

## CONFESSIONS ABOUT THE BIBLICAL PAST

I address myself to the question, Does a Jew today have anything to gain by studying the biblical past of the Hebrew people?

I want you to know the stark meaning I intend in the posing of this question. I mean, Should a Jew today bother to study the Torah?

If you doubt that herein I am questioning and perhaps undoing my faith, or if you do not want to encounter an ordinary man's religious anguish, please spare me the confession and please do not read one word farther.

My answer is, I don't really think that it is worth the trouble.

I. "Thou Shalt Teach Them Diligently To Thy Children."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes, when I am going to sleep, I fancy that I cannot catch my breath. I have heard that hard nocturnal breathing may be a symptom of coronary distress. Once I lay myself on the back seat of a Yellow taxi cab. I was overweight, and I had been running. I was quite sure that my aorta was about to rupture and was about to spill my blood into my whole chest cavity.

On such occasions I take the following medical precautions: I recite the Schma. If I were not Jewish, I would recite something else. You can see that my parents have taught me diligently.

In turn I have taught my children and will continue to teach them. It will be out of force of habit at least. So, when my light flickers and is gone, I will have done diligently, too. I will have done so in the seemingly unbreakable chain of Jews that leads from Abraham to me and to my children and to you and yours.

If man survives, unlike the dinosaurs who lorded the earth for

50,000,000 years and who now are gone, if man survives until this cosmos falls in upon itself again, as it will begin to do after another 29,000,000,000 years, according to an interpretation of "blue galaxies" as announced from the Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories,<sup>2</sup> if man and his evolutionary successors survive more than another puny 5728 years, my parents and their parents and their parents' parents and my children and their children's children and the children of their children's children will perhaps have recited the Schma more or less continuously from the antiquity of my forefathers to the end of days, more or less, of my seed.

Meanwhile, while all of this is going on, on the very same day (June 12, 1965) that the blue galaxies were announced, there was other business to be done in the co-partnership between man and God. Queen Elizabeth was listing the Beatles (George, John, Paul and Ringo) as official Members of the Order of the British Empire. "The Beatles themselves were astonished at the news."<sup>3</sup> And The Daily Mail of London was asking in a front-page editorial, "What about the Dave Clark Five, the Bachelors, the Animals, and the Rolling Stones?"<sup>4</sup>

What indeed about them in this cosmos that supposedly pulsates once every 82,000,000,000 years? What about all of us in this cosmos that supposedly will "fall back together, converging to be annihilated

in an explosion from whose Promethean fire a new universe -- and ultimately new life -- would be born?"<sup>5</sup>

And what about the manager and discoverer of the Beatles (who would not matter to me if it were not that he was named Brian Epstein) who at the age of 32 died in his sleep on August 28, 1967? What were his medical precautions or his last words or dreams and thoughts as he entered upon his life eternal in the cosmic pulsation?

In other words, what would it profit the Beatles or the Dave Clark Five or the Animals or the Rolling Stones or anyone at all to study the Torah?

What would it profit me to study the Torah?

II. "What Is Man That Thou Art Mindful Of Him?"<sup>6</sup>

All present questions about the value, if any, of studying the Torah must be answered in view of the fact that today we have one foot in Tennessee, where, in this very half century that we are now in, a man named Scopes was convicted of teaching evolution to children, and one foot, which is in the form of a Russian instrument package, on the planet Venus.

And also we must take into view that we are living at the precise time in history that it has become possible to think realistically that some day soon man and creatures above man and below man might

actually be made to order by means of chemical and other manipulation of the genetic spirals. That is, "life" is no longer a miracle but a process. At least that is what I think that life is.

And therefore the insignificance of my particular life has taken on a new profundity. No longer is it the pedestrian, terrestrial, agrarian, nomadic, personal insignificance that my biblical ancestors felt. Now it is the sub-microscopic insignificance of some  $10^{27}$  atoms that are clinging to each other for dear life, huddling one with the other somewhere in boundless space, in what we call the year 1967 A.D. or the year 5728 in the Hebrew reckoning or the year 12,000,000,000 or so in the present pulsation of the cosmos, and that go by the ultimately ridiculous name of Marvin Green.

When I die, do not bother to chisel anything at all on my tombstone.

III. "History Is A Nightmare From Which I Am Trying  
7  
To Awaken."

It is for a quite definite reason that I am accosting you with my insignificance. It is that you are insignificant, too. Also mankind as a whole is insignificant. Anything other is a lie -- or, more properly, a delusion.

I know -- and I assert to you -- that it is a nightmare to see and to believe that one's self is nothing but  $10^{27}$  atoms, more or less,

which are buffeting about in the vastnesses of galactic time and galactic space.

One tries to awaken from this nightmare by inventing significance. If one is a Beatle, one walks humbly with his Queen and is astonished to become a Member of the Order of the British Empire. If one is Jewish, one tries to connect himself to the fate of the people of Sinai. One sees, or persuades himself that he sees, a definite progression in history, of which he is a part and by virtue of which he is of more than flickering importance. Thus one automatically writes himself a role in history if he believes that the Jews are the chosen people. In so doing one is groping for significance. It is merely that. It is nothing more.

