

THE COLLECTIVE JEWISH SPIRIT:

An Interpretation of Jewish Philosophy

The "inner meaning" of Jewish philosophy — its constants throughout the ages, its relationship to Jewish history and life, and its context of general thought — is the subject of this enquiry by Dr. Adlerblum, a native of Jerusalem and now of Long Branch, N. J. She received her Ph.D. at Columbia University, where she was one of the favorite students of John Dewey, whose philosophy she helped spread through Latin America. A Life Fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters, she is the author of *A Study of Gersonides in his Proper Perspective* and *A Perspective of Jewish Life through its Festivals*, and has contributed articles to leading academic journals in philosophy.

The approach to Jewish philosophy by those who first wrote its history has been from without rather than one that issues from within. Jewish philosophy was envisaged as if with a camera out of focus. Some overstated its contributions; others overemphasized its assimilations from without; worst of all, many even today want to mold it into the image of what they would like it to be rather than what it intrinsically is. The many misinterpretations have obscured a proper perspective and led to the belief that there is no Jewish philosophy as such, as the organic relationship that ties Jewish thought to Jewish life was severed.

In the present essay my aim is merely to penetrate into Jewish philosophy, in so far as possible, without presuppositions of my own. I should like to take as my text the "Collective Jewish Spirit," which I shall later define, and be guided by one whom I consider the very reflection of it — Yehudah Halevi, the great medieval Spanish rabbi, philosopher, and poet. My view is that

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the inner historical process may throw light on what constitutes a genuine Jewish philosophy, which would then be given its proper place and the well-deserved title of which it has been deprived by its own historians.

There is no philosopher whose scaffolding has not been wrecked, with no more than debris left of it. In ancient Greece, the pupil of Plato, Aristotle, turned his teacher's system into ashes, and both Aristotle and Plato were drowned in Plotinus's ecstasies of the One. He set out to preserve their memory, but by blending the two systems into his own, each lost its identity. Kant's system was replaced by that of his disciple Fichte; Fichte's by Schelling's, and Schelling's in turn by Hegel. And the overwhelming Hegel was dethroned by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, John Dewey, and others. "Kill the beast Intellectualism" was the cry of William James's holy crusade. Bergson, the master of early twentieth century thought, has by now sunk into oblivion. As psychology nowadays has somehow been reduced to biology and biochemistry, the realm of philosophy cannot but shrink too. The problems of space and time, which occupied thinkers from Plato to Bergson, can far better be solved by physicists and astronomers. That the planets are intelligibles and the providers of human knowledge, as was believed by the scholastics; that knowledge and ideals are drawn from fixed patterns in heaven, as was asserted by Plato; that the soul and body come together in the Pineal gland, as was claimed by the father of modern philosophy, Descartes; that the world's existence hangs on perception — Berkely's *Esse Est Percipi*; — these and other concepts have long been passed into oblivion.

Still, the soul of philosophy remains alive in the stream of history. Out of these speculations a vision shines through. Criticizing their method does not imply minimizing the profound significance and contributions of these creative geniuses. Without their beacon on the human horizon, man would be groping in darkness with but little to lean on. But this emanates *not* from the neatly closed systems, which encumber rather than produce creativity. It is by going beyond the philosopher's speculations that we grasp the man himself and live by his vision. The core of philosophy is in vision. And vision cannot be melted into a

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universal, mechanical mold. In its true nature it is a rich prism, with as many colors as the variety of human histories. Yehudah Halevi was the first to point this out, in a slightly different manner. The course of human thought has substantiated his view. We have American, British, French, German, Jewish, Buddhist, and other philosophies. It was only Germany, aiming at Prussianizing the world with Berlin as its center, that claimed but one universal thought — of course, the German one.

Yehudah Halevi's treatment of philosophy as the product and at the same time the guiding light of the people from whom it has evolved, is highly relevant nowadays too. William James, John Dewey, Rousseau, and Tolstoy would have agreed with him, had he been known to them. To penetrate into the very depths of a people and give direction and concreteness to their potentialities for good is for Yehudah Halevi the highest philosophical attainment. The fact that we find in Jewish philosophy moral purpose, large horizons, world-wide views, and pronounced notions of universality, does not imply that philosophy should become synonymous with the science of ethics — which should and has always been an integral part of it. *Vision* is the fuel from which ethics draws its strength and philosophy its inspiration.

