

one equally, and even the most complicated lawsuits were decided quickly, justly, and practically free of cost. They enjoyed a family life marked by affectionate closeness, wherein each family delighted in the next. That was the spirit that prevailed in the ghettos when all around there was only brute force, barbarism and depravity; and freedom and light were the privilege of only a select few. Yet the very fact that Israel endured in a world of darkness, guaranteed the need for Israel's Redemption to atone for the guilt of the world.

So this dark time of injustice will not last forever, because it carries within it the seeds of its destruction. Any injustice that extinguishes the light of Righteousness and Humanity anywhere in the world; that denies the privilege of Righteousness and Humanity anywhere in the world; that elevates violence and inhumanity to the status of law anywhere in the world—will bring about its own punishment.

It is the voice of God, beckoning to all that is good and decent in man, which will cause His avenging Hand to be felt in the secular and religious life of the nations—by making the nations accept responsibility for all the bad done to Israel.

This voice of God will ultimately be heard. It will make itself heard ever more clearly. It will at long last cause the nations without exception, for the sake of their own Redemption, to give the scepter into the hand of the spirit of right and humanity under the dominion of the One God. Then He will break all chains—hence also the chains of the children of the ghetto—and the earth will belong to God once more.

וכפר אדמתו עמו

And the People of God, having become free, will atone for the earth of God.

Sivan I

The Festival of Revelation and the Uniqueness of the Torah.

On the sixth and seventh of Sivan we celebrate the Festival of the Giving of the Law *ומן מתן תורתנו*. Where are the symbols of this festival? Where is the significance of Shavuoth as the Festival of Revelation mentioned in the Torah? Why is this festival of Shavuoth so short and so fleeting? Pessach has its Matzoth, the festival of Succoth its Tabernacle and its Lulab, Rosh Hashanah its Shofar, Yom Kippur its Fast. But where are the symbols of Shavuoth?

We know how clear and precise is Scripture with regard to the conception and significance of all the other festivals; but you will search the Torah in vain for a designation of Shavuoth as the festival of the Giving of the Law. To the redemption from Egypt we dedicate a festival which lasts a whole week; it takes a whole month for its preparation and completely transforms our domestic life. To the miracle of our preservation in the wilderness we dedicate another week, the whole of which we distinguish by our living in the Succah. But to the Giving of the Law, to the Revelation of the Torah, to this most holy transcendent event from which our whole existence derives its meaning and purpose, to this festival of all festivals, we devote only one brief and placid day! Why this brevity and quiet, why this lack of pomp, this paucity of symbols?

1. Uniqueness of the Torah

There is no symbol for the Torah for the same reason that there is no symbol for God: the Torah is One and Unique like God its Creator. It has nothing in common with other laws, teachings, systems and institutions. It is so unique that it can be compared only to itself, it is something *sui generis*; as soon as you describe it by names and terms taken from other spheres you falsify the essence of the Torah and bar the way to its real understanding.

It is most essential to utter this warning. We think of all other things as belonging to classes which contain many individuals resem-

bling one another. This rule of thought makes it difficult to admit the existence of an absolutely unique phenomenon which has no parallel whatever in any similar sphere. But "absolutely unique phenomenon" is the only description we can apply to the Torah.

2. Religion.

One is accustomed to call the Torah "Religion" or Jewish Religion, because the word religion describes everywhere outside Israel the relationship of man to his God or gods; this word, too, is invested everywhere else with dignity and holiness; could one then have found a holier and more impressive designation for the Torah than religion? And yet, it is exactly this term "religion" which has made it so difficult to understand the essence of the Torah. From the time when men first drew breath on earth they have had a kind of religion. The heathen who prays to his fetish, the Aborigine who moulds his God of honey-dough and paints it with human blood, the Greek who carved his god of gold and ivory and ascribed to him the invention of his arts and indulgence in his own gallantries, and finally the adherents of those two world-religions which have come into existence by combining a few ideas from the Torah with various conceptions taken from the nations of the world—all these had, and continue to have some kind of religion. Even the atheist who despises religion has, perhaps, himself retained some sort of religion; it may be that he denies only the conception which other men have of God, that he despises only the kind of religion which he finds among other people. For by religion we understand the conception which men have formed and are still forming of a Godhead and their relationship to this Godhead. The religions of mankind are, therefore, human products—creations of the mind and spirit of man; and there exists consequently a genesis, a history of the development of religion and religions, just as there exists a history of languages, arts and sciences. The religion of a people rises and falls together with the other manifestations of its culture. Religion is only part of the cultural life of a nation and is conditioned by it. The more rational and the more refined men are, the more rational and elevated will be their conception of the deity and their relationship to it.

No religion can, therefore, in its beginning, rise above the cultural level of the nation out of whose midst it arose. No religion, in its

inception, can possibly be in complete contrast to the conceptions, inclinations and outlook on life of that nation. No religion, in the ordinary meaning of this word, can easily undertake to raise and educate the nation from which it sprang, up to its own higher standards; for it (the religion) is but a plant sprung from the spiritual and intellectual soil of that nation, and must, therefore, keep pace with the nation's advancement or retrogression.

The Torah, however, did not spring from the breast of mortal man; it is the message of the God of Heaven and Earth to Man; and it was from the very beginning so high above the cultural level of the people to which it was given, that during the three thousand years of its existence there was never a time yet during which Israel was quite abreast of the Torah, when the Torah could be said to have been completely translated into practice. The Torah is rather the highest aim, the ultimate goal towards which the Jewish nation was to be guided through all its fated wanderings among the nations of the world. This imperfection of the Jewish people and its need of education is presupposed and clearly expressed in the Torah from the very beginning. There is, therefore, no stronger evidence for the Divine origin and uniqueness of the Torah than the continuous backsliding, the continuous rebellion against it on the part of the Jewish people, whose first generation perished because of this very rebellion. But the Torah has outlived all the generations of Israel and is still awaiting that coming age which "at the end of days" will be fully ripe for it. Thus, the Torah manifests from the very beginning its superhuman origin. It has no development and no history; it is rather the people of the Torah which has a history. And this history is nothing else but its continuous training and striving to rise to the unchangeable, eternal height on which the Torah is set, this Torah that has nothing in common with what is commonly called "religion." How hopelessly false is it, therefore, to call this Torah "religion," and thus drag it by this name into the circle of other phenomena in the history of human civilisation, to which it does not belong. This is a fundamentally wrong starting point, and it is small wonder that it gives rise to questions such as the following, which have no meaning so far as the Torah is concerned: "You want Judaism to remain the same for ever?" "All religions rejuvenate themselves and advance with the progress of the nations, and only the Jewish 'Religion' wants to remain rigid, always the same, and refuses to yield to the views of an enlightened age?"

