter unsophistication—are for Philo the paradigms for *polis*-living!

In Philo and in the writings of other less-talented Hellenistic Jews we see how the Pentateuch was enlarged and elaborated so that it took into itself a *polis* world that it had never known. In Alexandria and Antioch a process took place that was identical with that which yielded the Pharisaic revolution in Palestine: the Pentateuchal mode, inadequate in its literal form to cope with the novel problems let loose by the Graeco-Roman world, was widened and enlarged so that the crucial and essential elements of this world might be drawn in. In Palestine the Pharisees achieved this through the concept of the twofold Law and individual salvation and developed a form of Judaism that could function either in Palestine or the Diaspora. In Alexandria and Antioch, Philo and others read the Pentateuch as the constitution of the world *polis*, and as such the repository of the highest achievements of Hellenistic thought. And though Pharisaism is not the same as the Judaism of Alexandria or Antioch, and though none of these are identical with Pentateuchal Judaism, the allegiance to the Pentateuch binds all these forms together. The original achievement of organizing the experiences of Israel in the ancient Near East under the tutelage of a single cosmic God had created a primal form that generated multiple and diverse forms in its grappling with Graeco-Roman civilization. The dependence of new modes on the primal mode binds them all to each other and thus to a single history.

The primal form, the Pentateuch, had placed the Land in

a central position. The cosmic God had selected a special people who would be given a special Land, if and when they deserved it. Dispersion was viewed as the punishment that disobedience entails, but it was regarded as temporary, though no fixed time was set for its duration.

The significance of the Land decreased in the Graeco-Roman period. Among the many reasons for this shift was the emergence of a vast and viable Diaspora. Unlike the exile to Babylonia, this dispersion was to a great extent voluntary. The Jews who settled in Antioch, Alexandria, Thessalonica, and Rome, did not contemplate returning to the Land for settlement but looked upon Jerusalem as their mother city. Much as the Greeks, they considered themselves to be the founders of colonies away from home. The Land was for them primarily the place where the sacrificial rites commanded by the Pentateuch were performed and the laws made known. It had ceased to be the highest reward for obedience to God's commands, being replaced by beliefs in individual immortality and in the values of a good life wherever led. The Jews who lived in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora must have preferred living there, for they could have freely returned to the Land.

Jews chose to settle in the Diaspora or to remain there because they were treated well, and they maintained a separate identity because they were able to find essential elements of surrounding cultures in the Pentateuch. The notion that the Jews were unwelcome in the *poleis*, and that their adherence to the Pentateuch excited intense hostility, is true only in part. The phenomenon is much more complex. During those periods in which the society in which the Jews lived was expanding or prospering, the Jews were the beneficiaries of rights and privileges and their religion was an object of respect and admiration. Only when the host society was undergoing stress and strain or was disintegrating structurally did the Jews suffer an erosion of their rights and an onslaught against their religion. The emergence and

consolidation of Hellenistic culture under the Seleucids and the Ptolemies was accompanied by the extension of rights and privileges to Jews who were willing to settle in the *poles*. In Alexandria, the Jews were accorded either unrestricted *polis* rights, or their equivalent, at the same time that they were permitted to organize themselves into a community based on their allegiance to the Pentateuch and to the Temple of its God in Jerusalem. The Pentateuch and its teachings aroused much sympathetic interest on the part of their Greek neighbors. The Jewish population steadily increased. A similar development took place in Antioch.

Difficulties set in only when the Hellenistic monarchies proved impotent before Rome's gathering might. The troubles that overwhelmed the Alexandrian and Syrian Jewries were a consequence of this collapse. The breakdown of stable order, the pain and humiliation of defeat, the agony of adjustment to radical restructurization made the Jewish communities highly vulnerable. Precisely because they had enjoyed protection, privileges, and rights as a differentiated minority, they were choice victims. Their legal status was challenged, their religion besmirched, their property plundered, and their lives taken. The same Roman rule that in Palestine had provoked the Jews to suicidal rebellion, provoked the Greeks and the Egyptians to sack the Jewries. The Jew, however, who lived in cities that had not been under the sovereignty of the Hellenistic monarchs and that had been directly under Roman rule for more than a century, cities such as Thessalonica and Rome itself, was not troubled and his rights not withdrawn.