It would be futile for us to attempt to define vision in fixed terms. We should rather say that, judging by those who have enriched human existence, it lies in the hope and endeavor of creating a loftier human world; in the trust in man's possibilities to be like unto the image of God; and in the confidence that the world and man were not created in vain. While all humanity may strive for the same end, the means, the organization, and the method of approach cannot but vary from nation to nation. To paraphrase Yehudah Halevi, different conditions and series of events engender different modes of thinking, feeling, and hoping.

Yehudah Halevi's vision was of the loftiest. He embraced in one indivisible whole, God, the Torah, the people, the land, the exodus from Egypt, the ancestral patriarchs, the prophets, and the righteous of all nations. He carried on his wings the deep feelings of the whole people whose muse he still is.

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Could such vision, the very heart of the people, have been lost to Saadya, who bitterly fought the Karaites for their lack of Biblical insight? To Bachya, deeply concerned with the Jewish way of life? To Maimonides, who gave us the *Yad ha-Chazakah*? To Gersonides, who drew his ethical lessons from the narratives of the Bible — without having a copy of it before him at the time he wrote them? This long historical chain of thought, by which they themselves lived, must have entered into the scale when they so carefully weighed the pros and cons of each idea.

Yet the usual tableau has been a stereotyped view of how Saadya grapples with the semi-unknown Platonic and Aristotelian principles, how Maimonides accepts them, and how Gersonides exalts them.

That there is no Jewish philosophy became an accepted axiom. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* does not have a special rubric for it; it is listed under "Arabic Jewish Philosophy." The first such book in the English language, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy* by Dr. Isaac Husik (1916, republished 1950), is based on this assumption. It is an excellent, scholarly, conscientious, and fully detailed exposition of each scholastic. But it is written in the same vein as the others, as if the chief task were that of collecting and organizing their neo-Platonic and Aristotelian discussions. His introduction is, I think, one of the best for an understanding of transplanted Aristotelianism. For an external appraisal such introduction is indeed basic.

An article in the *New Palestine* of March 1927 by S. M. Melamed fully reflects this historical attitude. Melamed, a doctor of philosophy, scholar, and author, protested against my viewpoint. I am quoting him because what I consider his fallacies shine through his words.

Where is Jewish philosophy to be found? To my opinion neither the Bible nor the Talmud contain Jewish philosophy. The Bible is a book of wisdom, and it may be granted that it contains a great deal of philosophical wisdom as well. The same can be said of the Talmud as a philosophical book. But philosophical wisdom and philosophy are two different things entirely. The first prerequisite of philosophy is analysis, and the ancient Jewish mind was not analytical. It was not a questioning, searching, and observing mind, because it had no attitude, or only a purely poetic attitude

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towards biological nature. The Bible sometimes hints at metaphysical problems, but never formulates them. The same holds good of the Talmud. Without clearly formulated philosophical problems, there cannot be any philosophy in the scholarly meaning of the term. Judaism per se is an *a*-philosophical proposition. Traditional Judaism precludes every philosophy. The first Jewish philosopher who dared philosophize without prejudice was Baruch Spinoza, and he was excommunicated by the Synagogue . . .

To my best knowledge, Dr. Adlerblum is the first to assert that there is such a thing as Jewish philosophy, and that the keynote of it is in Yehudah Halevi. She claims that Halevi has not been properly grasped by the historians. I for one would side with the historians whom Dr. Adlerblum is trying to combat. I take issue with her premise that there is a Jewish philosophy, that Jewish philosophy is bound up with the historical content, and with her viewing Yehudah Halevi as the pivot of Jewish thought. No philosophical historian would agree with her . . . Halevi was the emotionalist . . . and Rabbinic Judaism is primarily an intellectual proposition. Judaism is *intellectus purus* without admixture of emotionalism.