These questions would have sense and meaning if the Torah were

not cultural

the "Religion of the Jews," i.e. the conception which the Jews of a certain epoch had of God and of the relationship of man to God. They are, however, meaningless and futile because the Torah is the unique eternal Message of the Unique and Eternal God of Heaven and earth; it is not based on the ideas which the Jews once upon a time *had* of God and their relations to Him, but on those which they *should* have at all times according to the will of this One and Eternal God.

3. Symbols.

One is accustomed to call the Torah "Jewish Religion;" but what is usually called religion outside Judaism relates primarily, as we have seen, to something within man, to his conception of God. And any outward observance which is connected with this inward experience is, according to the general idea of religion, only its form, and, therefore, the unessential and indifferent part of it. Indeed, as long as the thought which inspires a religion is true, its sentiment pure and noble, any form which clearly expresses that inward character is acceptable; and this form must change with the inward religious sentiment. It is here that the danger of identifying the Torah with "religion" becomes manifest. Having once applied the term "religion" to Torah, one naturally concludes that in the sphere of the Torah too, man's inward frame of mind, his thoughts, conceptions and sentiments alone are the essential things; while the outward observances are merely unimportant forms which may and should change as we ourselves do according to times and circumstances. But, in fact, the whole unique character of the Torah and every word it contains are a living protest against this whole conception.

It is simply not true that our inward frame of mind and our sentiments are the essence of the institutions of the Torah, while everything is merely external framework or mantle. What the Torah wants to regulate is not only the thoughts and sentiments of man, but the whole of human existence—man's sensual impulses, his needs and desires, his individual life as well as that of his family, society and state. The Torah is the unique message of God addressed to Man in his totality. The few sayings of the Torah which refer to our thoughts and sentiments exclusively would cover only one small page. Are we then to regard ninety-nine hundredths of its 613 precepts as a mere wrapping which can at need be dispensed with? Only one who has never attentively

looked into the Torah could fail to realise how strictly it demands the observance of its laws relating to outward actions, and especially to the physical and sensual spheres of life which are quite outside the realm of what we usually call religion. Among the many laws belonging to this category we will mention only the dietary laws and the laws regulating sexual relationship. We may be sure, that unless our modern age makes the Torah a "sealed book" for the Jew, it will never succeed in robbing the people of God of its Torah and giving them an anaemic "religion" instead.

And finally, let us take those laws of the Torah which are expressly declared to be the embodiment of a thought, and consequently a symbol (אִימָה) or, to use the modern expression, a "form," e.g. Sabbath, festivals, sacrifices, etc. The character of all these laws makes it obvious that the name "religion" does not fit them at all; for in these laws what is called "form" stands forth as something essential, original and eternal.

Religion in general relates to the thoughts of man which find their expression in symbolic actions: in any system of religion, therefore, the thought is the original, important and essential element, whilst the external, symbolical expression of it is of secondary importance. But unlike "religion" the Torah is not the thought of man, but the thought of God, expressed in Divine Laws which are to be carried out by man as symbolic actions. It is by these symbolic actions ordained in the Torah that the Divine thought is first implanted in man. This symbolic action is, therefore, of primary importance; it is the most important element in the Pentateuch. The Torah is, therefore, a Divine document the authentic form of which must be kept and preserved with scrupulous accuracy, so that man should be able to study and assimilate the Divine thoughts contained in it.

This idea has important legal consequences. Any Jew who by word of mouth expresses the opinion that the world was not created by God is not liable to punishment according to the penal code of the Torah; and, conversely, if he had merely expressed his conviction of the Divine origin of the universe by words, sermons or lyrical poems, he would not have fulfilled his duty as a Jew. Both acts as the mere utterance of views would remain in the sphere of "religion," of what the world calls "faith," as the expression of an opinion held at a particular time. But opinions change and creeds alter. The atheist of to-day may become a devout hymn-singer to-morrow. And what he imagines to

be an advanced study of natural science may create in the religious poet of yesterday the conviction that his religious hymns were nothing but childish fancy. The penal code of the Torah does not punish, therefore, the expression of opinions about religious matters. It is quite different with the symbolic language of God as expressed by the commandments of the Torah. He who celebrates Sabbath in the Divine symbolical language of abstention from work (איסור מלאכה) has proclaimed the truth that God created the world; and he has thereby expressed this truth not as a human belief, but as a revelation of the Creator to man; he has preserved a monument for himself and mankind which may help his children and grandchildren to rise to the profoundest conception of God at a time when a misguided science has blocked the way to a true knowledge of God the Creator. And again, anyone who desecrates this symbolism of the celebration of the Sabbath has thereby overthrown for himself and others the Divine monument, he has torn to pieces the Divine document which is intended to immortalise the conception of God not as "religion," not as a human credo, but as Torah, i.e., as actual revelation of God to man.

It is just these "forms" therefore which preserve the truths of the Torah as Divine revelations, as Torah, and save them from being transformed into their opposites, from being evaporated into a religion; they are not the signs by which man expresses his changing thoughts and feelings but the script in which God has set forth the truths by which the world is redeemed and established. Hence, there is nothing more right and proper than the most loyal and scrupulous preservation of these "forms" in actual practice, so that generation after generation may find in them ever fresh and deeper meaning. Nowhere, therefore, can individual caprice do more harm than in that sphere; for a neglect of the prohibition not to add to the constituents of

¹ See Hirsch's explanation of the term מלאכה in his חורב and his Commentary on the Pentateuch. There he rightly points out that the conception of מלאכה, usually and wrongly translated as "work," forbidden on the Sabbath, has nothing to do with physical exertion. See also Grunfeld, "The Sabbath," pages 12-16. The meaning of the fundamental rule מלאכה מחשבת אסור חורה (Sanh. 62) is rather this: By complete abstention from such activity on the Sabbath as the term מלאכה implies the Jew testifies that it is only by the will of God that he can be active at all, and have dominion over all the earth, and that human creativeness is derived from God, the supreme Creator of heaven and earth. Anyone who does a מלאכה on the Sabbath thereby implicitly denies by his action that God created the universe.

these "forms" (בל חוסיק) or to subtract from them (בל תגרע) would mean a mishandling of the holiest gift of God to man.²

4. Theology

We have seen how the name "religion" became fatal to the true understanding of the Torah because this name was given to it in defiance of the fact that the essence of the Torah is in complete contrast to what is usually known as religion and its manifestations. Having thus wrongly applied the term "religion" to the Torah, people subsequently drew conclusions from the application as if it were correct. A similar danger to the understanding of the true essence of the Torah arises from the application of other alien conceptions to the Torah and its institutions.