Mordecai M. Kaplan, the Reconstructionist innovator in modern Judaism, advocated revision of this particular device, saying that it "must be understood as belonging to a thought-world which we no longer inhabit. . . . Nowadays for any people to call itself 'chosen' is to be guilty of self-infatuation. . . ."

Kaplan was wrong, of course -- it was not self-infatuation that led the Hebrews to Sinai in the desert. It was that they were hungry. They were thirsty. They were lonesome. They were scared. And today it is not self-infatuation that leads us Jews to the Sinais of the cities. Today's well-fed, indeed paunchy, harder-drinking Jews are also lonesome and

scared. Why else, for example, would the wealthy Brian Epstein have died of an overdose?

Perhaps at first it is hard for you to agree that a paunchy man is hungry and that a drunk is thirsty and that Mrs. Arthur Miller was lonesome and that ultimately just about all of us are scared -- i. e., feel insignificant.

But I think that we go to the synagogue because in our cities we feel the same feelings that we felt in the desert. We recite the Schma, and somehow we feel better. The mechanism is simple enough: we get ourselves to feel that we are linked up on a definite course of events with millions of persons who have been traversing the same course for thousands of years.

Of course it is not only the Jew who has to grapple with the sense of insignificance. I think that Conrad Aiken has stated the general case very effectively:

"It is morning, . . . and in the morning  
When the light drips through the shutters like the dew,  
I arise, I face the sunrise,  
And do the things my fathers learned to do.  
Stars in the purple dusk above the rooftops  
Pale in a saffron mist and seem to die,  
And I myself on a swiftly tilting planet  
Stand before a glass and tie my tie."<sup>9</sup>

IV. History: "A Vision Of God's Creation . . . . From  
10  
God Its Source to God Its Goal"

At last I am prepared to state my actual argument: There are two ways of viewing history -- either (1) it has a meaning or else (2) it is meaningless. Jews are committed to the view that it has a meaning, that it progresses, that we have a role. But I think, and I am sorry to say it, that this Jewish meaning is a delusion.

Those few sentences state my sad argument.

Hereafter I will amplify the argument with an interpretation of biblical history, and then I will propose a final solution to the Jewish problem, but first I want to enlarge on the two different views of history.

In a fine summary of contemporary problems in the philosophy of history, Hans Meyerhoff has said, "Christian interpretations of history . . . . have reasserted themselves strongly after a lapse of a few hundred  
11  
years." That is, religious thinkers like Berdyaev, Barth, Niebuhr, Tillich, Butterfield, Löwith, Pieper, Dawson and Toynbee are explaining  
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history and finding meaning in it by means of "a faith beyond history."  
They are doing so "as an antidote against the general despair at the limits  
13  
and failures of human reason."

Although Meyerhoff identified this search for meaning as "Christian," it is clear that the Hebrews invented it. Kaplan put it as follows:



"But since the truths established by the various sciences of human nature and history no longer permit us to concede that Israel received a type of revelation or communication that was outside the order of nature, we are compelled to find a rational basis for Israel's claim to distinction. That basis is to be found in the spiritual conception of human history as a whole. Assuming that human history is not blind and purposeless, but a progressive movement in the direction of ever-increasing truth, justice and peace, a progressive movement toward the kingdom of God, Israel's part in that movement is so prominent that we must concede to Israel the right to call itself God's chosen. Human progress and sensitivity to the moral order are contingent upon a true conception of God. The two religions which have helped to give two-thirds of mankind a truer conception of God -- Christianity and Mohammedanism -- and which have been instrumental in advancing mankind toward its ultimate goal, have stemmed from Israel. " 14 (Emphasis supplied.)

It does not matter to me whether it is labeled "Christian" or "Jewish" that history is thought to have a meaning. I raise this issue solely to have an excuse to quote Kaplan in his fantastically naive assumption -- written in the year that Adolf Hitler became Chancellor -- that human history is "a progressive movement in the direction of ever-increasing truth, justice and peace, a progressive movement toward the kingdom of God."

This selfsame assumption is the premise of the injunction, "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." For, if there were no imperative direction to pursue, if it did not count how one spent his life, it would not be mandatory for a father to transmit correct theological instruction to

his sons and to his daughters. It is true that the authors of the sacred literature were much more sophisticated than Kaplan. To them God is ineffable. His ways are unpredictable. He speaks out of the whirlwind. He does not follow a neat linear path laid out by Mordecai M. Kaplan. But He controls history. He made certain promises to Abraham, and through Moses He made certain promises with all of Israel for all time, "with those who are standing here with us this day . . . and with those who are not with us here this day." <sup>15</sup>

For a Jew, therefore, history is of necessity the record of God's performance under the various terms, provisions, conditions and intents of His covenants. It is a vision of His creation from the conversations with Abraham to the brimstone at Sinai to the end of days of the Messiah.

There would be no rigorous way of disproving Kaplan's fantastically naive assumption. The more sophisticated writers are even more invulnerable against rigorous logic and rigorous disproof. It comes down to what one wants to believe. It happens that I want to believe what Meyerhoff believes -- namely, that one seeks out a meaning in history because one wants "an antidote against the general despair..." Soon I will elaborate on this matter, but first I want to acknowledge that I am thrilled by Jewish survival.