With the better historical insight of our day, one would expect that not many would share these views. Yet there are scholars who still maintain them. Elsewhere I have tried to bring the philosophers face to face with the historians. I doubt whether they would recognize themselves in the historical interpretation. To dwell upon this here would not be within the scope of this article, which is a search for the basic meaning only. Our philosophers in the historic albums look to me like perfect, mechanically constructed robots, with a Mutakalimun, a neo-Platonist, or Aristotelian standing behind and prompting them; wonderful robots reflecting outer motions in minutest detail—but the breath of life, the Jewish life, is missing. Even for Yehudah Halevi, who rebelled against foreign influences, a prototype has been discovered in the Arabic author Algazali.

Would not a classification emerging out of the *inner* life be a better tool for the reconstruction of history than one based upon the borrowing process of intellectual assimilation? Had the panorama been viewed from the *Jewish* center, the flowing life of the people would not have been stereotyped into a fixed mold, into an effigy of a pseudo-Aristotle or a pseudo-Plato. The virtual image would have been that of the genuine Jewish expression;

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of the inner agitation of a struggling people's mind; of the concern of a Saadya that deeply-rooted beliefs not be encroached upon by some superficially attractive ideas which he sincerely rejected after careful analysis; of the apprehension of a Bachya lest the outer life obscure the inner one and the heart of the precepts be lost when mechanically performed; of the struggles of an Ibn Ezra between the accepted interpretations of tradition and interpretive innovations of his own. We would have seen the attempt of a Yehudah Halevi to merge the national and the religious life; the striving of Maimonides to bring out the rationalism of Jewish teachings; the innovations of Gersonides in juxtaposing tradition and science, and seeking the inner truth in the Torah with the backing of science.

The modern historian discovered no Jewish philosophy, because the Bible and the rich talmudic literature — great though he esteemed them — were not cast into a fixed system. Scholasticism met with his technical standards, but in his eyes it had no individuality of its own. The form, it is true, is molded on the neo-Platonic, post-Aristotelian, and Arabic writings. But underneath the alien form which has usually been taken for the whole, there is a restless inward life, crystallizing the past into the present, utilizing contemporary ideas primarily for the strengthening of its own thought. The inner emotion, the basis, the mode of thinking, even the dialectic, are Jewish. The historian has missed the protractor wherewith to measure Jewish relationships, because he cut off thought from its historical setting.

To take our scholastics out of the Jewish atmosphere is like viewing them through a distorted mirror. One cannot possibly speak of Christian scholasticism without having before one's eyes a panorama of the architecture of the church, the spirit within its walls, and the barbaric world with which it had to contend. Likewise, one cannot have a complete picture of a Jewish philosopher without setting him in his traditional milieu, even in the Synagogue where he prayed three times a day. This very setting created a Jewish *Anschauung* of its own which translated itself into viewing and interpreting life in terms of the Jewish past, and still more in reintegrating the whole past into the present.

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If I venture to restate our philosophy in terms different from the historians, it is not without due reverence for their herculean achievement. Were it not for the unsurpassed scholarship, devotion and self-sacrifice of the early historians, the great fathers of the *Jüdische Wissenschaftslehre*, there would have been much in scholasticism that would have remained closed to us even today. One cannot possibly write on the subject without consulting them. But one cannot resuscitate the body and forget the soul. Without stripping their gigantic contributions of their pre-conceived notions, their labor, fertile in itself, may become sterile. The fault was, of course, not their lack of scholarship — they rank among the highest authorities. But they were carried away by the emancipation philosophy of national self-effacement and absorption into the surroundings. They were not disturbed by an eclectic attitude towards Jewish life. They applied their own philosophy retrospectively, perhaps unawares of what they were doing. The same impulse made them deny the national existence as well as its intellectual reflection in abstract thought. It must have been an intellectual solace for them to find assimilating tendencies among the most pious Jews of the Middle Ages — as for instance in the saintly Bachya, in the *Gaon* Saadya, and in the one who thought that with his *Yad ha-Chazakah* he had sealed the Law forever.

Let us briefly set forth two pertinent points in the quest for the meaning underneath the surface of Jewish philosophic thought.

The first point is a negative one. The philosophers of the Emancipation did not grasp a fundamental characteristic of the Jewish mind, namely, the utter indivisibility of its inner being, the fact that it loses its identity if the minutest particle is torn from it. It is more tightly knitted than a biological organism. A physical body can thrive even with a limb amputated. It is the peculiar Jewish quality that the heart is located in each part, and the organism can function only when all are united into one whole.