Thus one calls the Torah "Theology," "Jewish Theology." By "theology" we generally understand a system of human ideas and conceptions of the Godhead. God is the highest notion which the human intellect can conceive; and the knowledge or assumed knowledge of things Divine is so remote from the average man, and the systems of theology so complicated, that a whole class of professional theologians came into existence. Compared to these "theologians" ordinary people were and are considered as "laymen" who do not know and are not supposed to know the intricacies of theological speculations.

Nothing could be more senseless than to apply the name Theology to the Torah, than to call the Torah "Theology" or even "Jewish Theology." For, whilst "theology" contains the thoughts of man on God and things Divine, the Torah contains the thoughts of God on man and things human. There is little said in the Torah which refers directly to God and things Divine; and of the inner essence of the Godhead and the supernatural we find in the Torah nothing at all. The Torah rather tells us what God is to us, to the Universe as a whole and to every part of it; above all, what the universe, the earth, mankind, Israel and every individual Israelite mean to God the Ruler of them all.

² See Deut. 4, 2 and 13, 1 (cf. Sifri) and Talmud Sanhedrin 88, 2. "If a man said, 'there is no obligation to wear Tefillin' (phylacteries), he is not culpable; but if he said, 'there should be in them five partitions instead of four,' he is culpable."

11. Torah the Final Goal.

And thus, this still and silent day of the Torah, bare of any adornment or symbol, enters your life. Strange it is how, in all its stillness, this Day of Revelation is so impressive, in all its silence so eloquent, in spite of the absence of any symbols so full of significance; the day of "the Giving of the Law" invites you to meditate earnestly on the uniqueness of the Torah which it brought to you, and to realise the fullness of life and happiness which this Torah is able to give to you.

Alas, the flute which accompanied the march of the pilgrims to Jerusalem has long since been silenced; the figs do not ripen any more in the fields of Israel; gone is the glow of the grape; the pomegranate no longer gives its juice; real joy is not felt in our days in the land of milk and honey. Indeed the time of independence and happiness that Israel was allowed to enjoy in the land of the Torah has been short and fleeting. The eternal hills of Judea are still there, the brooks still purl and ripple, the plains of the Holy Land still unroll, the same sky still spreads its canopy over the same earth; but as long as Israel is not returning thither, Israel as Israel, as the people of God and His word, as long as the Torah is not realised there in full, you may build colonies and industrial schools, and yet the soil of that paradise will remain—a wilderness.

The Torah is the Divine seed of all human happiness that is to come, the indispensable condition of independence and progress in this world which man seeks in vain through other means. This Torah has by no means come yet into its inheritance; it has hardly had a past and in its bosom it carries the future of eternity; and yet there are those who would cast it aside as obsolete, as a thing that had been good in its time, but has been superseded and has no longer any value for our days—as if the conditions of our time, and the relationship of the nations of the world to one another had not abundantly shown where a Torah-less mankind is likely to end.

Behold, the festival of the Torah has not presented you a symbol, it has not impressed itself upon your souls with any particular celebration; but it presents itself to you under two names by which it is to be remembered. One of these names points to that supreme happiness of life which the Torah can bring to you like a blossom of Paradise; the other name carries an indignant denial of the false allegation that the Torah is obsolete and antiquated. One designation of the festival of the

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Torah is יום הבכורים, "The Day of the First-fruits." We have already dealt with the happy associations which it evokes. The other name is הג' השבועות, "The Festival of Weeks," the deep implication of which should be earnestly laid to heart. Just as the term יום הבכורים refers to the joyful period that begins with the festival of the Torah, so does the name "Weeks" indicate the time of preparation which precedes it.

Is the Torah obsolete? Has our time—or any time—already progressed beyond the Torah, has it really left the ideal of the Torah behind it and outgrown its institutions? It is to this question that the name שבועות is able to provide the answer. "Seven weeks shalt thou count." So the Torah calls to us on its own festival. "Seven times seven days must you count before you can celebrate the day of my festival, seven times seven purifications you must go through before you can make yourself worthy of my institutions." "Not only the past is mine," says the Torah, "but the whole future; I am the ideal placed on high, to which all your generations have to raise themselves; my flame burns upon the summit of the mountains, but ye stood and are still standing at the foot of the mountain, בתחתית ההר, you have never sunk lower than when you imagine you have risen above my lofty heights." •

Do you know the generation that "curses their father and does not bless their mother;" that are "pure in their own eyes and yet have not yet outgrown their childhood's impurity;" "whose eyes are so lofty and whose eyelids are lifted up?" (Proverbs 30, 11–13.) That is the generation which belittles the Torah of its God and the institutions of its forefathers, and yet would need seven times seven purifications and transformations before it could be in a condition to reach the height to which that Torah and those institutions call it.

Whenever the Torah deals with a transition from a lower to a higher standard of morality, from a primitive, raw condition to an advanced state of purity and holiness, we find that the primitive stage is always made to pass through a sevenfold cycle of time before the higher stage of moral freedom, purity and dedication begins. Thus, an animal is only considered capable of being offered as a sacrifice seven days after its mother, a child can only be initiated into the covenant of Abraham after seven days, those who have become טמא, impure can re-enter the pure precincts of the Sanctuary and pure married life only after seven days. The liberated Jewish nation, however, had to pass through a period of seven times seven days before they could dare to look to the heights on which the Torah was enthroned; and when they

had settled in the Holy Land they had to count again seven times seven days from the moment the sickle was put to the corn until the celebration of the festival of the Torah; before they were considered mature enough to receive the full content of the Torah they had to stand a test of sevenfold self-scrutiny, trial and purification.

The Torah was not meant for the generation of revelation only, so that a future generation, more advanced, might be able to outgrow it. In very clear words was it stated that the covenant of the Torah was made for the most remote generations: *אח אשר ישנו פה ואשר אינו פה*.⁹ The Torah is not the starting point of Israel's world-historic development but its constant aim and goal. In reality, the whole of Israel's history of 3,000 years is but an application on a larger scale of the sevenfold period of purification through which we pass before the Festival of Revelation; and the purpose of our history is our education and preparation for the fulfillment of the truths and ideals of the Torah.

There is no doubt that we are going through that phase. Into whatever spiritual slavery we may sink, however estranged we may have become from the holy heritage of our fathers, whatever be the attractions and allurements of the possessions which we gained through an un-Jewish way of life, so that the ear that once heard: "Thou shalt not serve other gods," showed itself willing to be nailed to the doorpost of un-Jewish spiritual slavery—the Torah will never be forgotten. There was a time in our nation's life when the Shofar of the Jubilee was sounded at the end of a period of seven times seven years, and all the chains of serfdom were broken, liberty was proclaimed throughout the land and every man returned unto his family and unto his possession. And so, in God's good time, the great Jubilee of the Torah will come, after seven times seven historical phases of purification and education. Then the fetters of our spiritual slavery will be broken, the allurements of un-Jewish ways of life will have lost their attraction, even the remotest and most estranged of our brethren will then hear the ancient call of God in the powerful sound of the shofar, and they will turn, and return to the sacred heritage of our fathers and the eternal, holy vocation of our people.