The tribulations of the Diaspora Jewries could not be solved in Pentateuchal style. The Land, far from offering a haven, was itself being battered by Roman rule. The collapse of proud Alexandrian Jewry undermined its mode of Judaism, a mode so intimately bound up with the flourishing *polis* culture of Alexandria when it was the mother city of Hellenistic civilization. It could not for long compete

with Pharisaism which was unaffected by turbulence and disaster. Offering the individual an eternal life in return for steadfastness in the observance of the twofold Law of the cosmic Father God, Pharisaic Judaism could withstand any blows or comforts that history might bring.

V

During the Graeco-Roman period the Diaspora played a peripheral role in Jewish history. The fundamental form that emerged from this phase, the Mishnah, was the product not of the Dispersion but of a scholar class that had lived in Palestine both before and after the destruction of the Temple. This scholar class had developed a Judaism that could function in or without the Land, for they had created it out of wrestling with problems that the Graeco-Roman world had generated. The solution received its final rendition in the Mishnah. Just as the Pentateuch provided a viable Judaism that had been constructed out of Israel's experiences with the ancient Near East, so the Mishnah now afforded a Judaism that owed its creation to experiences with the Graeco-Roman world. But whereas the Pentateuch was primarily concerned with the history of God's relationship to His world, His people, and His Land, the Mishnah was predominantly concerned with codifying the *halakhoth*, the authoritative laws, that offered eternal life, *olam ha-ba*, for the individual. The promise of the Pentateuch is a Land flowing with milk and honey, the promise of the Mishnah is that "everyone of Israel has a share in the world to come." The Land comes under the jurisdiction of the *halakah*, for to keep the laws that pertain to the Land is to add to one's individual store of *mitzvoth* and thus increase one's eternal reward in a world, not a Land, to come.

By emphasizing the individual and his salvation, the Mishnah offered a mode of Judaism eminently fitted for

Diaspora existence. Its authority was recognized not only in Palestine, but in Mesopotamia as well. This is all the more remarkable, since the Jews of Babylonia did not live under Roman rule and could not be coerced by any power that the scholar class in Palestine may have possessed. The acceptance of the Mishnah as authoritative was a voluntary act prompted by the belief that it contained the laws that led to individual salvation. As such, the Mishnah was given primacy over the Pentateuch and served as the basis for the determination of law and meaning.

The welcome accorded to the Mishnah by the scholar class of the Jews living under Sassanian rule marks the movement of the Diaspora to the center of the stage of Jewish history. Palestine played only a peripheral role in the sweep of events, though it never ceased to have a powerful effect on Diaspora Jewry. It could not disappear from Jewish history, for the Land is in the Pentateuch and the laws for the Land and the Temple are codified in the Mishnah. So long as Jews maintained a distinct identity, they had to take the Land into account, even when rejecting it. Nevertheless, with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, Palestine ceased to be, for many centuries, the center of Jewish historical experience.

The decline of the importance of the Land as the creator of generative forms was brought forth most starkly in the triumph of the Babylonian Talmud. The Mishnah did not receive its authoritative elaboration in Palestine, though it was there that it was codified and there that the Palestinian successors of the *tannaim* developed the Palestinian Talmud, but rather in Babylonia. The Talmud that was the outgrowth of the intellectual activities of the Jewish scholar class of the Sassanian Empire won out over the Talmud of the Jewish scholar class living in the disintegrating Roman Empire. The Land, in and of itself, had no claims against the Diaspora, even when a native Palestinian class was still active in the Land. The Mishnah had so successfully

developed a form of Judaism affirming the individual's salvation through the *halakhoth* that the Land itself lost any claim to primacy. Since God's covenant was with the Israelite wherever he might be, the Land was largely irrelevant.

This concept proved to be very efficacious. It enabled Jews to continue a process that had begun in the ancient Near East: the integration of the surrounding cultures and civilizations through the elaboration of existing forms into novel forms. The Mishnah was a product of the Land, but its fruits were gathered in the Diaspora. It may have taken the Mishnah as its authoritative text, but it compelled it to subserve the needs of Jews living in a Sassanian society. Utilizing logical-dialectical methods that the *tannaim* had developed to derive authoritative novel legislation from the Pentateuch, the Babylonian Amoraim found in the Mishnah the support for their own legal innovations. Laws, institutions, and beliefs, which had no explicit *Mishnaic* support, were adopted. The Babylonian Talmud is not the logical exemplification of the Mishnah, but the forging of a new form of Judaism out of a preceding form. It represents the successful absorption of the Sassanian world into Judaism. It achieved this not by abandoning the previously created Pentateuchal and Mishnaic forms, but by elaborating them. The Jews of the Sassanian world were instilled with the verses of the Bible and with the texts of the Mishnah, but these were made to yield meanings appropriate for orienting oneself in a society that was no simple replica of either the ancient Near Eastern nor Graeco-Roman worlds. The sea of the Talmud contains all three currents.