From ancient to contemporary times the Jews have drawn strength

from their reliance on the fantastically naive assumption. Even an atheist must give them credit. For example, Bertrand Russell wrote:

"The Jews were distinguished from the other nations of antiquity by their stubborn pride. All the others, when conquered, acquiesced inwardly as well as outwardly; the Jews alone retained the belief in their own pre-eminence, and the conviction that their misfortunes were due to God's anger, because they have failed to preserve the purity of their faith and ritual. . . ." 16

What Russell attributed to stubbornness and pride, Steven S. Schwarzschild attributed to "unshakable Jewish confidence in the righteousness of its cause and in the eventual triumph of divine goodness. . . ." 17 He presented the following view of several millions of persons who submitted to their role and fate in the meaning of history:

"For the Jews of Eastern Europe who went to their martyrs' death at the cruel hands of the Nazis, on the walls of the Warsaw ghetto or in the gas-ovens of Treblinka, the song Ani Ma'amin became something approximating a national anthem. Its text consists of the twelfth of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith, the classic formulation of the beliefs which every Jew is expected to hold and which, in poetic form, has also been turned into one of the most popular hymns of the synagogue to this day, Yigdal Elokim Hai. This Twelfth Principle, in penultimate place (not unrelated to the last which deals with resurrection) and, therefore, very near the climactic pinnacle of Jewish faith according to Maimonides, reads: 'I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah -- and, though he may tarry, yet will I wait for him every day on which he may come.' " 18

I am even more thrilled when, instead of sweating out history and "showering" and waiting resignedly for the Messiah, the Jews go on ahead and get the jump on the Egyptian air force, as some of their biblical ancestors

would have done.

As I say, it comes down to what one wants to believe, but I do not think that it is a matter of indifference one way or the other. Beliefs have consequences. Indeed there is one consequence which has to be watched carefully, and that one is the tendency for a man's beliefs to distort his findings. Kaplan would have made a very bad professional historian for the reason that he would have gone through the data with the predetermined purpose of substantiating his philosophy. By contrast I think that Abram L. Sachar has written a relatively undistorted history. He does not exhibit a great deal of what R. G. Collingwood has called "the web of imaginative construction," but he has taken great and obvious pains to see to it that The History of the Jews does not constitute A Jewish History of the Jews. He wrote:

"A century ago the Biblical account of Hebrew origins was too sacred to question. The stories had been sanctified by the devotion of the ages; they had been the moral pabulum of generations of children who were reared with piety. Men and women had reverently woven them into their religious faith. This reverence, often bolstered up with unreasoning dogmatism, made the orthodox unwilling to submit the Bible to ordinary scientific tests. It was difficult even to suggest that the delightful folklore of the Holy Writ could not serve as history, that it was, indeed, not meant to be an exact account of the development of Hebrew life." 21

Now, I am prepared to offer my own interpretation of biblical history. I am afraid I have offended you by a lengthy and roundabout

proffer of my credentials, which are that I do not believe that the events of history are unfolding under the aegis of any covenant with anyone; that I recite the Schma primarily for medical reasons; but that I feel a kinship in the improbable conglomeration that includes Moses and Brian Epstein and "those who are not with us here this day." And I admit to feeling thrilled and to sensing miracle in the seemingly strange fact of Jewish survival. I hope my interpretation will find favor.

V. "The Number Of People Was . . . Not Much Greater  
22  
Than The Number Of Lions."

There are profound, transforming events which seem to have occurred. They are axial events. For example, in the Christian meaning of history the life and death of Jesus Christ is an axis dividing history into a before and an after. In the Jewish meaning the life and death of Moses is such an axis. In passing I note some of the interpretative mechanism and apparatus of Christian history that distinguishes it from the Jewish. That is, Christ's birth and death are regarded as miraculous (divine) whereas Moses's birth and death are doggedly ordinary (mortal). But the general point is that there are axial events or turning points in history, whether or not history is deemed to have a meaning.

I propose now to interpret the history of the Jews in terms, first, of an axial event, which happens to be the invention of agriculture, in

terms, second, of the nature of man as an animal, and in terms, third, of the genius of Moses.

As to the event, which will be the subject matter of this Part V of this paper, Roger Revelle, Professor of Population Policy and Director of the Harvard Center for Population studies, has written:

"Agriculture was invented 6000 to 9000 years ago. Its development over the next few millenia radically changed the human condition, and destroyed the previous equilibrium between birth rates and death rates. In the Fertile Crescent from the Nile to the Tigris-Euphrates, in China, India, Southern Europe Middle America and Peru, human numbers may have increased a hundredfold in one or two thousand years, until a new quasi-balance between births and deaths was attained. It has been estimated that, by the time of Christ, the world population was 300 million, even though agriculture had barely begun, or had not even been started, over large areas." <sup>23</sup>

This axial invention of agriculture, and this consequent explosion of population, resulted in the Middle East in what William H. McNeill has called "the breakthrough to civilization." <sup>24</sup> Men turned from the predatory to the domestic (including the nomadic). To support the communities that evolved, there also evolved a variety of political, legal and ethical systems. The government of Moses was one. That of Hammurabi was another. There were numerous others, some of them fairly well known today and some of them only dimly recorded. <sup>25</sup>

I think that our revered Torah should be viewed in this giant per-

spective. And when so viewed, the Torah is merely one Code out of the many Codes that evolved when the invention of agriculture civilized the human animal. It served the particular function of unifying the Hebrews, but the Hebrews were merely one group out of the many groups that proliferated in the Middle East.

