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HEALTH AND HOLINESS

In Judaism, the proper slaughter of animals is a religious rite, and the slaughterer himself a religious functionary. Circumcision, too, is a rite and its performer must be a devout and observant Jew, not just a competent surgeon. To certify to the "kosher" character of foods remains a significant function of Orthodox rabbis and a frequent stimulus to their polemics. Facilities for ritual immersion continue to clamor for recognition by zoning authorities as religious establishments.

Can all of this be made intelligible to non-Jews and even to Jews who conceive of religion as involving only metaphysical principles and ethical commitments?

It is with regard to these and other of Judaism's countless prescriptions on food, sex, personal attire, and personal appearance, that the Law's opponents have been most vociferous. In these areas also has the rejection of the Law been most common. For moderns often assume that hygienic considerations prompted God to ordain many of the commandments found in the Bible. Thus it is argued that the consumption of pork or horseflesh may induce trichinosis, and the eating of dairy and meat products during the same meal may make the fat imbibed excessive. Cohabitation during a woman's menstrual period may increase the likelihood of cancer, while circumcision reduces the incidence of this disease. However, with the progress of science and medicine, when other means are found to avoid the mentioned evils, these religious rules are regarded as obsolescent.

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Despite the popularity of this opinion, no one has ever undertaken a truly scientific analysis of the effects of any of the biblical ordinances on personal health. Certainly no one has identified what diseases may result from eating the scores of mammals, fish, and fowl, of which the Bible disapproves, while at the same time demonstrating that the animals which one is permitted to eat induce no such infection. At least this much proof is necessary to sustain any hypothesis based on hygiene. Some time ago one well known chemist, who was also a devout and observant Jew, did propose the establishment of a laboratory for just such a purpose. However, the overwhelming majority of Orthodox Jews did not concur, despite the suggestion of Maimonides and others that the commandments are related to our physical well-being. They did not feel that the results sought were relevant, for they were not prepared to reject or modify the Law because of any such findings. Indeed, there are rules which the rabbis promulgated specifically as measures to safeguard health, such as the prohibition to drink water that had been exposed.¹ But these are not related to the Levitical commandments which have religious, and not hygienic, significance. Non-observant Jews, on the other hand, are content with their assumption that in an age of sugar-curing and artificial refrigeration one can eat almost anything without fear of infection.

However, a teleological approach to the Law, with due regard for its own methodology, can yield a harvest of insights that enrich Jewish experience. For the Bible itself suggested religious reasons which the Oral Law developed and these reasons have lost none of their original validity, relevance, or urgency. Even if personal health may be the immediate desideratum, it is the spiritual component of health that is the Law's ultimate concern. And if our forbears linked the commandments with our well-being, it was usually the well-being of our psyches that they had uppermost in mind. Can this be made cogent for moderns?

II

The Law's major contribution to the spiritual well-being of its adherents was to add to the *dignity* and *sanctity* of human personality through prescriptions involving ingestion and procreation.

1. Mishnah *Terumot* 8:4.

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Man is an animal and as such has appetites which must be satisfied. Judaism never regarded the natural instincts as evil. Even sex was not evil. The so-called "Fall of Man" is not an authentic Jewish idea. If God had wanted the complete repression of appetites He would have created man differently. What God asks of man is rather that the satisfaction of his natural desires shall be achieved on a higher plane — a reflection of the divine soul which man has. We do not eat as cavemen. The preparation and the serving of food must appeal to our eye as well as to our stomach. Aesthetic considerations play an enormous role — the floral settings, the dishes, the table ornamentation. In sexual intercourse, too, our erotic tastes and deportment are more refined — we hope — than those of beasts. What the Law sought to achieve was to add considerations of holiness to the aesthetic. Satisfy the appetite, but do it in accordance with the divine will. The gratification of the instinct is thus transformed from an animal-like performance to one charged with dignity and sanctity. To the value of the beautiful we add the value of the holy. Eat and sleep and clothe yourself — even shave and build your home — as God willed that you do so. Be aware of God even as you fulfill your basic needs and requirements. In that way you will transform acts that are presumably without spiritual value into acts that are religious in character — acts that link you with the Infinite. In that way, too, you will avoid the feelings of guilt and even disgust with yourself that frequently accompany the satisfaction of appetites.