The subsequent history of the Jews in the Diaspora reveals the continuation of processes identical with those that transmuted Mishnaic Judaism into the Judaism of the Babylonian Talmud. The only significant difference is the growing complexification, not the process by which this complexification occurs. Talmudic Judaism was the outcome of

the integration of three major differentiable forms. Subsequent Jewish history illustrates the proliferation of new forms that have subsumed and preserved the old. Each new form has been the outcome of efforts at solving problems generated by the society in which Jews have been living. As a consequence each new form represents a solution by which Jewish identity has been preserved by altering it: the surrounding world provides the raw material for novel creations, the preexisting forms, for partial patterns and designs. The historical significance of the Diaspora is that it afforded the Jews the opportunity of developing a wide variety of forms, differing from one another, yet so intermingled and interrelated that they must be treated as the history of a differentiable entity, an entity whose primal form was created by a struggling to preserve an identity in a world of bewildering change.

The Moslems not only fell heir to the Sassanian world and its Jews, but to the Byzantine world and its Jews as well. The Umayyads and the Abassids imposed the needs of Islam upon the existing structures and transformed them to serve the interests of the caliphs. The Jews under Islam met their new problems with the Babylonian Talmud, the Mishnah, the Pentateuch, and they solved these problems by developing institutions that enabled them to cope with the distinguishing features of the Moslem world. The Geonic institutions were not duplications of the Babylonian academies, even though there is an historical connection. The title *Gaon*, for example, was a title never previously used. The Gaon was chosen in a different way; he rendered decisions with an authority that the heads of the Babylonian academies had not possessed. Sura and Pumbedita during the Geonic periods were not primarily academies, but oligarchical structures supporting the authoritarian powers of the *Geonim*. One did not have a seat in these academies because one was learned, but because one belonged to the right families. The fruit of more than four centuries of

legal activity in the Geonic period is not the equivalent of a Babylonian Talmud but the responsa of the Geonim. The Mishnah became the text of Judaism for Sassanian Jewry and the outcome was the Talmud; the Talmud was the authority that the Geonim appealed to, but they created their own distinctive Geonic form.

Jewish history in the Islamic period does not yield a single form only. In eastern Islam the Gaonate was the unique creation; in western Islam very different forms emerged. In Moslem Spain, for example, the Jews developed structures that they had never known previously, though all the while affirming undying loyalty to the forms they were abandoning. Hasdai ibn Shaprut became a *Nasi* of the Jewish community, not because he was emulating Judah the Nasi, but because he was the Jewish counterpart of the caliph. The office of *Nagid* which superseded it was a counterpart to that of the emir. The structure of authority was determined by the Moslem rulers who chose to exercise authority over the Jews through a court favorite, and the consequence was that the *Nasi* or *Nagid* was invested with control over the judiciary and the academies. Neither the Geonic, nor Talmudic models were decisive, for they were not geared to the particular problems that Jews faced in Moslem Spain.

The contrast between the Jewries of western and eastern Islam is evident not only in the communal structures, but in the intellectual sphere as well. Poetic creativity that had lain dormant for centuries in Judaism burst forth with remarkable vigor in Spain, but not in Baghdad. A passion for the scientific study of grammar, philology, and lexicography stirred the Jews of Moslem Spain, but hardly affected the Jewish scholars in the east. Philosophic thought had its thousands of admirers in eastern Islam, but its myriads in Spain.

The widening of the Diaspora thus encouraged the proliferation of forms. Each differentiable cultural area gave

birth to an equivalent variation in Judaism. Each new set of problems triggered the form generating mechanism and yielded some modal variation, or some radically new form. Karaism is an excellent example. It was a movement that grew out of dissatisfaction with the Geonic-Exilarchal system. Yet in rejecting the Talmudic authority that this system appealed to, it did not abandon Judaism, but sought refuge in an appeal to the primal form, the Pentateuch and the prophets. The result was not a rebirth of Pentateuchal Judaism, but rather an Islamic form of Judaism appealing to the Pentateuch for its justification, and not to the Talmud. The Karaites made a viable Judaism out of the larger world, just as had their rabbinic enemies.