I am not arguing that the biblical Hebrews were of no importance. I am saying that they were of quite limited importance. They are interesting. They have commanded the attention of great scholars. Some of their documents -- the Five Books of Moses, for example -- are marvelous pieces of evidence about the past. As Nelson Glueck said, "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever contro-  
26  
verted a biblical reference." But the truth is that the ancient Hebrews simply were not very important in ancient history.

Now I want to digress in order to contradict this minimization in two ways.

First, I want to acknowledge that, although the biblical Hebrews were not important in ancient history, they are of great importance in modern history. McNeill has stated it as follows:

"This [religious] conviction, and the magnificent poetry in which it was clothed, have become basic parts of the European cultural inheritance; and one cannot withhold admiration from

the men who wrought so enduringly. In an age when the civilization of the Middle East was leveling out toward a flaccid cosmopolitanism, and when dry rot had invaded the two anciently civilized lands of Babylonia and Egypt, the religion and literature of the Jews exhibited an extraordinary power and vigor. In its strong hold over human minds and hearts, uniquely combining religious universalism with individualism and nationalism, lay Judaism's strength and the secret of its future world-transforming career. " 27

Second, my knowledge of ancient history is not so great that I should arrogate to myself to depreciate any of the ancient people. Indeed, in preparing this paper I discovered many wonderful things that I had not dreamed of before. For example, I found that there is a question about whether all or only some of the Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt. At first the problem did not seem important to me, and I was satisfied with McNeill's rather mechanical statement of it, which is as follows:

"Only a part, perhaps a small part, of the Hebrew people had sojourned in Egypt, departing for the desert sometime in the thirteenth century B. C. under the leadership of Moses. . . . \* \* \*

"When the tribe that Moses had thus re-formed took its place in Palestine side by side with other Hebrew tribes, the religion of Yahweh and the Mosaic law offered a valuable rallying point for the larger community. The other tribes, having recently come from the desert, presumably lacked written law, regular priestly organization, or definite revealed religion. Under the conditions of the conquest and early settlement of Palestine, they soon began to feel the need for such supplements to traditional tribal organization and custom, and, finding a suitable system ready at hand among a kindred and neighboring people, readily adopted the religion of Yahweh and made it their own. " 28



But then I read Martin Buber's interpretation in his book Moses: The  
29  
Revelation and the Covenant. I shall not trouble you right here with  
what I found. Suffice it that I was astonished. Later on I will mention  
the subject again.

Now I return to the giant perspective. I return to my belief that  
the Hebrews and their whole culture, including the Torah, were simply  
a particular instance of "the breakthrough to civilization." In advancing  
this view I note that the Mosaic epoch follows the invention of agriculture  
by several millenia but that the critical effect of the invention -- namely  
the population explosion -- is documented in the biblical accounts. There-  
fore I propose to look at some of these accounts with a view to demonstrat-  
ing that the Hebrew religion was at least in part a response to population  
pressures.

In its opening verses, in setting the stage for Moses, the Book of  
Exodus records, "The total number of persons that were of Jacob's issue  
came to seventy, Joseph being already in Egypt. . . . But the Israelites  
were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased very greatly, so  
that the land was filled with them." 30 Pharaoh's concern is that "the  
31  
Israelite people are much too numerous for us." Pharaoh's remedy --  
the order to kill the male children -- is the very factor that originally

distinguishes Moses and that elevates him to his heroic proportions.

Later, by the first day of the second month in the second year following the exodus, according to the Book of Numbers, the number of males, twenty years and older, able to bear arms, excluding the Levites, was 603,550.<sup>32</sup> If women and children and all others also were counted in such a census, the whole would amount to about 2,000,000 persons.

The supposed growth of 70 persons into some 2,000,000 bears literal examination. In the Book of Genesis God made the following prediction to Abram, who at the time was childless: "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. . . . So shall your offspring be. . . . Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. . . ." I will take this prediction to establish the duration of the sojourn in Egypt, and I will assume that the 400 years began to run at about the time that there were 70 persons who were the issue of Abram's grandson Jacob. I will assume further that half of them were men and half women; that in each successive generation thereafter each pair of one man and one woman produced a net of 4 children who survived and who were able to procreate; that there were an average of about 29 years to a generation; and that there was an ordinary death rate. Under these assumptions

the population after 400 years would be equal to approximately  $70 \times 2^{15}$ , which amounts to 2,293,760. Therefore I conclude that the biblical account could possibly be accurate on the basis of reasonable assumptions and simple mathematics.

