

excluded and denied both temporal and eternal happiness. Each one has singled out one side of human nature in order to link to it the entire absolute truth, but at the same time has underestimated or cast aside all other sides of human life, and thereby blocked the road to complete truth, which can never be presented in final form, nor ever be the exclusive possession of one portion of humanity. Judaism, which is neither a religious nor a national system *solely*, but aims to be a *covenant with God* uniting all peoples, lays claim to no exclusive truth, and makes its appeal to no single group of mankind. The Messianic hope, which aims to unite all races and classes of men into a bond of brotherhood, has become an impelling force in the history of the world, and both Christianity and Islam, in so far as they owe their existence to this hope and to the adoption of Jewish teachings, constitute parts of the history of Judaism. Between these world-religions with their wide domains of civilization stands the little Jewish people as a cosmopolitan element. It points to an ideal future, with a humanity truly united in God, when, through ceaseless progress in the pursuit of ever more perfect ideals, truth, justice, and peace will triumph,—to the realization of the kingdom of God.

PART III

ISRAEL AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL

1. The central point of Jewish theology and the key to an understanding of the nature of Judaism is the doctrine, "God chose Israel as His people." The election of Israel as the chosen people of God, or, what amounts to the same, as the nation whose special task and historic mission it is to be the bearer of the most lofty truths of religion among mankind, forms the basis and the chief condition of revelation. Before God proclaimed the Ten Words of the Covenant on Sinai, He addressed the people through His chosen messenger, Moses, saying: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will hearken unto My voice, indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."¹

2. The fact of Israel's election by God as His peculiar nation is repeated in Deuteronomy, with the special declaration that God had found delight in them as the smallest of the peoples, on account of the love and the faith He had sworn to the Patriarchs.² It is accentuated in the Synagogal liturgy,

¹ Ex. XIX, 4-5.

² Deut. VII, 6-8; X, 15; XIV, 2. Comp. Schechter: *Aspects*, 57 ff.

especially in the prayer for holy days which begins with the words: "Thou hast chosen us from all peoples; Thou hast loved us and found pleasure in us and hast exalted us above all tongues; Thou hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and brought us near unto Thy service, O King, and hast called us by Thy great and holy name."¹ Inasmuch as the election of Israel is connected with the deliverance of the people from Egypt, the whole relation of the Jewish nation to its God assumes from the outset an essentially different character from that of other nations to their deities. The God of Israel is not inseparably connected with His people by mere natural bonds, as is the case with every other ancient divinity. He is not a national God in the ordinary sense. He has chosen Israel freely of His own accord. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son," says God through Hosea,² and thus prefers to call Himself "thy God from the land of Egypt." This election from love is echoed also in Jeremiah, who said, "Israel is the Lord's hallowed portion, His first-fruits of the increase."³ The moral relation between God and Israel is most clearly characterized, however, by Amos, in the words: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."⁴ Here is stated in explicit terms that the God of history selected Israel as an instrument for His plan of salvation, in the expectation that he would remain faithful to His will.

3. The real purpose of the election and mission of Israel was announced by the great prophet of the Exile when he called Israel the "servant of the Lord," who has been formed from his mother's bosom and delivered from every other bondage, in order that he may declare the praise of God among the peoples, and be a harbinger of light and a bond of

¹ See Singer's *Prayerbook*, 226 f.

³ Jer. II, 3.

² Hos. XI, 1; XII, 10; XIII, 4.

⁴ Amos III, 2.

union among the nations, the witness of God, the proclaimer of His truth and righteousness throughout the world.¹ The entire history of Israel as far back as the Patriarchs was reconstructed in this light, and we find the election of Abraham also similarly described in the Psalms² and in the liturgy. Indeed, in every morning prayer for the past two thousand years the Jewish people have offered thanks to God for the divine teaching that has been intrusted to their care, and praised Him "who has chosen Israel in love."³

4. The belief in the election of Israel rests on the conviction that the Jewish people has a certain superiority over other peoples in being especially qualified to be the messenger and champion of religious truth. In one sense this prerogative takes into account every people which has contributed something unique to any department of human power or knowledge, and therein has served others as pattern and guide. From the broader standpoint, all great historic peoples appear as though appointed by divine providence for their special cultural tasks, in which others can at most emulate them without achieving their greatness. Yet we cannot speak in quite the same way of the election of the Greeks or Romans or of the nations of remote antiquity for mastery in art and science, or for skill in jurisprudence and statecraft. The fact is that these nations were never fully conscious that they had a historic or providential destiny to influence mankind in this special direction. Israel alone was self-conscious, realizing its task as harbinger and defender of its religious truth as soon as it had entered into its possession. Its election, therefore, does not imply presumption, but rather a grave duty and responsibility. As the great seer of the Captivity had already declared, to be the servant of the Lord is to undergo

¹ Isa. XLI, 8 f.; XLII, 6; XLIII, 10; XLIX, 8.