Thus Shavuoth presents the Torah not as something which we have already achieved, but as a high and everlasting aim; it calls to us *שבעה*

⁹ See Deut. 29, 13–14.

שבעה חספר לך, "Seven weeks shalt thou count,"¹⁰ cleanse and purify yourselves sevenfold for that aim, for the lofty heights of the Torah, and even if you had achieved all other aims in life, if Jewish disabilities had been abolished in the whole world, if you were equal citizens everywhere and enjoyed equal rights, if you had again your own soil and could put the sickle to your own corn on your own broad acres, even then you would not have arrived at your goal, you would only stand at the beginning of your eternal vocation; then, more than ever before, would it be necessary for you to prepare and purify yourselves for the realisation of your Torah, to elevate yourselves and to dedicate yourselves, then, just then—would you have to begin and count the purifying weeks of the Torah: *מהחל חרמש בקמה החל לספר שבעה שבועה*: "From the time thou beginnest to put the sickle to the standing corn shalt thou begin to number seven weeks." (Deuteronomy 16, 9.)

¹⁰ Deut. 16, 9.

hear the Voice of ה' our God, we will surely die. For where is there a mortal man who like us has heard the Voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire and has remained living? You, Moses, go near and hear all that ה' our God will further say to us and all that ה' our God will say to you. Then tell it to us; we will hear it and fulfill it!"

"... And God spoke to Moses face to face just as a man speaks with his friend"—וידבר ה' אל משה פנים אל פנים כאשר ידבר איש אל רעהו—"You have *seen* that I have *spoken* with you from heaven"—אתם ראייתם כי מן השמים דברתי עמכם.

This reality of וידבר raises the Torah high above everything that claims mastery over men's minds under the name of "religion." It stands as a stumbling-block before both philosophers and fools. No claim made by any "religion" can compare to it. It resists all amalgamation and fusion with anything that dream and inspiration, thought and fantasy, poetry and speculation elicit from the mortal breast.

God *spoke*. He did not first put the spark of inspiration into the breast of a mortal man who then soared above the limitations of ordinary perception to grasp something higher, more real, more pure... and then announced this to the listening multitude in the Name of God as "breathed into him by the Breath of God" although he was not free from human error and human limitation. Out of such an announcement, generations of inferior imitators would be compelled to pick out the grain from among the chaff, the true from the false, what is Divinely given from what is man-made.—But no, God *spoke!*

God *spoke*. He did not produce manifestations that would first need to be understood, riddles that would need to be solved, drawings that would have to be explained, or symbols that would have to be examined, whose comprehension and solution, whose explanation and examination would then still have admitted of doubt as to their correctness.—לא במראה ולא בחידות—God spoke, and Moses and Israel needed only to listen attentively in order to understand and transmit to posterity *that which was spoken* by God.

God *spoke*. And therefore God *continues to speak* to us directly in the book of His Torah, to us and to every one of our descendants, however distant from us in time. It is not Israel's words, or Moses' words, enclotting that which was given to them by God. "God *spoke* all of these words to your people as a whole," and thus it is His words which even today every one of us learns from His book. The Horeb-

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summit still flames for us and, together with the fathers, we still hear... the Word of God.

God *spoke*.—Every doubt as to the content and the Godliness of every single word of this Torah is thereby eliminated. *But also every possibility of that so-called improbability of the Divine Law, of that imagined necessity for progress not of men in God's Word, but rather of God's Word at the hands of man, is eradicated.*

Suppose we theorize that God did not *speak*; that Israel and Moses were more than merely loyal transmitters of *what has been spoken* by God. Suppose we say that Moses was the poetic genius, the chronicler, the brilliant legislator whose poetry, whose works of history, and whose legislative accomplishments we have before us in the Torah. And given this supposition we can even adapt ourselves to referring to the Torah as "Divine" since—after all—we are deferentially wise enough to recognize God as the ultimate source of this achievement—if only by inspiration—just as He is the source of all that brings happiness to people.

—Yes, we could suppose that the "Divine Word" that has come down to us is not the Word of God spoken by God and faithfully transmitted via Moses and Israel in a long chain of tradition, but only something bequeathed to us through Moses and Israel not as transmitters but as intermediary interpreters. But then we would have to allow room for the possibility that the content of this Word, as it has come down to us, was influenced by the capacity for understanding, the insights, the opinions, and the whole degree of development of the People and the man (Moses), through whom it was given to us.

There is no nation and no man in any age able to remove themselves entirely from the influence of their time and who could function as these intermediary interpreters, without interposing their own subjective personalities—even were they the most intellectually gifted of people. And furthermore, every upward step achieved by humans contains in it the possibility of being outdone by a later nation, and so on eternally.

There has been no nation and no man in any era who wished to think of Moses and Israel as released from this universal law of human nature. No one yet has wished to deny the fact that—were Moses indeed the originator of the Torah—there could eventually arise an era that would be entitled to smile condescendingly at Moses and his era,

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and to regard as the gropings of a child that which appeared to Moses and his era as the summit of wisdom. This new "enlightened" era would be entitled to pity as dreams of a biased time the things which the earlier generation interpreted from the signs given them by the Deity.

But consider: It was the Egyptian horde of brickbakers and, to be sure, its noblest son, but nevertheless *its* son, in whose breast—strangely enough—the spark of God was ignited. It was a "thornbush" upon which the Divine flames were kindled.—Could the light therein have shone with such purity as though in the firmament? Could the existence of the flames have been unconditioned by the earthly and lowly material that fed them? And is it not pertinent to ask about the thornbush whether this earthly element could have been wholly separate from the Divine element, the colored wrapping separate from the brilliantly shining center?

Many people place Moses at the head of the Zoroasters and Solons of mankind. They ascribe to him a nation-saving, state-founding genius as a ruler, military leader, and lawgiver. Concerning this the records of him mention nothing; concerning this the records attest just the opposite. All of these people know this very well. The higher they place this Moses, the more deeply they degrade the Torah and throw it, as *his* work, as *his* word, into a place in the ranks of all of the other human, though also Divinely guided, efforts that are generated in the course of time and are to be antiquated by the passage of time.