The Talmud makes this point clear in a beautiful text discussing the purpose of Torah — and the Torah is the Law. The Torah is compared to a drug; not an opiate of the masses, as Karl Marx thought, but quite the contrary, a life-giving drug. "Twere as if 'a man had severely wounded his son and placed a poultice upon the wound, saying, 'My son, so long as this poultice is on your wound, you can eat and drink and bathe as you please, and you need not fear. If you remove it, however, the wound will become ulcerous.' Thus spoke God unto Israel, 'My son, I have created Satan but I have also created Torah. Study and observe the Torah and you will not only be saved from Satan; you will become his master.'"²

Apparently, God had handicapped man by endowing man with instincts that could lead to evil. However, God gave us Torah. So

2. *Kiddushin* 30b.

long as one lives within the Law one can eat and drink and cohabit — one can satisfy one's basic impulses — but their satisfaction will not be the fulfillment of man's animality as a result of which he may even forfeit his self-esteem, but rather the dignification and sanctification of those self-same drives which would otherwise be regarded as the hallmarks of his depravity.

III

One may ask *how* divine prescriptions add the dimension of holiness to human performance. The answer is suggested by Judaism's theology. As Martin Buber observed, for Israel to be a holy nation it must imitate God Who at one and the same time is immanent and transcendent — a part of the world and yet beyond it. Holiness, according to Judaism, implies a capacity to be a part of nature, and yet capable of transcending it. Judaism never advocated asceticism or isolation. It is a social religion, and personal happiness — physical as well as spiritual — is to be derived from and with one's fellow-man. This God Himself ordained. Yet in every situation the Jew must be capable of God's immanence and transcendence. He must be of this world, and yet able to transcend it. The Jewish people itself is a segment of total humanity, and yet must retain its character as a whole apart from the group. Similarly individual Jews are to enjoy the pleasures of the body, but yet not be their slave. It is in this way that the disciplines of Judaism make for holiness, and *imitatio dei*. Holiness is thus to be attained in the wilful control of one's own immanence and transcendence vis-a-vis Nature.

Perhaps it would have been enough for the Law to impose disciplines to make the Jews a disciplined people. No one will deny the value of self-control, and an observant Jew does in fact learn how to master his natural appetites. Especially for Jews is it essential that there be an elaborate pattern of prohibitions. They had been singled out by God for a special mission — they were to be a blessing unto all the inhabitants of the earth as the standard bearers of the truths embodied in the Torah. The assignment was not an easy one, as history well demonstrated. So unique and dedicated an army required much regulation to deepen its capacity for self-sacrifice. This the Law might have sought to achieve by prescribing the manner in which Jews satisfied their basic needs and impulses. But self-

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discipline is not enough, if the discipline is self-centered. The discipline of Judaism had to be God-directed — a responsiveness to His will and an imitation of Him.

It may be difficult to prove that the Law fulfilled this end in fact. Yet, it is a fact that the prohibitions did make Jews aware of their Jewishness — of their separateness from other peoples and their kinship with each other. The prohibitions insulated the Jewish people and prevented their assimilation, even though there was no period of Jewish history when Jews were without frequent and intensive contact with other peoples.

This is no less true today than it was centuries ago. Children reared in homes where the so-called ceremonial laws were observed were far more conscious of their Jewish identity than children whose Jewish indoctrination depended exclusively upon their study of Jewish history, ethics, or theology. Reformers learned this lesson — though late. They are now urging the reintroduction of more and more rituals into the home for the preservation of the Jewish people. For children cannot grasp the abstractions of Judaism. Yet they are impressed by tangible observances — special foods, candles, palm-branches, citrons. The Law advanced this view millenia ago. Let the child be aware of his group affiliation from the very moment that he can identify the food that he eats.

Yet neither the personal goal of self-control nor the social goal of group-solidarity are the principal reasons for the prohibitions that circumscribe the natural appetites of the Jew. The philosophical end is the only one which the Bible mentions, and that end is holiness — life in nature but yet transcending it as God had directed.

Occasionally a rabbi would become so addicted to asceticism that he would advocate fasting and celibacy, with sex serving no purpose other than child-bearing. However, the more authentic rabbinic view was that God must be served by the very fulfillment of natural instincts whose enjoyment was God-ordained. But the Law reared ramparts around the gratification of the impulse so that man may be its master rather than its slave. And this was holiness — to be capable of immanence and transcendence with respect to desire itself.