² CV, 7 f., comp. Neh. IX, 7.

³ Singer's *Prayerb.*, p. 40.

the destiny of suffering, to be "the man of sorrow," from whose bruises comes healing unto all mankind.¹

5. Accordingly the election of Israel cannot be regarded as a single divine act, concluded at one moment of revelation, or even during the Biblical period. It must instead be considered a divine call persisting through all ages and encompassing all lands, a continuous activity of the spirit which has ever summoned for itself new heralds and heroes to testify to truth, justice, and sublime faith, with an unparalleled scorn for death, and to work for their dissemination by words and deeds and by their whole life. Judaism differs from all other religions in that it is neither the creation of one great moral teacher and preacher of truth, nor seeks to typify the moral and spiritual sublimity which it aims to develop in a single person, who is then lifted up into the realm of the superhuman. Judaism counts its prophets, its sages, and its martyrs by generations; it is still demonstrating its power to reshape and regenerate religion as a vital force. Moreover, Judaism does not separate religion from life, so as to regard only a segment of the common life and the national existence as holy. The entire people, the entire life, must bear the stamp of holiness and be filled with priestly consecration. Whether this lofty aim can ever be completely attained is a question not to be decided by short-sighted humanity, but only by God, the Ruler of history. It is sufficient that the life of the individual as well as that of the people should aspire toward this ideal.

6. Of course, the election of Israel presupposes an inner calling, a special capacity of soul and tendency of intellect which fit it for the divine task. The people which has given mankind its greatest prophets and psalmists, its boldest thinkers and its noblest martyrs, which has brought to fruition the three great world-religions, the Church, the Mosque, and — mother of them both — the Synagogue, must be the

¹ Isa. LII, 3-LIII, 12.

religious people *par excellence*. It must have within itself enough of the heavenly spark of truth and of the impetus of the religious genius as to be able and eager, whenever and wherever the opportunity is favorable, to direct the spiritual flight of humanity toward the highest and holiest. In fact, the soul of the Jewish people reveals a peculiar mingling of characteristics, a union of contrasts, which makes it especially fit for its providential mission in history. Together with the marked individuality of each person we find a common spirit highly sensitive to every encroachment. Here there is a tenacious adherence to what is old and traditional, and there an eager assimilation of what is new and strange. On the one hand, a materialistic self-interest; on the other, an idealism soaring to the stars.¹ The sages of the Tannaitic period already remarked that Israel has been intrusted with the law which it is to defend and to disseminate, just because it is the boldest and most obstinate of nations.² On the other hand, the three special characteristics of the Jewish people according to the Talmud are its chastity and purity of life, its benevolence and its active love for humanity.³ A heathen scoffer calls Israel "a people of generous impulses which promised at Sinai to do what God would command, even before it had hearkened to the commandments."⁴ "Gentle and shy as a dove, it is also willing like the dove to stretch out its neck for the sacrifice, for love of its heavenly Father," says the Haggadist.⁵ And yet R. Johanan remarks that Israel, called to be the bearer of light to the world, must be pressed like the olive before it will yield its precious oil.⁶ Every individual in Israel possesses the requisite qualities for a holy priest-people, according to a Midrash of the Tannaitic period, and hence we read in Deuteronomy, "The Lord

¹ Meg. 16 a.

² Beza 25 b.

³ Yeb. 79 a.

⁴ Shab. 88 a.

⁵ Cant. R. IV, 2; Tanh. Tezaveh 1.

⁶ Menah. 53 b with ref. to Jer. XI, 16.

hath chosen thee to be His own treasure out of all peoples that are upon the face of the earth."¹

7. All these and similar sayings disprove completely the idea that the election of Israel was an arbitrary act of God. It is due rather to hereditary virtues and to tendencies of mind and spirit which equip Israel for his calling. To this must be added the important fact that God educated the people for its task through the Law, which was to make it conscious of its priestly sanctity and keep it ever active in mind and heart. The election of Israel is emphasized in Deuteronomy especially in connection with the prohibition of marriage with idolaters and with the prohibition of unclean animals, which also originated in the priestly laws.² The underlying idea is that the mission of Israel to battle for the Most High imperatively demands separation from the heathen peoples, and on the other hand, that its priestly calling necessitates an especial abstinence. And as has the law in its development and realization for thousands of years, so has also God's wise guidance trained Israel in the course of history so as to render him at times the unyielding preserver and defender and at other times the bold champion and protagonist of the highest truth and justice, according as the outlook and the mental horizon of the period were narrow or broad.