G. Ernest Wright has considered this same problem and has reached the following conclusion:

"The census lists in Num. 1 and 26, probably variations of the same list, give the number of males involved in the Exodus and the Wandering as slightly over 600,000. With women and children the total population would be between two and three million. The Sinai peninsula could not possibly have supported this number. Three to five thousand would be a more reasonable figure. The army of Rameses II in the battle of Kadesh against the Hittites numbered 20,000 men, and would constitute no threat to an Israelite army of 600,000. It is possible that the lists represent a census taken in a later age, e.g., in the period of the Judges or in the time of David (2 Sam. 24), and that the word for 'thousand' in the list has a specialized military meaning." 34

Despite the seeming success of my mathematics above, I would agree with Dr. Wright. There were natural limits on the size of the Hebrew population. Certainly one limit would have to have been the ability of the desert to support the people with food and drink. Another limit, that seems equally real to me, would be the maximum number of persons that Moses could have commanded effectively. I think this number would be the number of persons who could hear his voice, and I would set it at about 5,000.

It is not essential here to try to determine the exact magnitude of the following of Moses. Whatever the absolute numbers involved, the Bible manifests awe and concern at the growth of the numbers.

Now I will trouble you to read one last piece of evidence from the Book of Exodus. This evidence speaks of something which is of constitutional magnitude in the formation of Judaism. There were two things that were mutually necessary that occurred at Sinai. One of them was the declaration of the substantive law, the Ten Commandments and the Covenant Code. The other was the establishment of a judicial system to administer and enforce the law. The latter is given precedence in the narrative. In the following rather fanciful account, please note the weight of the population as it presses upon Moses as the narrator conceives it:

"Next day, Moses sat as a magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, 'What is this thing that you have undertaken for the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?' Moses replied to his father-in-law, 'It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I arbitrate between a man and his neighbor, and I make known the teachings of God.'

"But Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, you as well as this people. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, and enjoin upon them the laws and the teach-

ings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain; and set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Let them exercise authority over the people at all times; let them bring every major dispute to you, but decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself, and let them share the burden with you. If you do this -- and God so commands you -- you will be able to bear up; and all these people will come home content. '

"Moses heeded his father-in-law and did just as he had said. . . . Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way to his own land. " 35

I conclude this Part V with this summary: The momentous establishment of Jewish religion was a mere skirmish in the human revolution that followed the invention of agriculture. McNeil has described the revolution as a whole in this gigantic perspective:

"This [invention] opened a radically new phase of human history. The predator's mode of life automatically limits numbers; and large-bodied predators, like early men and modern lions, must perforce remain relatively rare in nature. Thus larger populations, with all the possibilities of specialization and social differentiation which numbers permit, could only be sustained by human communities that found ways of escaping from the natural limits imposed by their predatory past. This constituted perhaps the most basic of all human revolutions. Certainly the whole history of civilized mankind depended on the enlargement of the human food supply through agriculture and the domestication of animals. The costs were real, however; for the tedious labor of tilling the fields was a poor substitute for the fierce joys, sharp exertions, and instinctive satisfactions of the hunt. The human exercise of power thus early showed its profoundly double-edged character; for a farming folk's enlarged dominion over nature, and liberation from earlier limits upon food supply, meant also an unremitting enslavement to seed, soil, and season. " 37

VI. "Man Is The Animal Which Represses Himself And  
Which Creates Culture Or Society In Order To  
Repress Himself."

37

As McNeil said, when man -- including our Hebrew ancestors -- made the breakthrough to civilization, "the fierce joys, sharp exertions, and instinctive satisfactions of the hunt" were replaced by "an unremitting enslavement to seed, soil, and season." I think that biblical history should be assessed now in terms of the nature of man and in terms of that which happens to man by virtue of the fact that he is civilized.

The nature of man is that of an animal. We should not neglect this fact. "Man has existed in substantially his present biological form for perhaps a million years. . . .,"<sup>38</sup> but civilization, which ultimately distinguishes him from the other species, is less than 10,000 years old. "Homo sapiens appeared in Europe only after the last glacial ice sheets had begun to melt back northward, perhaps 30,000 years ago."<sup>39</sup> And for more than 20,000 of these years man was at most a skillful hunter. The science of physics, which is the science that gives man his measure of strength in his encounter with the cosmos as a whole, is only about 350 years old.

There is a particular animal aspect of man that was most influ-

ential in enabling him to become civilized and that then turned out to be most profoundly affected by the fact that he became civilized. That aspect is man's relationship to his young. Human young are utterly helpless at birth and are very slow to mature, so that there is a prolonged period in the life of every man in which he is dependent on others for his very survival.

McNeill regards this aspect as the one which presents man with the opportunity to become civilized. He said:

"Indeed, the helplessness of human young must at first have been an extraordinary hazard to survival. But this handicap has compensations, which in the long run redounded in truly extraordinary fashion to the advantage of mankind. For it opened wide the gates to the possibility of cultural as against merely biological evolution. In due course, cultural evolution became the means whereby the human animal, despite his unimpressive teeth and muscles, rose to undisputed preeminence among the beasts of prey. By permitting, indeed compelling, men to instruct their children in the arts of life, the prolonged period of infancy and childhood made it possible for human communities eventually to raise themselves above the animal level from which they began. For the arts of life proved susceptible of a truly extraordinary elaboration and accumulation, and in the fullness of time allowed men to master not only the animal, but also the vegetable and mineral resources of the earth, bending them more and more successfully to human purposes." 40

It is during a man's dependent infancy that there is the maximum transmission to him of his cultural inheritance. Benjamin S. Bloom presented the following table showing the age by which 50% of adult develop-

ment has occurred for the various designated characteristics:

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Age at 50% Achievement</u>
Height	2-1/2 years
General intelligence	4 years
Aggressiveness in males	3 years
Dependence in females	4 years
Intellectuality in males and females	4 years
General school achievement	Grade 3

No doubt Judaism's survival is in large measure attributable to thousands of years of obedience to the injunction, "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children."