Christian-feudal Europe was a society that was radically different from Islamic, East or West. The Jews settling here looked to the same Talmud as the Jews of Islam, but the Judaism that they created was not in the Talmud. They built communities that could function in a Christian-feudal world. They rejected the authoritarian, centralized principle that was everywhere evident among the Jews under Islam, in favor of decentralized modes. Each community was proudly independent and wielded its own sovereignty; each worked out some type of representative government. The scholar class was made up of rabbis who had the right to determine the law without recourse to a higher authority. The scholar class that it created was geared to the solution of problems that confronted independent, self-governing Jewish communities in a Christian-feudal structure. The Geonic form was not imitated, though it was not only known but highly respected. Neither was a system of subordination of the scholar class to a *Nasi*, or *Nagid*, adopted. The concern in Christian-feudal Europe was the development of a scholar class, each individual member of which was to be so thorough a master of the Talmudic texts and so skilled a dialectician that he could render decisions as an independent authority. The institution of the Rabbinate

was the creation of the Jewish communities of Christian-feudal Europe; it did not emerge independently in the Jewish communities of Islam. It was a product of the decentralized nature of feudal society, of communal structures grounded on some concept of representational government, of the prestige and power of the Church, of a jealous concern for communal independence. The Rabbinate was not an institution necessitated by Talmudic dicta. The Geonic system was totally committed to the Talmud as the source of all authority, yet we find no Rabbinate in the realms of the Ummayyads and the Abassids. The *Nasi*, Hasdai ibn Shaprut, and the *Nagid*, Samuel, recognized the authority of the Talmud, but they did not encourage the development of a scholar class that would be independent of the authority of the *Nasi* or the *Nagid*. The Talmud, like the Pentateuch, was compelled to yield support for whatever system ultimately emerged. In the Islamic world the Talmud underwrote the institution of the Gaonate, of the *Nesiuth*, of *Negiduth*—all adhering to the principle of centralization of some sort. In the Christian-feudal world the Talmud underwrote the principle of decentralization and buttressed the *kahal* form and an independent Rabbinate.

We thus have basis for the following generalization: the distinctive institutions of the Jews, such as the Gaonate and the Rabbinate, are solutions to problems emerging out of the larger world. They are not solely the outcome of immanent processes, though these are always at work. Had there been no Islamic world, there would have been a Talmud but not necessarily a Gaonate. Had there been no Christian-feudal Europe, there would not necessarily have been a Rabbinate. The identity of the Jews was *preserved* by continuously *altering* it.

This generalization holds true not only for the Diaspora, but, as we have already seen, for the Land as well. The Diaspora is a continuation not a break, for Jewish history is not the history of a Land but of a process of already con-

solidated forms giving birth to new forms. It is a process of problem-solving—the larger cultural and civilizational complex persistently raising the problem of identity, and the Jewish entity solving it by new forms.

Wherever we turn in the history of the Jewish Diaspora, we find this process at work. Consider, for example, the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides. It is a compendium of Jewish Law. Maimonides claims that he is merely collecting the authoritative decisions from the Talmud. The book seems to be what Maimonides says it is. No one could, for a moment, mistake it for a code of Moslem Law. Yet both in form and content it shows itself to be a Jewish Lawbook that owes its distinctive features not to the Talmud, nor to the Mishnah, nor to the Pentateuch, but to the fact that Maimonides lived as a Jew in the Islamic world.

The *Mishneh Torah* gives evidence of this in its structure. The first book is concerned with enunciating first principles, with metaphysics and not with the Laws themselves. Maimonides affirms that the foundation of foundations is the knowledge that there is a *matzui*, a Being, a first principle, or first cause. The idea of grounding a lawbook in metaphysics surely is not derivative from Pentateuch, Mishnah, or Talmud. The decision to coin the word *matzui* for Being, rather than to use the many names of God available in the authoritative texts of previous Judaism, proves conclusively that Maimonides had other models in his mind. The book of Jewish Laws is grounded in metaphysical principles that are universal. *Adonai*, *Elohim*, *Shaddai*, *Shekhina*, *Ha-Kadosh barukh hu*—all these names for God were too particularistic. *Matzui* suffered from no such limitation. It meant simply *Being*, and hence was metaphysically acceptable to all philosophers irrespective of their denominational allegiance. Subsequently Maimonides identifies *Matzui* with *Adonai*, but only after he has made clear the nature of Being.