But it is not so. God *spoke!* "The thornbush burnt in fire, *but the fire consumed not the thornbush!*" *Moses and Israel were bearers, not nourishers, of the Godly.* God did not reveal Himself *from* Israel and *from* Moses. He *spoke* His Word *to* Moses and *to* Israel.

Israel's entire history and the entire phenomenon of Moses bear witness to the fact that they both were only the thornbush, not *out of which* a fire *Divinely* broke forth, but rather upon which God sent down the flame of his world-illuminating and world-overwhelming fire.

Concerning *Israel*, what a gulf there is between the natural faint-heartedness which trembled and sought to flee from freedom back into the former slavery, and the divinely-endowed courage, while in slavery, which of itself broke the chains. What a gulf between the people which joyfully danced around the calf at the base of Horeb, still flashing with lightning, and the Law radiating from Horeb's summit!

And *Moses*—this timid, fearful, slow-tongued person, who modestly objected "Who am I?!", who was the humblest man on earth—he certainly lacked everything needed in a national deliverer who is to inspire the people, break the chains, overthrow the tyrants, and gain the victory.—He lacked everything needed in a ruler of a nation who is to found the state, impose order, organize administration, and teach the Law! Eight days before the Sinaitic Giving of the Law, Moses' father-in-law, the priest of Midian, must teach this "Solon," who allegedly had been initiated into the profundities of Egyptian governmental wisdom, the basic principles of governmental organization!

But the smaller the degree to which Moses resembled Solon, the more certain it was that he would become no Alexander and no Solon. The purer he was, the more uniquely capable he was of becoming the loyal instrument of the Divine Will. Precisely because he had no political skill or self-interest, he could become the faithful vessel of the Divine Word, God's purest and most devoted messenger and presenter of His Law which educates and redeems Israel and humanity. He was a man who harbored no conceit and nourished within himself no ambition to add even one minor human feature of his own to the Word of God, which he was called upon to transmit. ולא קם נביא עוד בישראל כמשה אשר ידעו ה' פנים אל פנים לכל האמת והמופתים אשר שלחו ה' לעשות בארץ מצרים לפרעה ולכל עבדיו ולכל ארצו, ולכל היד החזקה ולכל המורא הגדול אשר עשה משה לעיני ישראל. There will never again arise a prophet in Israel like Moses, *to whom God drew near Face to face*, for all of the signs and wonders that God sent him to perform in Egypt against Pharaoh, against all of his servants, and against his whole land, and for all of the overwhelming Omnipotence and all of the terrifying grandeur which Moses wrought before the eyes of all Israel.

God *spoke*—וידבר אלקים! It was *God* who did the speaking! Do you wish to refuse compliance with *His Word*? Do you lack the desire to let your full blissfulness consist of hearing His Word and fulfilling His Word? Do you venture the transgression of a law spoken by *God*? Do you wish to risk battle with *Him* Whose Almighty fills the heavens and the earth, Whose Almighty rules above the heaven and the earth; to Whom you belong with every drop of blood in your heart and with every breath of your life?

וידבר אלקים, it was *God* Who spoke, and do you wish now to take

And let us not be deterred by the fear of being left out if we hold fast to this Law and educate our children above all in the ways of this Law and for the ways of this Law! Let the whole world ridicule you for being so simpleminded as to walk in the ancient ways of Sinai. Let them scorn you because you are still so blind that you do not see how much easier and how much more unrestrained is the traveling upon broad boulevards of recklessness and of deviousness in turning a profit. Let them laugh at you because you are so blind that you do not see how many avenues to advancement, to wealth and pleasure, to honors and high standing you close to your children by educating them for the sake of this Law from the desert of Sinai. Let the whole world mock at you because you are still blind enough to spurn the modern wisdom that edits this Law to suit the weakness of character and the passionate exuberance of a lost generation. Let them scoff at you for not subscribing to the educational philosophy of withholding from children all teachings of their God, so that their conscience will not trouble them and they will not become aware of the precipice, near to which they wander. These "enlightened" ones make sure not to burden their children with knowledge of God, so that the children will without scruples, without trepidation, and without hesitation follow the footsteps which the irresponsibility of their fathers has marked out for them.

—Let the laughers laugh. Let the scoffers scoff. Let the "intelligent" exult. You hear *ידבר אלקים* proceeding from Sinai on the Festival of Horeb. It is *God* Who spoke the Law to which you adhere and for which you educate your child. And it is better to be laughed at by the whole world your whole life long than to bear guilt for one instant before your Father in Heaven *מוטב שוטח כל ימיו ולא שעה אחת רשע בפני אביו שבשמים*.—It is better to entrust yourself and your child to the guidance of your God than to commit yourself and him to everyday sagacity of those thought of as "intelligent," whose sagacity in reality is blinded by the attractions of profit and pleasure.—For have they more peace, are they more fortunate, are they happier in their life, are they more secure in their future—for all that they abandon God and His Torah?

Has the cleverness of the fox suddenly become wisdom and the wisdom of Rabbi Akiba become foolishness? The records of past eras relate that—

"fanatical tyranny once forbade the Jews to occupy themselves with the study of the Torah. But Rabbi Akiba did not obey the prohibition. Papus found him with large groups of listeners gathered around him and publicly teaching Torah. Are you not afraid of the authorities, Akiba? Papus asked him.

I will tell you a story, answered Rabbi Akiba. Once a fox was walking by the river bank and saw the fish anxiously congregating from every direction. From whom are you fleeing? asked the fox. From the nets that men are putting into the water to capture us with, they answered. Come up here on the dry land, responded the fox, and we will live together merrily in the same way that your fathers and my fathers lived together. You are supposed to be the cleverest of all animals, the fish answered. But you are not the cleverest, you are the most foolish. If there is reason for us to be afraid within our natural element, how much more reason is there for us to be afraid when we forsake our natural element! So it is with us. Now, if we are in such danger when we occupy ourselves with the study of Torah, concerning which it is said: it is your life and the length of your days, how very much greater would the danger be if we laid it aside!

It was not long before Rabbi Akiba was seized and thrown in prison. But Papus also was seized and brought to Rabbi Akiba. What brought you here, Papus?, Rabbi Akiba asked him. Hail to you, Rabbi Akiba, he responded. You have been seized for the sake of the Torah! Woe to Papus, he has been seized because of trivialities!

As Rabbi Akiba was being led out to execution, it was then precisely the time to read the Shema. With iron implements of torture they tore his flesh from him. But he calmly paid homage to the dominion of God with the words of Shema. Even now, master? his followers asked him. My whole life, answered Rabbi Akiba, I grieved over the verse of Shema which reads: 'With your whole soul, even when He takes away your soul.' I thought: how long must it be before I find the opportunity to fulfill this verse. And now that I have the opportunity, should I leave it unfulfilled? He then recited

ories of intellect and power. The world prostrated itself at the feet of these all-conquering civilizations and basked with envious, blandishing homage in the radiance of their splendor and culture.