During the infantile period of maximum cultural transmission, during this prolonged period of dependency, during this period in which the Hebraic injunction and the Catholic catechism and the like are being impressed, there are other events of great moment in the life of the child. In particular he is encountering the universe. The injunction, and also the catechism and the like, are imposing a cognitive structure on the phenomena which he apprehends, and at the very same time he is developing what Norman O. Brown calls a "psychological vulnerability."

Brown said the following:

"The critical institution in the transition from ape to man, the link between man's sexual and social organization, is parenthood, with the prolonged maintenance of children in a condition of helpless dependence. . . ."



"Prolonged infancy has . . . far-reaching consequences. On the one hand, infancy is protected from the harshness of reality by parental care; it represents a period of privileged irresponsibility and freedom from the domination of the reality-principle. This privileged irresponsibility permits and promotes an early blossoming of the essential desires of the human being, without repression and under the sign of the pleasure-principle. On the other hand, the infant's objective dependence on parental, especially maternal, care promotes a dependent attitude toward reality and inculcates a passive (dependent) need to be loved, which colors all subsequent interpersonal relationships. This psychological vulnerability is subsequently exploited to extract submission to social authority and to the reality-principle in general."<sup>42</sup> (Emphasis supplied.)

According to Brown, trauma, from which the individual never recovers without psychoanalysis, is the inevitable effect of this psychological vulnerability. That is, "the pleasure-principle is forced to capitulate against its will,"<sup>43</sup> and "the capitulation can be accomplished only by repression."<sup>43</sup> The trauma provides an answer to Brown's question, "Why does man, alone of all animals, have a history?"<sup>44</sup> The answer is that "the repressed dreams of omnipotent indulgence in pleasure persist"<sup>45</sup> and give man a Faustian restlessness. Since man is unconscious of his real desires and since man cannot be satisfied through his conscious desires, his restlessness leaves a cultural record which we call history.

If it is true that man's neuroticism causes history, there is a very important consequence. According to Sigmund Freud there is a law of neurotic diseases that there will be obsessive acts which increasingly

approach the original forbidden impulse and the original forbidden act. Thus, in arguing that Moses was assassinated by his people and that the form and content of religion are determined by the repression of this supposed event, Freud said:

"Now I will invite the reader to take a step forward and assume that in the history of the human species something happened similar to the events in the life of the individual. That is to say, mankind as a whole also passed through conflicts of a sexual-aggressive nature, which left permanent traces, but which were for the most part warded off and forgotten; later, after a long period of latency, they came to life again and created phenomena similar in structure and tendency to neurotic symptoms.

"I have, I believe, divined these processes and wish to show that their consequences, which bear a strong resemblance to neurotic symptoms, are the phenomena of religion . . . ." 46

But the result of this reasoning is that history, being a neurotic manifestation, will necessarily follow a direction given by the law of neurotic diseases.

I am reminded again of Kaplan's fantastically naive assumption that history is "a progressive movement in the direction of ever-increasing truth, justice and peace . . ." And also one must consider the notion in Christian history that there will be an Antichrist, which is a great antagonist who is expected to fill the world with wickedness and who will be conquered forever by Christ at His second coming. Reinhold Niebuhr said:

"In the New Testament the [Antichrist] symbol is integral to a total and consistent view of history, according to which the future is never presented as a realm of greater security or as the guarantor of a higher virtue. The Antichrist stands at the end of history to indicate that history cumulates, rather than solves, the essential problems of human existence." 47

In other words, in the history of Freud and in the history of Kaplan and in the history of Niebuhr - all three alike - there is a direction which mankind is following. In Kaplan and Niebuhr God points the direction. In Freud it is man's own unconscious. But for all of these distinguished gentlemen history has a meaning.

I am getting ready to advance my own final view of history. First, however, I want to call attention to the concept of Teilhard de Chardin that at a definite moment in the past, in the evolutionary experience of man, the notion of collective "mankind" arose and that it served the purpose of endowing individual man with a derivative existence beyond the limits of his own existence. De Chardin said:

"Mankind: the idea of mankind was the first image in terms of which, at the very moment that he awoke to the idea of progress, modern man must have tried to reconcile the hopes of an unlimited future with which he could no longer dispense, with the perspective of the inevitability of his own unavoidable individual death. 'Mankind' was at first a vague entity, felt rather than thought out, in which an obscure feeling of perpetual growth was allied to a need for a universal fraternity. Mankind was the object of a faith that was often naive but whose magic, being stronger than all vicissitudes and criticisms, goes

on working with persuasive force upon the present day masses and on the 'intelligentsia' alike. Whether one takes part in the cult or makes fun of it, even today no-one can escape being haunted or even dominated by the idea of mankind." 48