Dr. Aron Barth also suggests that the Law sought to convert every natural impulse into an act of rational choice. The pause that the Jew must make before he yields to an impulse in order to ask whether

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that which he is about to do is, or is not, permitted, converts action that is otherwise impulsive into action that is rational — action that involves selection, deliberate choice.³ This, in and of itself, is an ennobling influence in man's spiritual growth.

IV

In still another way, the Law sought to safeguard the dignity and sanctity of human personality. The Law did this in consonance with its own method which not only prohibits objectionable behavior and punishes those who permit its evils to come to pass, but also takes measures to make the very incidence of the evils impossible. A few illustrations may be helpful. The Written Law, for example, enjoined covetousness. But how does one prevent its incidence? The Oral Law induced a fear of the "evil eye"⁴ in those who were wont to boast of their possessions and thereby caused others to be jealous. The Law thus inhibited those who might be inclined to ostentation. And as men refrained from boasting and showing off their worldly goods, the incidence of jealous feelings in others was reduced. Similarly, the Law did not simply order husbands not to abandon their wives and punish them when they so sinned. Long before the abandonment — at the very moment when the marriage was consummated — it vested the wife with rights which would deter husbands from abandoning them. Furthermore, the Law often achieved its goal not by preaching or exhortation but by rules which paved the way to the end desired. Thus, the Law did not just urge the sharing of the flesh of one's animal offerings in the temple with the poor. It prohibited the eating of that flesh after a day or two no matter how well preserved, and in that way gave the donor of the animal offering no choice but to share what was his with others less fortunate for the only other alternative was to let the food go to waste altogether.

Now, there is no greater threat to human personality than homicide and the Law feared that its incidence would increase because of man's carnivorous habits. It appears from a chapter of Genesis that God had hoped that man would be herbivorous. Only after the flood, in Noah's day, was permission granted unto man to eat

3. Aron Barth, *Dorenu Mul She'elot ha-Netzach*, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: Religious section of the Zionist organization, 1959), pp. 21, 49.

4. *B. Metziah* 107a, b.

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the flesh of animals.⁵ This, however, might cause man to esteem life lightly. Therefore, the command against murder, and also suicide, was promulgated simultaneously.⁶ Sharing the fears of ethical vegetarians, the Bible suggested that the shedding of the blood of an animal even for the purpose of food might make man callous to the shedding of the blood of fellow humans. The Bible, therefore, did more than prohibit murder. It sought to induce an aversion for blood. The Law's maxim was that the blood was life. Consequently, the drinking of blood was prohibited. Moreover, the horrifying practice of barbarians to cut steaks out of the live animal for food was also enjoined.⁷ These were minimal prohibitions incumbent on all humanity. For Israel, however, there were additional prescriptions. Jews were not to eat meat unless the animal was so slaughtered that the death of the animal was immediate and at the same time the maximum amount of blood was removed from the body and tissues. Even after this manner of slaughter, the meat must be soaked and salted, or broiled, so that its blood content was further reduced. Perhaps some nutritive benefits were lost, but no Jew could fail to be impressed by the moral suggestion that though the eating of meat was permitted, Jews must be ultra-careful, even squeamish, about the eating of blood. Thus their almost congenital aversion for war, duelling, and murder, was no accident. It was definitely the consequence of the Torah's preoccupation with the prohibition regarding blood. In one instance⁸ was the method of slaughter varied so that the blood was not speedily removed and that situation involved the ritual which constituted atonement for murder. This different method of slaughter, so to speak, was a reflection of the murderer's performance.

Yet, even if the manner of removing the blood had ethical significance, what of the act of slaughter itself? What act could induce a greater disrespect for life than the very act of killing the beast! Visitors to slaughter-houses may have beheld how coarse and vulgar are the men who get the grip on the animals, swing the sledgehammers, and then in fun and frolic cut up the cadavers. That we might have meat, alas, some human beings must be made callous.

5. Gen. 9:3.

6. *Ibid.*, 9:5.

7. *Ibid.*, 4, and *Sanhedrin* 59a.

8. Deut. 21:4.

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This Jewish law sought to avoid. And in order that no Jew who eats meat shall do so at the cost of a brother's loss of humanity and refinement, the qualifications to become a slaughterer were so numerous and so exalted that the slaughterer became a religious functionary upon whom higher standards of ethical and ritualistic behavior were imposed than upon rabbis or cantors! To prevent his degradation, the requirements were exalted to the opposite extreme. He was to be learned in Torah, a man of unimpeachable trust and integrity, capable of great personal sacrifice, and absolutely immune to any kind of pecuniary appeal. Pious Jews were wont to boast that they ate from the *Shechitah* or slaughter of only saints. No greater compliment could be paid a man than to say that a famous rabbi ate the meat of an animal which he did slay. Such was the Torah's method to save from degradation not only him who eats the meat but him who makes it available!