Maimonides codified Jewish Law, but he grounded it

on metaphysical principles that he became aware of through the work of Islamic philosophers and through a study of the Pentateuch, Mishnah, and Talmud. Indeed, his intense desire to bring order out of Talmudic chaos, to bring to an end dialectical debate, to make the Law simple and unambiguous, to purge Judaism of superstition and error, to fashion a highly centralized and authoritarian system of religious and social controls—such a desire can scarcely be attributed to the sacred texts he venerated. No necessity for this kind of work came from them. Rather did it stem from having lived in the Islamic world and having absorbed many of its basic principles. The *Mishneh Torah* is a brilliant example of how the larger world is absorbed into the Jewish world by the alteration of previous forms. The outcome is not a loss of identity, but its alteration.

Rashi and the Tosaphists living in Christian-feudal Europe were unobsessed with metaphysics and they were undisturbed by disorder. They were concerned with making the Talmud usable and its method supreme. The Pentateuch, Mishnah, and Talmud did not stir them to cut off dialectical debate nor to distill fixed dogmas of belief. They were unaware of the dangers lurking in anthropomorphisms, superstitions, in clashing legal decisions. They had the Judaism appropriate for a Christian-feudal world, and they assumed that this was the Judaism that had always been.

Contrasting forms thus emerged out of contrasting societies. When they met up with one another in Spain, there was struggle for supremacy. The Maimunist anti-Maimunist controversy was its ideological manifestation. Two modes of Judaism were locked in battle to determine which type of structure would prevail, which idea-system would triumph. Christian-feudal Judaism contended with Islamic Judaism and appealed to the same sacred texts, the Pentateuch, the Mishnah, the Talmud. The upshot was a Jewry and a Judaism that was predominantly Christian-feudal in structure and ideology, largely because the Christian-feudal

kings and princes were the victors and not the Moslems. Nevertheless, just as Christian Spain did not totally eradicate the Moslem culture, so Spanish Jewry ended up with a structure and an ideology that was not an exact replica of the structure and ideology of France and Germany. The form that emerged in Spain is seen to be distinctively individual.

The proliferation of differentiable forms—this is the history of Diaspora Jewry. Jews were or had been almost everywhere: in Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa, Germany, France and England, the Provence, Spain, Italy, Poland. Each of these areas had their distinctive history, each developed distinctive structures. And to each of these the Jews reacted by modifying, altering, adapting, creating forms so as to survive with an identity. The result was not a single form, but multiple, varied, and diverse forms, existing side by side and frequently in violent opposition to each other. The manner in which the Jews governed themselves, the institutions that they established, the beliefs that they cherished, the movements that they spawned varied from area to area. The *Sefer Hasidim* and the movement that it engendered was a product of German Jewry; the *Zohar* of Spanish; Lurianic Kabbalah and Sabbatianism of Ottoman; Hasidism of Eastern European Jewry. Remove the larger structural matrix and the phenomenon is impossible; immanent forces alone cannot account for the end result.

What drew these forms together was not their similarity but their link to the earlier primal forms. Since each new form affirmed a relationship to Talmud, or Mishnah, or Pentateuch, it found itself bound to all forms, however alien. Since both Maimonides and Rashi accepted the authority of the Talmud and Pentateuch, they become interlinked, and the contrasting forms that they advocate become part of a single history. In the course of time the forms became intermeshed as the writings of one area became

available to Jews in other areas, and as Jews migrated from one country to another. The *Zohar* and the Lurianic Kabbalah could thus penetrate Eastern Europe, even though they had been produced in Spain and in the Ottoman Empire. Sabbatianism could reach out for followers all over the world because it claimed to be in line with the primal modes. Diaspora history is not the history of a unified experience, but of multiple and diverse forms, each a product of the interaction of Jews with a specific society, interconnecting, and intermingling by virtue of binding ties to the primal generative modes.

The modern world did not bring to an end the basic process at work in Jewish history. On the contrary, it contributed exempla of its own. The rise of capitalism, the emergence of scientific thinking, the triumph of the nation state, confronted the Jews with problems, and they met the problems in the same way that they had met them in the ancient and in the medieval world. They integrated the new phenomena into the forms that they had developed over the centuries. In the Age of Reason, Mendelssohn insisted that Judaism had always been a religion of reason and of laws. The Enlightenment was thus no new phenomenon for the Jews, since this was the very essence of their being, even though centuries of persecution had destroyed its power to guide the lives of most of them. In the romantic period, Krochmal offered Jewish history as the handiwork of the Absolute Spirit.