Ahad Ha-'Am, the fine pamphleteer of Zionism, has identified the same sense of the collective as a special and very powerful characteristic of Judaism in particular. He wrote:

"Judaism did not turn heavenwards and create in Heaven an eternal habitation of souls. It found 'eternal life' on earth, by strengthening the social feeling in the individual, by making him regard himself not as an isolated being, with an existence bounded by birth and death, but as part of a larger whole, as a limb of the social body. This conception shifts the center of gravity of the Ego not from the flesh to the spirit, but from the individual to the community; and concurrently with this shifting, the problem of life becomes a problem not of individual but of social life. I live for the sake of the perpetuation and the happiness of the community of which I am a member; I die to make room for new individuals, who will mould the community afresh and not allow it to stagnate and remain forever in one position. When the individual thus values the community as his own life, and strives after its happiness as though it were his individual well-being, he finds satisfaction, and no longer feels so keenly the bitterness of his individual existence, because he sees the end for which he lives and suffers. But this can only be so when the life of the community has an end of such importance as to outweigh, in the judgment of the individual, all possible hardships. . . . So it was that Israel as a community became 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,' a nation consecrated from its birth to the service of setting the whole of mankind an example by its Law." 49

My own view is similar to that of de Chardin and Ahad Ha-'Am. I agree that man identifies with 'mankind' and a Jew with 'the Jewish people'

and that this process confers a feeling of a kind of immortality. But I think that the person who does the identifying is doing so for the purpose of seeking significance rather than immortality.

Man is the animal who is driven by his own insignificance. Man is the animal who is aware of the cosmos. Man is the animal who thinks of the remote stars and who is thereby reminded -- without even knowing it -- that at times his mother's breast was full for him and that at other times he wept and cried out and demanded and got nothing and was reduced to quivering whimpers. Man is the animal who kept trying to launch the first Vanguard space package while the Sputnik was beeping in orbit. Man is the animal who stood hungry and thirsty and lonesome and scared at the foot of Sinai.

I agree with Brown that there is a traumatic repression of the ultimate of the sense of insignificance and that the repression results from the infant's primordial disaster: the child's "omnipotent indulgence in pleasure" is utterly destroyed by the reality of his "powerless dependence  
50  
on other people."

Man's intellect heightens this disaster. As he progresses in knowledge and learns, for example, that he is  $10^{27}$  atoms, and if he takes this view seriously, the vestiges of omnipotence disappear, and he is left

with the nightmare concern, Who will take care of these atoms? As Brown says, "The infantile conflict between actual impotence and dreams of omnipotence is . . . the basic theme of the universal history of mankind. And in both conflicts -- in the history of the individual and [in] the history of the race -- the stakes are the meaning of love."<sup>51</sup>

Why else would Brian Epstein have died of an overdose?

VII. "Every Individual Is A Moses Who Perishes Outside  
The Promised Land."<sup>52</sup>

Man-the-individual dies. Man-the-citizen lives forever in the history of the community. The sun never sets on George, John, Paul or Ringo. What a relief it must be to be able to go to bed at night and to be aware, as the thoughts of death pluck at one's aorta, that one is a Member of the Order of the British Empire. And yet within recent days the British pound has been devalued. No wonder the Beatles are studying under Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

In all of human history it was Moses who created the most enduring sense of community. Nations come and nations go, but within recent days it was the Jews, the descendants of the Patriarchs, who got the jump on the Egyptian air force. Certainly the prophets had something to do with it, too, that Judaism survived the destructions of the Temple and the millenia

of the Diaspora, but it was Moses who gave the idea.

Once, at a precarious moment in my own existence, I opened a Bible "at random," taking due care to stay in the front part of it. I read of the infant Moses - my namesake - floating down the Nile toward the bosom of his enemy. Thereupon I took heart in the cosmos.

Today I see Moses lying on the rocks of Sinai. He is in fever. A spine of stone is cutting into his cheek just below his eye. His bones ache. He is unable to move. He came to Sinai because at the camp the children were stoning him. They were thirsty. Their mothers were loitering with the men.

He himself is beyond thirst. He has wept away almost all of his fluids. A moment ago a man from the camp had struggled toward the rocks, staggering, and had shaken a stick up at him and had shouted, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" The man went away, but his voice seemed to linger. At the foot of the rocks there were 50 or 100 men gathering, looking up at him, shouting at him. At night they would take their sticks, and then they would come after him.

He tried to move but was afraid that the spine would penetrate his eye.

The sun was gone now, and he began to tremble, shivering with every muscle as the night wind blew across his burning back and chilled him up and down his arms and legs and feet.

The wind also bore the sounds of laughter. There were shrill screams of delight. Perhaps the girl with brown skin, who had come to his tent, was screaming. There was a fire far below, back at the camp. Perhaps the fire was glistening off her thighs. Perhaps she stood with her legs apart, holding her hands behind her, bending herself backward, keeping her dry mouth open, hoping it would rain.