That the Torah through its prescriptions wanted to save the dignity of human personality and protect it against brutalization is made clear from a verse in Leviticus that deals with the covering of the blood after the slaughter of the beast. The Bible provides for an additional prescription regarding the "life substance." After it is shed, it shall be covered with soil or ashes and hidden from view. Yet this additional rite was limited only to the slaughter of fowl and animals, and not to sheep and cattle. The rationale for the limitation is suggested in the verse containing the command.⁹ That verse refers to the hunt, from a superficial point of view an irrelevant circumstance. However, fowl and animals, other than domesticated ones, usually had to be captured from nature and the hunt cannot help but involve the captor in more inhumanity than is normally involved in the case of beasts of the farm. That the hunter may act out his added guilt and be restored to feelings of humanity, his shedding of the animal's blood in the process of the slaughter must therefore be followed by a special commandment — the covering of the blood. That is why the commandment is limited to creatures whose usual means of apprehension was the hunt, and in antiquity most fowls that Jews could eat had to be hunted. In several instances the Talmud considers even domesticated fowls as requiring capture.¹⁰ Thus did the Law take special precautions when greater human degrada-

9. Lev. 17:13.

10. *Betzah* 25a. V. *Tosafot*, 9a.

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tion might ensue, and the Oral Law expanded the rule to cover even situations not involving the hunt. Any special regard for blood served a moral purpose.

Indeed, the hunter was hardly respected by Judaism. Esau — and not Jacob — was his prototype. Walther Rathenau once exclaimed that he never knew a Jew who enjoyed the hunt. In any event, more than the slaughterer, the hunter had to have an antidote to the meanness of his vocation and both hunter and slaughterer had to be spared the inevitable hurt that their occupations could cause to their spiritual personality. Moreover, those who ate the meat had to be assured that they did not have to wrestle with their consciences because their indulgence was at the sacrifice of a fellow human's dignity.

Jewish philosophers sought to discover meanings that were implicit even in the details of the dietary prohibitions, not alone in their over-all pattern. Some detected a divine intent to impress us with the importance of avoiding some of the objectionable habits or characteristics of the animals tabooed. Others saw in the law forbidding the boiling of a kid's flesh in the milk of its mother a reminder to be grateful. The dietary prescription was to inspire a grateful heart, especially since the same biblical verse ends with a command to bring the first fruits of one's harvest unto the Lord as a thanksgiving offering. For still others this, and many additional rules, were designed to exorcise ancient pagan rituals of which we now know very little.

However, the net effect of all the prescriptions was that the selection of the animal, its slaughter and its preparation, and finally its very cooking and eating, were subject to the Torah's mandate. Thus hunter, slaughterer, butcher, and cook performed their tasks in accordance with God's command. The Law determined what the Jew may eat, how he shall slaughter that which he wants to eat, how he shall remove its blood, and with what else he might cook or eat it. Curiously enough, the only edibles which are subject to absolutely no control by the Law are fruits and vegetables — except for the worms within them. Were the Jew to become herbivorous again, so many of his dietary laws would become unnecessary. His unremitting reverence for animal life itself would fulfill the demands of a holiness code.

But the Jew, like the Gentile, has been becoming more carnivor-

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ous rather than less so. And the Law, through the millenia, has expanded in many ways to make the Jew more conscious than ever that as his physical existence requires food, so his spiritual life requires *kashrut*. One may jest about gastronomic Judaism, or one may seek to deceive for profit as so many hotels and caterers do with their offers of "Kosher style" products. To the devout, however, *kashrut* remains the way to sanctify life.