All the while, in little Judea, a core of men within the nation lived their own lives, wound the laurels of homage in honor of completely different values. These men found the paths of their Calling within the orbit of a completely different sun. And they built foundations of a completely different structure in anticipation of a world-conquering future. The Law was their value system, the Law was their sun. It was the Law for which they built the future of their nation and the future of mankind.

In vain did Persia unfold the impressive solemnity of its pomp. In vain did Greece develop the brilliance of its science and the gracefulness of its art which pleased the spirit and heart. In vain did Rome display the world-conquering genius of its statecraft. The Light of the Law that shone upon Jewish men allowed them to recognize a lie under any wrapping—no matter how gleaming. It armed them against all temptations of Greek and Roman philosophy which appealed to the senses; and against all enticement offered by Greek and Roman practical wisdom which favored self-interest.

And when for the second time the temple, priesthood, state, and kingdom of Judea sealed their own downfall through the apostasy from God's Law—to fall prey to the Roman sword—the core of the Jewish people emerged from the debris and ruins of an unprecedented destruction. They carried with them the lamp of the Godly Law, triumphantly confident, toward an unparalleled period of wandering through the nations of the world.

What is this Law?

It is the *wine* of our old age. It renders the physical winter of our life the spiritual summer of our existence. The storms of youth are transfigured, the struggles of manhood resolved. It has not caused the youth to strive in vain, nor the man to struggle in vain on his paths. Dedication to the Law has deprived neither the youth nor the man of anything worth having.

Everything noble and true that they achieved and for which they struggled, has now become the unfailing spiritual harvest of the old man. The laurel of the richest achievement of life adorns his temples. He has nothing more to become. He has become. He is. And now he stands, a monument to the power of the Divine Law.

This Law shapes men, moving within the circle of the living in order to spread the rich seed of its fruits. In its journey it attracts those who are receptive, inspiring them to join together in dutiful fulfillment of the Divine Word. And this is the result—

The old man's body has aged. But his spirit and his heart are fresh and warm as in youth, lucid and strong as in manhood. The innocence of childhood still lives in his heart. The fire of youth still burns in his breast. The light of manhood still shines in his eyes.—Yet, all of it is more mature, more thoughtful, more complete, more self-secure; all of it more developed.—

For the Divine Law is the wine in which the milk of childhood, the fire of youth, and the truth of manhood flow to the old man in ever newer, richer freshness until the time comes for his God to guide him, ripe for a new future, onto a still higher, richer path of life.

This Law was—and is—the *wine* of our nation's old age, of its maturity. As Judea's state and temple collapsed under the tread of the Roman legions, the Roman world itself—its own states and temples included—was already putrid internally and decomposing rapidly. There then came a long succession of centuries, in which aging, dying, decomposition, disintegration, separating into atoms, and fitting together into new forms in raw and barbaric beginnings constituted the history of the nations of mankind on earth.

There was only *one* nation that had already surmounted death, that had already *become* and did not have to become any further. This nation was not affected by this decomposition process, by this journey through death to a belated new life. It remained the only living nation amid the corpses of all the other nations. This nation was Israel, our nation.

In Israel's subjugation, Rome's emperors celebrated the last historical triumph of the Roman eagle. But by that time, Israel had become what was necessary for its triumphant historical journey through the lands and through the ages.

There was now no longer any Jewish state or Jewish temple, but individuals and households had been lastingly won to the Divine Law—which they preserved tenaciously as their only safeguard. In this Law they possessed what Rome, with all its imperial splendour and might, could never possess. The hollowness of the Roman achievement was revealed in the wretchedness of its homes, the barbarousness of its leaders, the oppression of its lower classes. But in the Jewish home, all delusions lay behind.

Israel had but one desire: to live a complete human existence on the

"Sanctification"—complete self-sacrifice for the sake of an ideal, complete devotion to one Calling, dedication of one's entire being to the One, Unique One. That is truly קידוש, sanctification. In contrast is: הגבלה, restraint, holding at a distance, סן ייהרסו אל ה'.—The one calls us to become fully absorbed in God, the other restrains us and points with the utmost earnestness to the barriers that still separate us from God and the Godly!

Let us imagine that the Sinaitic Revelation were what people would so eagerly like to make it: "a Revelation of hitherto unknown truths," "a Revelation of Divine truths of salvation." Suppose that this Revelation dealt exclusively, or even only for the most part, with the sphere of "faith and knowledge." Suppose further that the disclosure that there is one God and only one God in heaven and on earth were not merely the beginning of the Teaching that was revealed at Sinai, but rather the totality of it.

If all of this were the case, it would be incomprehensible why all of these preliminaries that were inculcated into the people during the Three Days of Restraint were so important. The truisms which Sinai preaches would then be so simple and so obvious to the human heart that indeed it would require only a child's gaze and a child's heart in order to grasp this Truth in its fullest clarity and deepest meaning.

Labeled "religion," the Sinaitic Revelation is often thrown in among many other faiths which human beings, with their need for God, construct for themselves. How much anxious preparation—certainly not three days' worth!—would it have required in order to open the hearts of the people to a Teaching whose whole purpose was simply to instill in them "comfort during life and hope at the time of death"—the same function as performed by the other "religions"?

No! The day of Divine Revelation at Sinai summons us to the Mountain of God, flaming with the fire of God's Glory, for the purpose of bringing us—not belief, not religion, but *Law!*

It is a Law whose requirements are not satisfied by means of thoughtlessly recited confessions of faith. The requirements of this Law are not fulfilled by means of sighs of self-tormenting melancholy, nor through a fleeting effusion of heavenly sentiment. It is a Law that demands deeds above all, both inward and outward ones. It demands unceasing internal labor to refine one's own spirit and character in order to transform the inner self into an ever more powerful workshop of Truth and a never-declining seed-bed of morality.

At the same time, it demands unceasing external labor to develop

human society into a kingdom of God in which justice, morality, duty, and love shape and govern all relationships. Together, these two efforts at perfection—the inner and the outer—will bring to realization the Divine Will on earth in individual, family, and national life, through free human activity.

It is a Law that thus does not call primarily for the temple, but rather for the human body, the human soul, the human heart, the human household, and the human society to be the source of its effectiveness. It enlists for that purpose nothing less than one's entire life.