8. It is true that the thought of Israel's calling and mission in world-history first became clear when its prophets and sages attained a view of great world-movements from the lofty watch-tower of the centuries, so that they could take cognizance of the varying relations of Judaism to the civilized peoples around. The summons of the Jewish people to be heralds of truth and workers for peace is first mentioned in Isaiah and Micah,³ while only in the great movement of nations

¹ Sifre to Deut. XIV, 2.

² Deut. VII, 6; XIV, 2.

³ Isa. II, 3; Micah IV, 2 — passages considered by modern critics to be of exilic origin.

under Cyrus did the seer of the Exile recognize the peculiar mission of Israel in the history of the world. If in gloomy periods the outlook became dark, still the hope for the fulfillment of this mission was never entirely lost. In fact, the contact of the Jewish people with Greek culture after Alexander the Great gave new power and fresh impetus to the conception of Israel's mission,¹ as the rich Hellenistic literature and the vision of Daniel in chapter VII testify. In fact, Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish people, became for the earliest Haggadists a wandering missionary and a great preacher of the unity of God, and his picture was the pattern for both Paul and Mohammed.² The election of Israel is clearly and unequivocally expressed by Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedath in the words, "God sent Israel among the heathen nations that they may win a rich harvest of proselytes, for, as God said through Hosea, 'I will sow her unto Me in the land,' so He wishes from this seed to reap a bountiful and world-wide harvest."³

9. In the Middle Ages, when the historical viewpoint and the idea of human progress were both lacking, the belief in the mission of Israel was confined to the Messianic hope. Both Jehuda ha Levi and Maimonides, however, regard Christianity and Islam as preparatory steps for the Messiah, who is to unify the world through the knowledge of God.⁴ "The work of the Messiah is the fruit, of which Israel will be universally acknowledged as the root," says the Jewish sage in the Cuzari. Therefore he rightly accepts the election of Israel as a fundamental doctrine of belief. Modern times, however, with their awakened historical sense and their idea of progress, have again placed in the foreground the belief

¹ See Bousset, l. c., 60-99.

² Gen. R. to Gen. XII, 4, and see J. E., art. Abraham.

³ Pes. 87 b. with ref. to Hosea II, 25.

⁴ Cuzari IV, 23; Maim. H. Melakim XI, 4.

in the election and mission of Israel. The founders of reform Judaism have cast this ancient doctrine in a new form. On the one hand, they have reinterpreted the Messianic hope in the prophetic spirit, as the realization of the highest ideals of a united humanity. On the other, they have rejected the entire theory that Israel was exiled from his ancient land because of his sins, and that he is eventually to return there and to restore the sacrificial cult in the Temple at Jerusalem. Therefore the whole view concerning Israel's future had to undergo a transformation.¹ The historic mission of Israel as priest of humanity and champion of truth assumed a higher meaning, and his peculiar position in history and in the Law necessarily received a different interpretation from that of Talmudic Judaism or that of the Church. As individuals, indeed, many Jews have taken part in the achievements and efforts of all civilized peoples; the Jewish people as such has accomplished great things in only one field, the field of religion. The following chapters will consider more closely how Judaism has taken up and carried out this sacred mission.

¹ See Geiger: *Zeitschr.* 1868, p. 18 ff.; 1869, 55 ff.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE MISSION OF ISRAEL

1. The hope of Judaism for the future is comprised in the phrase, "the kingdom of God," — *malkuth shaddai* or *malkuth Shamayim*, — which means the sovereign rule of God. From ancient times the liturgy of the Synagogue concludes regularly with the solemn *Alenu*, in which God is addressed as the "King of kings of kings" — king of kings being the Persian title for the ruler of the whole Empire — and directly after this the hope is expressed that "we may speedily behold the glory of Thy might, when Thou wilt remove the abominations from the earth, and the idols will be utterly cut off; when the world will be perfected under the kingdom of the Almighty, and all the children of flesh will call upon Thy name; when Thou wilt turn unto Thyself all the wicked of the earth. Let all the inhabitants of the earth perceive and know that unto Thee every knee must bend, and every tongue give homage. Let them all accept the yoke of Thy kingdom, and do Thou reign over them speedily, and forever and ever."¹ At the close of the Torah lesson in the house of learning the assembly regularly recited the blessing, "Praised be Thy name! May Thy kingdom soon come!" — afterwards known as the *Kaddish*,² and reëchoed in the so-called "Lord's Prayer" of the Church. The words of the prophet, "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall the Lord be One, and His name One,"³ voiced for all ages this ideal of the future, and thus gave a goal and a purpose to the history of the world

¹ J. E., art. *Alenu*; Singer's *Prayerb.*, 76 f.

² J. E., art. *Kaddish*.

³ Zech. XIV, 9.