V

While man's use of beasts may degrade him, nothing is more detrimental to the cause of human dignity than man's use of his fellow-man, living or dead. The sources from which the prohibition against autopsies developed are few but Jewish sentiment and rabbinic understanding compensated for the paucity of the texts.¹¹ Again two results were to be accomplished. First, respect for human life was to be induced by the respect accorded even the dead. Consequently, there was a general prohibition against rendering their limbs and tissues asunder. Second, if it became necessary to do this in order to save life — which purpose supersedes most commandments — then the person so acting was to be safeguarded against any possible irreverence with respect to life and he was expected to be reverent until such time as he had fulfilled his last duty which was the proper burial of the part dissected. As in the case of the slaughterer of cattle, those who handled the dead among humans were expected to be saints. What a difference between the undertakers of today and the *Chevrot Kadisha* of old! And what a difference between the traditional watching of the dead until burial, accompanied by the uninterrupted recitation of Psalms, and the atmosphere prevailing in some morgues and dissecting rooms of today's luxurious hospitals, with even "rock-n-roll" music coming in via radio!

Indeed, the dead must be handled. They must even be dissected at times. And some men must become callous in the performance of these duties. Yet Jewish law would never let them become so callous that their reverence for life was in any way diminished. Only saints qualified for the task. And saints they must remain. One

11. See I. Jakobovits, "Dissection of the Dead in Jewish Law," *Tradition*, Vol. I, No. 1, 77-103.

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wonders whether one should not seek some parallel pattern for the training of modern physicians who, instead of being exposed to a program of "hardening" vis-a-vis blood and suffering, ought not to be exposed continuously to religious and moral indoctrination regarding the sanctity of life. Perhaps they would perform needless surgery less often, and not agitate as much for euthanasia. But undertakers and grave-diggers already need saving more than doctors. Modern Jews are happy that undertakers have made burials so aesthetic — the family is shielded from everything unpleasant. The death occurs, and all they must ever view with their own eyes is a magnificent casket — reposing either in a soothing chapel, or in a memorial park, blanketed with greens. That some human beings have to make of death big business, of embalming a licensed profession, of grave-digging the occasion for jesting (presumably to save the grave-diggers from an inevitable morbidity), does not disturb anyone. But why should any human being be caused to suffer an irreverent attitude toward life only because we need someone to perform unpleasant tasks? That is why Jewish custom called for the gratuitous handling of the deceased by a man's friends as an act of brotherhood — or by the saints who were members of the *Chevrah Kadisha*. The last shovel of earth was to be thrown by one who loved and respected the deceased so that in no event could ministry to the dead become the occasion for the degradation of another human being to whom the service had become only a vocation or a job.

VI

If Jewish law would suffer no degradation of man in his use of the dead, then *a fortiori* that it would not suffer any degradation of man in his use of the living — especially his use of his own wife. Much of Jewish law pertaining to ritual immersion after the menstrual period had its roots in this goal.

A woman was never to become only an instrument for man's pleasure. Nothing would make for greater mutual hostility between husband and wife than the feeling that one is only an object for the other's gratification. Even the exploiter would ultimately hate the exploited — such is the mechanism of the mind in sexual performance. If spouses were to respect each other forever as persons

equally created in the divine image, then the gratification in sexual intercourse was to be mutual. However, mutuality in climax could not be attained until at least the man learned to be disciplined and artful. The ritual immersion itself may or may not have fulfilled some hygienic purpose. But the fact that during the menstrual period there was continence meant first that humans do not cohabit as or when animals do. Second, it meant that for a good part of the month, the husband was to cherish his wife, even though he could not enjoy her body. In truth, every month there was reenacted the drama of the wooing and nuptial periods with which the marriage began. It were as if each month husband and wife reenacted the relationship of bride and groom — with a period of restraint comparable to the period of the engagement, followed by a honeymoon comparable to the wedding night. Indeed, a Jewish wife is to come to her husband at least once each month as a bride after a ritual immersion.

Hygienic reasons have been advanced for the Torah's strictures with respect to sexual intercourse during a woman's menstrual period and thereafter for a specified number of days, especially since the Law prohibited cohabitation for a period of time after any vaginal discharge. Yet, it would be the sheerest folly to defend all the rules as health measures. The present state of scientific research would hardly warrant such conclusions. The Law, however, did seek to conserve certain moral values, and no moral value played a more prominent role in Judaism than the value of the woman's consent to marry and cohabit. Her vaginal cleanliness always was — and still is — an important factor in her readiness to consummate love relations with her husband with maximum gratification. No less significant was the possibility that either spouse might find cohabitation distasteful or unaesthetic and consequently nurture an antipathy to the other. The Torah's goal, therefore, was to achieve in marriage a proper balance of so-called Platonic love with passionate love. A wife was to be enjoyed both as a fellow human and as a woman, and in due time, when she reached menopause, she would be both to her husband simultaneously.