The second point is a positive one. From the dramatic, intellectual struggle of the Jewish medieval philosophers we see that our ancient past is not a mere static entity from which to derive

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a few profitable lessons. It functions dynamically at every stage. In scholasticism it played a role even in its most abstruse technical reasoning. Whatever new idea was brought forth *had to be tested by the Torah itself*, or by a proper interpretation of it. Thus Maimonides, the supreme logician, was the author of the *ani ma'amin* (I believe.) This was not an inconsistency as some may think. The articles of faith became for him principles which guided him in his own perplexities. So Gersonides, the most radical among them who was willing to accept the truth from whatever source it came, turned to the Bible as the basis of human experience, as a valid, primary source. After lengthy pro and con arguments he thanked God for helping him to find the truth in the Torah. This deeply rooted reverence for the observance of the Law and the impulse for strengthening the fence around it were not superimposed on their philosophy from without but formed an integral part of it.

Intertwined as this period is with the continuity of the whole, it is none the less but a profile of it. It is preferable to take a full-length picture of the Jewish historic landscape. What is of importance in the history of thought is the genesis of ideas: the way they came to be what they are, how they struggled into existence, the situations that engendered them, and the people who lived by them.

The course of our history seems to have been determined by two parallel movements, inner and outer, one tending towards the center of gravity and the other away from it. Both were equally animated by an earnest desire of perfecting and enriching the national self. The differentia between these parallel lines — constructive tendencies arising from within, and movements superimposed from without — consist in their respective conceptions of the inherent nature of Jewish philosophy. Through these divergencies some fundamental characteristics become delineated: the essential difference between Jewish and Christian philosophies; the fate of Hellenism and the narrow-minded Karaism; the fallacies of the Reform philosophy; and primarily the character of a philosophy whose essence is spiritual preservation and opposition not to outward ideas as such but to their fusion with the Jewish essence.

Hellenism and Christianity were based on the assumption that Jewish thought, fused with some outer system, would become enriched through the fusion. But Christianity ceased to be Judaism as soon as it effected this combination. If fusion had been a genuine Jewish concept, Hellenism would have survived and the Jewish and Greek philosophies would have fused into one, the result being nearer to the Jewish spirit than in Christianity. But anti-fusion is a basic category of the Jewish mind, just, as fusion is the essence of Christianity. Because of it the relation between Jewish and Christian philosophies, even though an organic one in appearance and in spite of ethical similarities and a common source, is none the less an external one. Logically the Christian philosophy is an obliteration of the Jewish one, and not a development of it; they are mutually incompatible. The one is centripetal, the other centrifugal. The Jewish belief is in growth from within. Judaism did not seek to superimpose itself upon the larger world. The Prophetic ideal was that the world will gradually become Judaized through its own inner process and will of its own accord come up to the Mountain of the Lord. Christianity preferred to abstract Judaism from its setting, so as to carry it to other nations. It transferred the Jewish inner self to an incompatible outer world. It lost its Jewish being because its philosophy was based on premises violating the fundamental laws of Jewish behavior. Judaism cannot suffer to be abstracted, even if the abstraction is made for the sake of perpetuating and spreading its fundamental principles. All its aspects are interrelated, and function Jewishly only in the organic whole.

Hellenism is a typical illustration of Jewish behavior towards an outer culture when it reaches the point of fusion. The meeting with Greek civilization was not Judaism's first encounter with the outer world. Long before there had been a close contact between the Jews and the Babylonians — but the two civilizations were merely collateral and not interpenetrating. Whatever was acquired from the Babylonians had no bearing on the inner Jewish life. The contact with Babylon had a rather reverse effect. It brought about the strengthening of Jewish idealism and the abolition of idol worship.