It is a Law that thus demands the most difficult sacrifice from man: the joyful submission of his entire being to a higher Will. In making this demand, this Law is calling for nothing other than התקדשות, total dedication and devotion, or literally: "to be prepared, ready." Thus the expression: לך אל העם וקדשתם היום ומחר, "go to the people and sanctify them." This means: prepare the people today and tomorrow, to be ready for the call of God.

And how much the whole character of the Law expresses itself already in these preparatory tasks: ויכבסו — אל תגשו אל אשה — וקדשתם שמלתם!

The internal activity of sanctification and preparation for one's entire being is to be accomplished by working on one's inner life, with one's inner faculties: קידוש. It is to be embodied through symbolic external action: כביסו. It is to be immediately activated through the sacrifice-requiring, *morally free control* over sensuality: פרישות. Observe in this first group of preparatory tasks the basic features of תורה, עזרה, and חוקים that are so characteristic of this Law!

This Law respects no philosophy that is so inner-directed, so absorbed with thoughts and feelings, so afraid of exposure to a real-life setting, that it fails to generate an embodying system of rules by which men can live together in public. Such a philosophy is too weak to endure the light of day. Likewise, this Law recognizes no externally imposed system of legality which fails to take into account man's internal moral development.

All thoughts and attitudes are to become externalized, are to have consequences in the external world of men, while all external actions will serve to transform the inner self and are based on a profound understanding of this inner self. That is the standard by which life is constructed on the soil of this Law!

Does not this concept form the foundation of the ten Divine

tion of your acknowledgment of Him through the most devoted, sacrificial actions and deeds.

—In the same way the "civic" tablet begins with *לא תרצח, לא תנאף* you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. However, it was by no means the intention to secure a civic well-being via these laws without also implanting the inclination to legality in the innermost thoughts of men.

The "civic" tablet requires the most difficult thing from a human heart: you shall not *covet* your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his bull, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's—*לא תחמד*—And you think, in all seriousness, that you can build a civic well-being and secure it through the merely external process of legislation? Is this even remotely possible without the transformation towards lawful-mindedness of the inner person, which is, however, possible only if one accepts first the concept of a living God!

You can place a jail at every street corner and a policeman in front of every house and official warning posters in every room. You can draw the attention of your youths to the logical connection between respect for civic duty and civic honor on the one hand and their own self-interest on the other, starting in earliest childhood. You can teach and encourage in them the idea that they can gain their own fortune only by sparing and fostering yours, and by working for the welfare of the whole community. You can make the principle, "do not do unto others, etc."—so long misunderstood and abused—the basic rule and measure governing their future actions as men. You can assume that you have won everything if you have but taught and accustomed your citizens to be well-behaved out of no other reason but self-interest.

However, you have done nothing. Crime lurks in all corners and derides your laws and your power, your bailiffs and prisons, and above all your clever moral reasoning.

Your households and cities and states are ruined if you are not able to win hearts. All your institutions are doomed if you are not able to implant in the hearts of your people contentment with one's own good fortune, unenvious joy over another person's good fortune, and respect for the life, marriage, property, happiness, and honor of others. All is ruined if you are not able to banish sensualism, the desire for forbidden goods and forbidden pleasures from the hearts of your people, thereby uprooting all crime. *יחפשו עולת חמנו חפס מחפס וקרב*

איש ולב עמוק "Let them investigate our crimes, but we have long since glossed things over when the inquiry begins, for within is the man and the heart is deep!" (Ps. 64, 7)

This is the reason for the sneer of the criminal that mocks at every preconceived notion of social bliss contained in your wisdom. Yes, indeed! "Within is the man and the heart is deep!" And you wish to reach this inner recess and this deep heart with the long arm of your authority?

There is only One Who can be the Lawgiver of mankind. Only He can say to His citizens not only "you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness," but also "you shall not covet!" This only He can say, the One, Unique One from Mount Sinai, *כי*! It is He, because it is before Him and Him alone that we stand not only with our words and deeds, but also with the faintest stirrings in our heart and the most imperceptible thoughts in our soul. He can understand our inner self in its deepest roots!

It is He who, precisely because He is the God of Sinai, does not wish merely to be worshipped and sung to and offered incense in temples and sanctuaries. He does not wish to be known as having come *to* Sinai, but rather as having come *מסיני*, from Sinai. He wishes to be known as having come to us, as having entered into the totality of earthly sphere with all of its physical, sensual, mundane, transitory yearning and striving.

God desires that we should recognize Him as having come to us, for our sake, among us, to be in us, to wed Himself, His holy Will, His holy Law with our journeyings upon His earth.—*מימינו אשדח למו*—His holy Law is to take possession of our heart like the *אש שחורה*, the invisible flame of life. It is to permeate, purify, transform, enlighten, and vitalize our entire existence in all of its aspects.

He is the One, the sole Lawgiver of all mankind, most of all because only He Himself, the contemplation of Him, and the consciousness of Him are capable of giving us the strength and ability to fulfill the most difficult requirement. Despite the great difficulty, however, of this requirement—*לא תחמד*—"you shall not covet!"—the free and joyful fulfillment of it is the sole condition for all social well-being.

Only He, only the contemplation of Him, only the consciousness of Him is capable of making every one of us wealthy, joyful, contented, and happy no matter what measure of goods and pleasures we actually possess. Only He, the contemplation of Him, and the consciousness of Him can cause us to recognize in every human wanderer upon the road

of life, a brother rather than a rival. Only these three factors can cause us to respect this fellow sojourner on our road, to love him, and thereby to transform the condition of all humanity from a state of hostility and rivalry into one of a united, brotherly family.

Only he to whom **אנכי** is a reality is capable of making **לא אחמד** a reality.

Only such a one will be able to ascend into the higher levels of human functioning. Only such a one will desire nothing for himself. Only he will accustom himself to appreciate everything that he acquires or that is denied to him, not from his individual point of view, but rather as part of the exalted Godly plan for His Kingdom.

Only he to whom **אנכי** is a reality and who submits to **ה' אלקיו** as both child and servant, will not consider the worth and significance of his personality and his life to be dependent upon the amount of his possessions. He will not consider his inner peace to be dependent upon the satisfaction of his desire for pleasure.

With regard to **ה' אלקיו**, the **אנכי** says to him that joy or pain do not arise from being granted or denied what one desires. Rather, they flourish from the consciousness of having either fulfilled one's obligation or neglected one's opportunity to do so. For one to whom **אנכי** is a reality, life becomes a mission, a continuous service of God. In both of them he sees only one happiness, one joy: the happiness and the joy of pleasing his Lord and Master. As a servant of **ה' אלקיו**, he recognizes that every good thing that life bestows upon his fellow-man becomes his fellow-man's possession by Divine right. Every joy in the life of his neighbor becomes a Divine blessing which he regards with respect and with an unenvying attitude that is a glorification of God.