The rise of the nation state found the Geigers, the Frankels, the Samson Raphael Hirsches, and the Graetzes affirming what was for them a truism: the Jews were not a nation, but a religious people. Their national loyalties were committed wholeheartedly and without reservation to the nations among whom they lived. Western culture was not alien to their spirit but at one with the highest teachings of Judaism. These Jews were not negating their past when they insisted that they were not a nation but conforming

to a process that is already so familiar to us: they were absorbing Western civilization as they sought to maintain their identity in the face of novel problems.

As these problems changed so did the solutions. For the Jews of Western Europe, emancipation was a realistic goal: Jews became citizens in France, England, and Germany. For the Jews of Eastern Europe, the goal seemed unreachable, and it was therefore abandoned. It was not that the Eastern European Jews were better Jews than those of the Western communities, but that they were up against obstacles that precluded a Western solution. As long as there seemed to be hope in the wake of Alexander II's reforms, the Maskilim, the Westernizers of Eastern Europe, sought a similar kind of emancipation. They turned to nationalism only when it was evident that Russia was no Germany. And in turning to nationalism they were not returning to a past but creating a new form out of the nationalist ideologies that were proliferating in Central and Eastern Europe. The source of modern Jewish nationalism is to be looked for in the rise of Western nationalism, not in the Pentateuch. The Herzls, the Pinskers, the Dubnows, the A'had Ha'am's did neither more nor less than Jews have always done: they appealed to previous modes to justify the process by which a new mode is created. Modern Jewish nationalism is neither more true nor less true to the essence of Jewish historical experience than any other mode, but an additional example of the process by which Jewish history became the unique history that it is.

VI

Since the sixteenth century, Jews have been undergoing the process of Westernization and constructing identities out of the structural and ideological materials that it creates. The variety of identities that have emerged is largely a consequence of the fact that the Jews were caught up in every

phase of the Westernization process. Living as they did in all areas of Europe, in all the countries of the Near East and North Africa, the Jews were affected by the new, revolutionary developments not only at different times but at different stages. When the Jews of Holland, England, France, and the United States were confronted with the problems of modern civilization, the capitalist system was predominantly commercial and nationalism was just beginning to emerge as the dominant ideology. When the Jews of Germany were confronted with Westernization, industrial capitalism had already begun to move to the fore and nationalism aroused the most intense emotions. The Puritan, French, and American revolutions had already thoroughly transformed the political institutions of these countries, and such new ideologies as socialism were beginning to attract considerable support. In Eastern Europe the Jews were drawn into the maelstrom of revolutionary changes at a time when nationalism was rampant; imperialism triumphant; rivalry between the powers destructive; revolutionary Marxism potent. As for the Jews of the Near East and North Africa of today, they face Westernization in a nuclear age in which decolonization has given birth not only to the State of Israel but to dozens of independent nations.

The Jews were swept into these processes and they reacted in multitudinous ways. No simple solution to problems existed for Jews as a single entity, because they were no such thing. Because of the Diaspora, the Jews did not simultaneously face the same dilemmas. The Jews of each area were so bound up with the individual history of that area that there could not possibly be a viable single identity. In Poland, the concept of national determination, of autonomy, had a powerful appeal because it fitted in with an ideology that was very potent in Eastern Europe. It was next to meaningless for American Jews. So, too, various forms of socialism seemed to offer solutions to the problems of Eastern European Jewry, and the *Bund* became a power-

ful force among Polish Jewry; yet Marxism did not seem to offer answers for Jews elsewhere. Even so devastating a phenomenon as the Nazi holocaust meant something quite different for Jews in Hitler's power and those who were not. The Westernization processes that ended up with Nazism in Germany, worked themselves out constructively in other parts of the world. Anti-Semitism was not equally potent everywhere; Westernization did not necessarily spell disaster for the Jews.

Indeed Westernization fathered the State of Israel. Israel is the creation of the Diaspora. Had the Jews been confined to a history in the Land, they would have been overwhelmed by the stagnation that overtook the Near East with the decline of Ottoman hegemony. Israel is the most advanced new nation, not only in the Near East but possibly in much of the world as well, only because Jews living in Europe were exposed to Westernization and the nationalist ideologies that it spawned. Mazzini, Garibaldi, and a host of other impassioned preachers of the nationalist idea, were those who lit the spark in the heart of Herzl and his followers. The Bible proved to be a precious rallying point, and the long-cherished messianic ideal a valuable support; neither was the source. Mendelssohn, Geiger, Graetz, and a hundred other Jewish thinkers were as familiar with the Bible and the messianic concept as was Hess or Herzl. The difference was that the former bent the texts and the past to the new non-national form that they were creating to preserve identity within the national state; the latter to the goal of a separate national existence. Both solutions carried with them the absorption of the Western world. The State of Israel is one of the finest products of the Diaspora. Her advanced industrial economy, her flourishing agriculture, her parliamentary system, her political parties, her armed forces, her dynamic cultural life, her intense patriotism, her *realpolitik*, her Westernizing of her pre-Westernized immigrants—all testify to a schooling in