As long as the Greek relationship remained an outer one,

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it was looked upon favorably. The translation of the Scriptures into Greek was hailed by the Rabbis as a happy event. The Greek language was studied in the schools, and a knowledge of it even became a requisite for admission to membership in the Sanhedrin. There was no serious objection to borrowing some of the laws, customs, terminology, proper names, and even eschatological ideas from the Greeks. But when the Hellenistic influence spread from outer activities to fundamental ideas, when attempts were made to bring Greek theology to the support of Judaism, or to explain and interpret Jewish Law in the light of Greek ethics, the reaction to Hellenism assumed an altogether different nature. The making of the Septuagint, which had brought about a closer contact between Greek and Jewish life, was compared to the making of the golden calf, and a fast-day was declared to mourn the national deterioration. The study of the Greek language was forbidden, and Jewish works bearing Greek traces were banished from the schools. So, although Greek ideas were prevalent, they remained from without and did not change the essential constitution of Jewish thought. The reply to Hellenism was the writing of the Mishnah, where the Jewish traditions became fixed and crystallized. The movement for fusing Judaism with another philosophy created a disturbance in the Jewish equilibrium, but it was no more serious than a ripple in the water. Our historic stream continued undisturbed, leaving the pebbles behind.

I do not think that Christianity, as is usually believed, is an offshoot of Hellenism, even though Philo must have paved the way for the Greeks. Christianity came out of an attempt to re-evaluate the inner philosophy from one of antagonism to fusion and abstraction to one that would tolerate them. From an inner movement it became an outer one, as it went counter to the laws of Jewish nature.

Another element of our philosophy is the actual experiencing of continuity as a dynamic flow of the Jewish stream. Karaism, which viewed tradition as a static accumulation, violated the Jewish sense of continuity and its view of the Law as a growing, living tree (*Etz Chayyim*). Hence in spite of its strict adherence to the Pentateuchal laws, Karaism lost its contact with the Jewish

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organism. It remained stagnant with no creativity of its own, and disintegrated. In the course of its history Karaism produced only one great man, Aaron ben Joseph of Constantinople (in the Thirteenth Century). But he tried to bring Karaism back into the original fold. His authoritative works are nearer to Rabbinism than to Karaism.

The vicissitudes of the various movements thus gives us a glimpse into the inner meaning of Jewish philosophy: the insistence that nothing be superimposed on it from without; the organic connection with its setting; the impossibility of abstracting one phase and establishing it as a separate entity; the preservation of individuality and continuity; the constant living of history; the Law as a dynamic expression of behavior; the combining of faith with the study of the Law. These traits and many others are aspects of the "Collective Jewish Spirit," which translates the philosophical concepts into living realities.

Three questions may arise regarding the Collective Jewish Spirit: (1) Is there one? (2) Why search for meaning outside the philosophers themselves? (3) What is the Collective Jewish Spirit?

The affirmative reply to the first question is proved by Jewish life itself, which without its Jewishness would have remained a mere memory like so many other ancient civilizations. When the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai, according to the well-known Midrash, there were present not only those who came out of Egypt. Every Jewish soul, even of those not yet born, was brought down from heaven to stand at the foot of the mountain, hear the voice of God and receive the Torah. The feeling of a joint spiritual experience — "As if I myself had gone out of Egypt" — blends the *I* with the whole, each in all and all in everyone. This is not similar to the general medieval preoccupation with nominalism and realism, whether reality lies in the species or in the individual. With us it is both. The Jewish whole is the reality expressed through the individual, who *qua* Jew has individuality only insofar as it embodies the whole.

It may appear to be outside the realm of philosophy to connect it with our festivals. Yet they are not merely a phase, but an essential part of the Jewish structure, an integral and inseparable

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expression of our innermost life. They have the inherent capacity of transforming the concept of a spiritual whole into a living reality. Every festival is a historical dynamo regenerating and reproducing the past into a living form of our collective spirit. It is a re-living of the whole of history from its very beginning. The past, the present, the people, the land, memory and actual experience, are fused together into one spiritual whole—the festival, an offshoot of our philosophy and its concrete expression. We see in the festivals, as if through a magnifying glass, that the Jewish concept of continuity is not merely that of time and space, but an experiencing of the past as if it were alive today in the present.

The concept of *Election* is another illustration of the Collective Jewish Spirit. God did not single out some particular individuals for bestowing “grace” upon them for their own personal “salvation.” The covenant is made with the whole people.