The renowned Dr. Kinsey, alas, did not understand this principle of Judaism. Rightfully it may be said that he did not even understand sex. A quantitative study of sex on the basis of "outlets" and "incidence" with no attention whatever to the qualitative aspects of

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the phenomenon must needs be misleading. Conclusions thus reached must be distorted. Judaism, on the contrary, was more interested in the qualitative aspects of the love-relationship than its frequency. And the Law with respect to *Taharat ha-Mishpachah*—family purity—sought to provide periods of complete continence thereby to promote romance and heighten the mutuality of the spouses' ultimate gratification of their desires.

A charming text of the Talmud is illustrative of this intent. The Talmud was very much aware of the desire of males to have sons. Capitalizing on this preference, the Talmud reminded husbands that sons are conceived in their mothers' wombs only when the female reaches climax earlier than the male in the consummation of the love relationship!¹² If the male ego was to be flattered by the bearing of male heirs, it must excel first in the art of love. It does not really matter whether the talmudic dictum is scientifically correct. It is at least an abiding invitation to men to be preoccupied with the desires of their wives, and if younger women are, by their very natures, less capable of achieving climax speedily, then men must be the more patient and the more artful to that end.

In the final analysis, however, it was the Law that dignified and sanctified the satisfaction of man's most urgent drive with full regard for the shared character of the experience, and the mutuality of feeling of the spouses, at the same time that the period of continence made not for frustration but rather for shared experience of the spouses on a level other than the physical.

Sexual intercourse, however, involves more than the sanctifying of life as in the case of dietary laws. It involves the very creation of life itself in holiness. Religious persons will never cease to wonder that God made man His partner in creation. It is God and man together who populate the earth. And in the final analysis, that means that man fixes the number of immortal souls with which God must endow His children. That is why it is inconceivable to the devout Jew that the process of conception should be without religious mandates.

Furthermore, the Law accentuates the role of the Jew as a partner in the creation of other Jews through the rites of circumcision. The covenant with Abraham became symbolic of more than one's Jewishness. An uncircumcised male was regarded as incomplete. His

12. *Niddah* 31a.

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circumcision was the final act of his creation — his final fashioning. For females too there was a final act of creation, according to Judaism.¹³ The piercing of the hymen was for a woman what circumcision was for a man — only in the former case it was the husband, not the father, who was God's partner in creation. To such an extent were perfectly natural processes woven into the warp and woof of the holy life.

And the code applied to the postnatal period as it did to events preceding. After a birth there was again a period of continence followed by the reenactment of nuptials — with a difference, however, between the birth of a male and a female. The periods of both continence and nuptials were doubled in the latter case — perhaps because vain males needed the benign effect of the Law more when their wives bore them what they wanted less.

To many moderns all of this regulation may be unacceptable. Yet moderns should remember that virtually all of it was personal regulation — self-discipline. In a remarkable inference from a biblical verse the Rabbis ruled that Jews were “on their honor” — males and females alike could certify to their own observance of the Law. Needless to say, the word of the suspect was not always acceptable to the cautious devout. But Judaism frowned upon public supervision of the extent to which wives practiced ritual immersion (as some rabbis in America and Israel have instituted it) and Judaism also attached no legal stigma to the issue of parents who did not observe the rules. Indeed, the acid test of one's commitment to God was one's willingness to heed His will in the most private, the most secret, of all human performances.

VII.

Self-discipline or God-directed discipline, however, was not the only religious value that the Rabbis gleaned from the code of personal holiness. Even the rules pertaining to the ritualistic preparation of utensils yielded religious insights. Dishes normally had to be cleansed with the same heat that prevailed when they were improperly used. Boiling water or steam might be enough for pots that had been used in non-kosher cooking, since the maximum temperature for cooking is that of boiling, but higher temperatures were

13. *Sanhedrin* 22b, and Rashi's comment thereon.

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required to qualify old stoves for baking by the observant. It was not difficult to conclude from this that in the measure that one sinned, one must atone. Of what value, for example, would be the atonement of an old man — altogether spent — for sins he committed in his youth? Or of what value is the belated verbal apology of an anti-Semite when the millions of dollars he had expended earlier had already resulted in the death of millions of Jews?

To the uninitiated the Law may appear bleak, even unbearable. To those, however, to whom the Law is life itself, observance is not a chore but a daily delight, dignifying existence, ennobling the spirit, and yielding not only a consciousness of God but fresh insights into His will.