As a servant of **ה' אלקיו**, he recognizes every mortal fellow-pilgrim as **רעהו**, a fellow-creature led and cared for by the One, universal Shepherd upon the pasture of His protection. As a servant of **ה' אלקיו**, he abjures not only every unkind deed, but also every unkind word. As a servant of **ה' אלקיו**, he stifles every unkind thought or feeling as soon as it arises. Thus, **לא לחמד** completes the circle that links even the various forms of civic legislation to the first segment of the Divine thought, to **אנכי**.—

This Revelation at Sinai, in its most basic features, immediately announces itself not as teaching, but rather as Law. It is a Law, moreover, that seeks to permeate the entire man and transform him inwardly and outwardly. It seeks to cause everything inward to be brought to life in outward deed, everything outward to be rooted in the deepest foundation of inwardness.

Therefore, we will be surprised that such a Revelation now requires as its first pre-condition, **קידוש**, sanctification, the preparing aright of one's entire nature. For the sake of this preparatory sanctification itself, it immediately commands also the physical manifestation of **כיבוש**, and of deeds of abstinence and self-control, termed **פרישה**.

We will further be surprised that a special emphasis is placed on the fact that **ה' יתקדשו אל ה' הכהנים הנגשים**. This indicates that the priests in particular—before they contemplate sanctifying the people—should look to their own self-sanctification and must work at their own self-sanctification. For only in preparing themselves, first of all, for the Godly Law can they walk before the people and lead the people toward the height toward which they themselves are striving in ceaseless self-preparation.

However, with greater, more anxious anticipation we see **הגבלה**, the delimitation, the keeping at a distance: **כל הנוגע בהר מות יומת — והגבלת את העם — לך רד והכהנים והעם אל יהרסו לעלה — רד העד בעם פן יהרסו אל ה'.**—What a significant momentous warning, rich in consequence, must this **הגבלה** contain! How eloquently and significantly it speaks to us even today—if we let it—from out of the whole perspective of the events of that time.

In the **התקדשות**, in the devotion itself lies the danger which is to be met with the **הגבלה**.—

Do you doubt that the danger lies in the **התקדשות**? Then we must lay hold of ourselves in our heart and delve into our feelings at moments of religious awe! Then we can understand what gripped our fathers as they stood at Sinai.

A holy and sanctifying feeling takes hold of us. We feel ourselves elevated, closer to God, better. Because we feel that we are nearer, we believe that we are already near. Because we feel that we are better, we believe that we are already good.

We forget that by all of this we stand only at the beginning, at the preparatory beginning. We forget that this better feeling is only our guarantee that we can become better, that we can become good. It is only our guarantee that in our heart not everything has faded away as yet, and that the sacrifice of our whole physical and sensual nature to the mastery of God is possible!

We forget that the holy, sanctifying feeling that elevates us toward God is only a guarantee for us that the Divine fire that burns and blazes before us upon the high mountain peak can rely upon one kindred spark in our own heart. If only this spark were liberated from its encumbrances, it would fly up from within us with eternal yearning

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for God. However, it has never yet attained that goal. It can never attain its goal as long as it has not gained the awakening, illuminating, purifying, strengthening, vitalizing, shaping, guiding rulership and mastery over our entire nature.

We forget that, rather than flying away, this spark in us must first complete its work, the work of an entire lifetime. It must first transform us into bearers of the Divine Glory, serving God with all our might. This transformation must take place in our world, behind our earthly barrier, amid all of the places inhabited by us on earth. For God did not come to Sinai in order to remove us from our earthly constraints.—“Go down to the people. Sanctify them and restrict them. Sanctify them behind their barrier. They are not to come to me. I will come to them.” I will teach them how to live so that their entire earthly journey might become one that is holy to Me. I will teach them to live so that I might come to them from Sinai, so that “I might journey among them,” so that “I might live with them!”—ה' בם סיני בקדש.—

But let us consider the seriousness, the punishing, rejecting seriousness.—מרת ימות— which removes us, together with every animal in our herds, to a place behind the barrier that holds us at a distance—אם בזהמה אם איש לא יחיה. This causes us to say to ourselves: it must be that this whole Giving of the Law rests primarily upon the awareness of the gulf that separates the receiver of the Law from the Giver of the Law. It must be that the danger of misjudgment of this barrier is very great. The temptation to misjudge it must be very alluring and the danger must be so potent that it even proves ruinous for the entire Work of this Revelation. Else why the barriers?

There has yet hardly been an era, since the time when we stood around the flaming peak of Sinai, in which the danger of this misjudgment and the underestimation of this danger were so clearly demonstrated before our eyes as in our own days.

Truly we have ventured beyond the barrier nearly to the farthest extent. We have almost completely identified ourselves and the Godly within us, with God above us. We have almost wholly identified the receivers of the Law with the Giver of the Law. We are clearly already near this point. In the meantime, we dare to hint, teach, and preach—quietly and unobtrusively—that the Giver of the Law and the receivers were one. That the Word did not come to man, but rather it was born out of man.

We are very close to preaching that the Divine Word was nothing but the expression of the inherent Godly quality within man. That

therefore the Godly Law also—which after all is basically nothing but a mere human law—is like everything human: it cannot escape the influence of the times; it has a history and it evolves like everything else that man produces. That therefore every single era and every single person in every era must first bring this Law before the tribunal of their critical judgment. Every receiver of the Law must first establish himself legislatively as giver of the Law.

While our “childish” forefathers imagined themselves to have progressed to the level of angels with their נעשה ונשמע, their advanced descendants hold aloft the slogan, נשמע ונעשה!—and see in it the proud achievement of their endless progress and their never-ending advancement.—

“go down, warn the people!”—ה' רד העד בעם “set a barrier before the people” and hold them behind the barrier with a warning—פן יהרסו. Let them not break down the barrier. Let them remain conscious and eternally mindful that God stood in the distant heights and that He stood personally in front of them. That מן השמים, that the Word of His Law came to them from Heaven, not from men, so that they might inviolably uphold it as God's Word and as God's Law throughout all ages. So that they might increasingly prepare for it a home in their midst in loyal fulfillment, but never raise themselves above it in audacity and lunacy—פן יפרץ בהם ה'.

The sun is shining. Summer rejoices in all the meadows. When will our sun shine? When will our summer come into being? Our summer will come when the fire of Sinai becomes our sun.

The planets draw close to the sun and move away from it—קידוש and הגבלה—in the course of their eternal orbits. In the same way, there takes place in us קידוש and הגבלה, the eternally near and the eternally distant: the orbit of life. Under the rays of this sun, the sun of Sinai, our strength buds and all of our blossoms mature.—

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