Why search for meaning outside the philosophers themselves? The meaning of such rich content can be found only in the content itself, if grasped in its wholeness. From our scholastics we can learn how to meet the challenge of the world Jewishly. They enriched the past through their scholarly interpretations, and the future through their enlightenment. Maimonides is still our guide. Saadya and Bachya are an everlasting source of inspiration. But medieval philosophy is a reflection of one particular period only, with an overemphasis on intellectual outlook. Maimonides felt it incumbent upon him to give rational grounds for the Laws, as if there were no other ties equally strong. The motive for Saadya, Maimonides, and others in philosophizing was to guide those who wavered or felt preplexed and attracted to Arabic and Greek thought. Theirs, Jewish as it was both in aim and in inner content, was none the less an answer to a challenge. It was a selection of material to fit the climate of the time, and not an all-embracing whole. They meant to address themselves to the few. Maimonides wants to whisper to the wise, and beswears the reader not to divulge the underlying meaning that he may discover for himself. The hay is for the superior ones, and the straw for the masses. Furthermore, this was a period that had not yet grasped the dynamic forces of history. Augustine looked upon history as the “progress of the City of God from

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earth to heaven." Maimonides is amazed at the fact that the Bible fills many of its pages with the narratives of wars. Gersonides said that they are mentioned for pedagogical purposes, to teach us to avoid evil and practice good. Philo, the father of scholasticism, explains that the Exodus from Egypt means the overcoming of matter and entering the world of the soul, passing mysteriously from the somatic to the pneumatic state, i.e., from the body to the soul.

To transcend our scholastics for the search of the "meaning" does not imply ignoring them. They are among the living geniuses of our history, and they carried on the flow of the Jewish stream. But with their lack of historical insight, it would be more fruitful for our particular purpose to turn to Yehudah Halevi, the only one of his time who grasped our history by its very roots.

Halevi is the poet of the Jewish heart and the philosopher of the Jewish soul. In him we find the blending of the emotional and the intellectual. His is the mirror of genuine Jewish thought such as it is, at bottom, in the Bible, Halakhah, the Midrashim and liturgy and commentaries. There is a deep human side to Halevi's philosophy, with his emphasis on faith, hope, trust, and the joy of living. Besides the profound philosophy of religion, of nationalism, and of the meaning of Jewish history, his *Kuzari* brings out in dramatic fashion a fundamental principle of Jewish philosophy: the organic connection between thought and action, means and ends, intention and behavior. The historians in their account of Halevi's metaphysics consider the bulk of it as rather irrelevant, as mere poetical metaphors and rambling historical discussions. If space permitted, it would be worthwhile to demonstrate that his linking of philosophy and history is genuinely Jewish and is relevant even in contemporary thought.

But Yehudah Halevi is not alone. The deep and rich sources from which he drew remain to be explored at first hand. This intellectual exploration is the function of a Talmudist, one who can organize the Talmud's innermost philosophical thoughts, as Maimonides systematized its legal material. The Talmud would not be accused of legalism were its innumerable religious, philosophical, and psychological insights brought to the surface. In

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a perspective of genuine philosophy, the Talmudists would rank among the great philosophers in history for their deep influence upon the people and their oneness with them. They know how to extend continuity from the past into the present, and allow for growth into the future. Theirs were ideas whose very roots grew in Jewish soil. They cultivated the seed, kept its growth in line with the roots, and cared for its perpetuation. To them an ideal was an ideal and not a dream, and it was crystallized in such laws as would bring about its attainment. The many precepts attached to physical activities indicate their infusing sacredness into daily activities, instead of keeping them apart. Regard for the sacredness of the laws leads to a harmonious society, and needs not a strict division of classes as in Plato's *Republic*. Their rules for conduct were such as to maintain an uninterrupted flow from Mt. Sinai to the rivers of Babylon and far into the future. They showed a unique historical perspicacity by understanding how to raise a people to the level of its own philosophy. Their effectiveness in moulding the life of the people surpassed that of the Greek philosophers. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle no doubt influenced the course of their civilization. But they stood apart from their people. Socrates was condemned by them to drink the hemlock at the age of seventy. His disciples wanted to help him escape from prison, but at court they were few and silent. Plato meant his *Republic* for Athens, but it remained Utopian. Both he and Aristotle were exiled. The Stoics and the Epicurians were also apart from the people. The sage Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius did not put into effect the Stoic teachings of self-discipline and liberality in his attitude towards the early Christians, whom he persecuted.