the Western Diaspora and a dedicated determination to make Israel a model Western nation. Only a quick look at the other nations that surround Israel is necessary to realize that it is a Diaspora history that has made the difference. The State of Israel merely confirms the continuation of a process that has always been at work in Jewish history: the building of new forms out of the civilizational materials to hand.

And what of the future of the Diaspora and of the Land? The question is more aptly put if we apply it to the Jews and their future. The answer is simple, if not helpful. So long as Jews continue to show their capacity, wherever they may be, to create new forms in response to problems that the surrounding world sets for them, they will continue to exist. Should this power atrophy, or should they be totally and physically exterminated everywhere, then they will have *had* a unique history but will cease to have one. Such a danger for the foreseeable future is remote both in the State of Israel and in the Diaspora.

In Israel, we witness daily the amazing capacity for thriving in the modern world. There is no stagnation here; Israelis are proving to be skillful Westernizers, astride the forces of technological and ideological change. The future of Jewish identity here seems secure, and the ties with the past firm.

As for the physical existence of the State of Israel, there is bound to be more uncertainty, for it has only limited means for preserving its sovereignty. Israel may very well be able to defend herself against the Arab nations that surround her, but she could not defend herself against either the United States or Russia. Should United States' policy ever require the liquidation of Israel, then Israel will be liquidated. Israel has carved her independence out of the disintegration of British imperialism and can survive independently only on sufferance of the new masters. Fortunately, the United States is encouraging the decolonization

process and is supporting the principle of national self-determination. Israel can therefore expect the United States to do no less for the continuation of her independence than she does for Gabon, the Congo, or the Arab States. The existence of the State of Israel thus seems assured, not because of her own intrinsic power to preserve it, but because the policy of the United States favors it.

The Diaspora communities of the West seem also to have maintained the knack for evolving new forms. The Jews in the United States, especially, are displaying a remarkable aptitude along these lines. Three religious denominations are expanding and thriving; Jewish community centers everywhere are demonstrating new vitality; Jewish philanthropic agencies are raising immense sums of money; Jewish institutions of learning are thriving; Jewish identity is no shame. A viable form is in the process of becoming. And what is occurring on a large scale in the United States is occurring proportionally in Western Europe and South America.

Anti-Semitism is no major problem now, nor does it seem likely to become one again. Diaspora experience reveals that anti-Semitism is a power only when a society is disintegrating or undergoing severe stress and strain. The long existence of the Diaspora, its world-wide spread, was made possible only because Jews were as well-treated as they were ill-treated. They have again and again been welcomed to settle, even as they have again and again been compelled to pull up roots. So long as the societies in which Jews live are expanding or stable, Jews can be assured that anti-Semitism will be confined to the cracks and crannies of the social order. If the United States continues to grow and to solve her economic and social problems, then the Jews can continue forging their identity by adapting themselves to circumstances. If the reverse should occur, the catastrophe that would follow would have such world-wide convulsions that it is hardly likely that there would still be an Israel where American Jews could find refuge.

The situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union underscores the generalization just advanced. The Jews here are suffering for one reason and one reason only: the Soviet Union is in such desperate straits that she can barely feed her people. She offers anti-Semitism instead of food; Jew hatred instead of a higher standard of living. Should major changes occur within the Soviet society that halt the disintegrative processes and that introduce major economic and structural reforms, then we can expect the position of the Jews in the Soviet Union to improve and observe how they attempt to assert their identity in their world.

The issue then today is not Israel or the Diaspora, but the world. The fate of the Jews on the Land has been no different than their fate in the Diaspora. At times it has been good, at times bad. The Land has no magical properties for dispelling the power of mighty nations; and no state in so small and strategic a spot can ever be strong enough to withstand a world power, however brave and determined her soldiers. The Diaspora, in turn, has been no unmixed blessing or curse. It has been a world stage on which comedy, tragedy, and destiny have been enacted. No simple formula is available for Jews, because they have always been rooted in the world and all its complexities, whether abiding within the Land or whether dispersed to the world's four corners.