Now there were scraping noises, stones crunching underfoot. They were coming after him.

He managed to rise. As they came into sight, barely visible in the moonlight, he took the tablets he had carved. He walked past them. Somehow he managed to control his trembling. At the edge of the camp Joshua was waiting for him, his sword ready in hand. Together they walked to the fire. The men followed silently only three steps behind.

The girl was naked. Her body was shining at him in the firelight. She was grinning. He set the tablets down and took up her child in his arms. He made his voice as loud as he could. He said, "I did not bring you up out of Egypt to kill you and your children and your cattle with thirst. There is



water in the rocks on the mountain. The Lord will lead me to it. Tomorrow, when it is daylight, I will lead you to it, and you will drink -- you and your cattle and your children and this child, too."

There was great murmuring. After a long while the girl went and covered herself with a cloth and came and stood next to him. She reached up and touched the dry blood where the spine had ripped open his flesh. One of the men who had followed him with a stick came close and said, "Show us that this thing is true."

He looked steadily at the man, hoping his fear and doubt would not show and betray him in his eyes. At last he put down the child, and he took up one of the tablets. He was trembling as he pointed at it and began to read: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

#### VIII. The Final Solution To The Jewish Problem

Thank you for reading what I have written about antiquity.

History has no meaning for me. That which befalls us upon this planet Earth is, in my humble view, of no significance in the cosmos. Sometimes I feel ridiculous, muttering the Schma into the galactic void. But I do so for medical reasons -- and for other reasons, too, I think.

With respect to the history of the future, I think that someday the

Dave Clark Five will disband; that the Bachelors will meet their match; that the Animals will go the way of all flesh; and that the Rolling Stones will gather their moss. But I think that Judaism will survive.

The music that we hear is the music of the spheres, of the cosmos. Judaism will survive unless the chemists go one step too far or one step too high in their trifling with the genetic spirals. If the chemists behave -- and I doubt that they will --, I think that Judaism will survive for the reason that there will always be a small percentage of us who will think as Moses thought and who will feel as Moses felt on the rocks at Sinai.

So we will keep on going, we will keep on plugging away in the midst of the meaninglessness, and it will not hurt us to pass on the Schma to whom it may concern.

The End

## FOOTNOTES

1. I don't know the original source of this quotation.
2. N. Y. Times, June 13, 1965, p. 1
3. Op. cit. note 2, supra, p. 3
4. Ibid
5. Op. cit. note 2, supra, p. 1
6. Psalm 144
7. Joyce, Ulysses (Modern Library) p. 35
8. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew (Macmillan, 1948) p. 211
9. Aiken in Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry (Harcourt, Brace, 1941) pp. 460-461
10. Toynbee, A Study of History (1954) Vol. X, p. 3
11. Meyerhoff, The Philosophy of History in our Time (Doubleday, Anchor, 1959) p. 23
12. Ibid
13. Ibid
14. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization (Yoseloff, 1957) pp. 99-100
15. Deuteronomy 29:15
16. Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (Simon and Schuster, 1945) p. 312
17. Schwarzschild in Great Jewish Ideas (B'Nai B'rith, 1964) p. 237

18. Ibid
19. Sachar, A History of the Jews (Knopf, 1966)
20. Collingwood in op. cit. note 11, supra, pp. 66-84
21. Ibid, p. 10
22. Revelle, Population, Science Journal, October, 1967, Vol. 3, No. 19, p. 113
23. Ibid
24. McNeill, The Rise of the West (Mentor, 1965), pp. 45-78
25. Ibid, Chapters II and III
26. Glueck, Rivers in the Desert ( ), p. 31
27. Op. cit. note 24, supra, p. 183
28. Ibid, pp. 174-75
29. Buber, Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant (Harper Torch, 1958)
30. Exodus 1:7
31. Ibid, 1:9
32. Numbers 1:44
33. Genesis 15:5, 13
34. Wright, Biblical Archaeology (Westminster, 1960) pp. 41-42
35. Exodus 18:13-27
36. Op. cit. note 24, supra, pp. 25-26

37. Brown, *Life Against Death* (Random House, 1959) p. 9
38. Op. cit. note 22, supra
39. Op. cit. note 24, supra, p. 22
40. Op. cit. note 24, supra, pp. 20-21
41. Bloom, *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* (Wiley, 1964) p. 205
42. Op. cit. note 37, supra, pp. 24-25
43. Ibid, p. 25
44. Ibid, p. 15
45. Ibid, p. 25
46. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (Vintage, 1939), p. 101
47. Niebuhr in op. cit. note 11, supra, p. 328
48. De Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (Harper Torch, 1965) p. 245
49. Ahad Ha-'Am, *Selected Essays* (Jewish Publication Society, 1912) pp. 146-47
50. Op. cit. note 37, supra, p. 25
51. Ibid
52. Op. cit. note 47, supra, p. 319
53. I said I could refer again to my astonishment at Martin Buber's interpretation concerning the Hebrew population that was in Egypt and that came out with Moses. Buber's point is that the exact data is obscure but that the act of Moses incorporated all of Israel into the Covenant at one and the same time. The imaginative devices and concepts of Buber are wonderful. Op. cit. note 29, supra.