In the Talmud we can find the nearest approach to the direction which philosophy might take in the future: a turning away from abstract rules and categorical imperatives, dictating duties without indicating how to attain them. Had the thread of the talmudic philosophical thoughts been taken up by the scholastics, there would have been no need of seeking the meaning behind their speculations. It would lie on the surface, just as it is in their non-too-accessible interior.

As to the Bible, it is an all-embracing philosophy of God,

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the Torah, the people, the Land, and the whole universe, on a moral foundation. The Bible does not need our eulogies. I am referring to it merely to counter those who do not rank it as a philosophical classic. That it is — a great philosophy, an imperishable one.

The rich content, different emphases, and the variety of interpretations; Jewry's historical vicissitudes, the stormy passage from the ghetto to the outer world, and the regaining of the Land of Israel; even the catastrophic changes of an atomic age — all these indicate that a genuine meaning of Jewish philosophy must be sought not only in well-defined thoughts, but also in those coursing through the veins of the Jewish organism and which form a continuous flow from generation to generation.

A definition of the Jewish spirit would be as difficult as that of capturing in words the ocean, the mountains, the rivers, and the air we breathe. The details, the many specific traits, may form a colorful mosaic, but that would be no more than describing the ocean as water, waves, and, and fishes and the mountains as rocks and trees. To catch the spirit behind them, one has to bathe in the ocean, climb the mountains, and watch the unfolding panoramas from the top. The loyal Jew does it. He experiences his philosophy daily, when he utters the *modeh ani* on awakening and *be-yadkha afkid ruchi* on retiring. The *shema* is a summary of his vision, his faith, and his pattern of living.

The joy of freedom, the passing through the Red Sea, the wandering in the desert, the revelation of God Who appeared to give His laws for a better life — such a deep, spiritual, romantic adventure left an indelible imprint on the Jewish mind. "Romantic" is here used in the philosophical sense, denoting that which touches the very depths of life. A spiritual romance woven out of God, a land, and a people fused together in an organic whole carries with it its own regenerating strength. The vital impetus has thus its source in the spiritual romance of its own being. It animates the people as a whole to strive towards those ideals which gave character and individuality to its formation.

The Collective Jewish Spirit is not what is meant by Folk Psychology of the masses. It is not a civilization either, because

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its history unfolded before its civilization began, in the desert when the people were without food or water.

Every Jew, whether faithful or indifferent to his heritage, carries with him the spiritual birthmarks which constitute the Jewish being from its very inception. Some reach the Jewish entelechy while others bear lighter earmarks or fall behind, just as some are gifted musicians, painters, thinkers, while others merely hear sounds, draw lines, think in a rudimentary fashion. But the seed of a spiritual species is present.

The various characteristics gathered from the above survey need not, I think, be summarized, nor would it be pertinent to enter into further details. The exposition of texts, analysis of details, reference to the perennial problems of the Omnipotence of God, man's freedom of will, reward and punishment, immortality — vital as they are in themselves — do not bear directly on the present subject which aims more at reaching the heart. Judaism is an all-embracing philosophy with emphasis on the spiritual. It is not like that of Thomas A. Kempis which leads to isolation, personal salvation, and fleeing from the world. Ours is one with life itself without the dualism of other philosophies since Plato. Any one-sided characterization of it, such a legalism, mysticism, supernaturalism, materialism, or rationalism, shows a lack of penetration into its essence. It is none of these separately, but all of them form inseparable aspects of its harmonious whole.

I have tried as much as I could to reach the Jewish mind without interpolating ideas of my own. Many even today would like to mold our living tree as did the French gardeners with their landscape in Versailles, France. I wonder which is more attractive to the eye and to the soul: forests where trees live naturally, looking straight into the sky with branches spreading into the air, or the trimmed, pitiful-looking trees in Versailles, cut in round or triangular shape to blend with the architecture of its resplendent palace.

To conclude: A vision where the spiritual, the physical, the mountains, the hills, the water, and the earth all unite in unison to sing the glory of God — such an epic canticle can be part of human philosophy. But it can not be encased in a system.