The world today is radically different from any other in which the Jews have lived. A process is taking place which may very well end up with one world of many parts. National sovereignty may very well be losing its meaning, and national states may find themselves more and more partners in regional or even world-wide common markets. If such traditional enemies as Germany and France can join together in the pursuit of mutual ends, then this road may well be traversed by others. If the United States and Russia can agree to a partial test-ban treaty,^o then surely there ex-

^o A treaty was subsequently signed, on August 5, 1963.

ists no guarantee that the violent national hatreds of today will preclude warm friendships on the morrow.

The State of Israel emerged at a time when national sovereignty, nineteenth-century style, can be a reality for at most two, perhaps three nations. What we are witnessing is the proliferation of national autonomy, not national sovereignty; for the power of the atom and the power of the purse are ultimately decisive. The continuation of Jewish existence both in the Land and in the Diaspora now more than ever before is dependent on the character of the world that is now aborning. If it comes forth economically expansive and potentially capable of solving the problems of man's continued existence, then the Jews will be free to have the identity of their choice. If on the other hand it comes forth torn, violent, and malformed, then its impress on the Jews will be indelible. It may then be that the Jews will not find forms, either in the vast repository of the past or in the creative minds of the present, to preserve them. And a world that could bring such a history to an end would be unworthy of continuation.

VII

The history of the Jews is no ordinary history, for it is not simply the history of a land and its people, of a nation and its destiny, a religion and its God. It is, to be sure, a history that has all these elements; and an historian can so order the data that one of these *aspects* can be mistaken for its *essence*. But should he wish to do justice to *all* that this history contains, should he not search for a concept that would be adequate to the complexity of the phenomena?

This paper has been a groping toward such a concept. It has posited that Jewish history is primarily, though by no means exclusively, a history of the elaboration of multiple and diverse forms from a primal form. The generative power of this primal form is to be found in its assumption

that the diversity of phenomena and the variety of experience must somehow be unified. The refusal to confine Yahweh to a single set of functions, or to a single realm of competence, necessitated an elaboration of His powers, and an extension of His functions, and a widening of His realm of competence. The end result of this process was the Pentateuch, which brought under the sovereignty of a single cosmic God not only all phenomena and experience that had already occurred, but also all that would occur. The Pentateuch thus served as the primal generative form, for the Jews subsequently assumed that all phenomena and all experience, however novel and unanticipated by the primal form, must be unified. To achieve this the primal form was not only altered and modified, but was thoroughly transmuted, as new forms were created to cope with novel situations and with changing societies, cultures, and civilizations. In attempting to bring multiplicity and diversity under a concept of unity, the original primal concept was continuously enlarged so that multiplicity, diversity, and novelty would not be denied or obliterated, but absorbed and integrated. The concept of unity implicit in the Pentateuch became explicit through the proliferation of integrated forms. Even while the Land was still the center during the Graeco-Roman period, the power of form-enlargement and form-creation was evident in Pharisaism which absorbed the Graeco-Roman world without succumbing to it, and which transmuted the primal form without abandoning it. As such, it created in the Mishnah a form hardly less generative than the Pentateuch.

The existence and expansion of the Diaspora led to the multiplication of forms. Because Jews lived simultaneously in many different societies and civilizations, they were compelled to multiply and diversify forms in their efforts to maintain their identity, i.e., their link with the primal form. Since the Jews were always a minority, these forms absorbed the surrounding worlds and impressed a Jewish identity

upon them. Through this process, identity is preserved through its alteration. The multiple, varying, and changing identities are interlinked with each other through their common link with the primal forms.

The Diaspora was thus the breeding ground of forms precisely because it precluded a single type of experience. Had the Jews remained in the Land they would have had but limited opportunities for form-creation and form-elaboration, because the Near East has never developed the peculiar dynamic qualities of the West. Indeed for many centuries the Land was stagnant because it was in an area that was stagnant. Indeed the only times after the collapse of the Roman Empire that Palestine was charged with creative energy was in the heyday of the Ottoman Empire, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and in the present epoch. And each time the energy and the creativity and the forms came from the Diaspora.

Without the Diaspora the Jews would be form-impoverished; because of the Diaspora the Jews have a treasury of forms. And it is the existence of such abundance that augurs well for the future. In the plenitude of interlinked forms and in the aptitude for form-creation is to be found the key to survival. A primal concept of unity has garnered a universe of diversity.