

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 *Alelu*, 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."<sup>1</sup> 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*,<sup>2</sup> 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,"<sup>3</sup> voiced for all ages this ideal of the future, and thus gave a goal and a purpose to the history of the world

<sup>1</sup> J. E., art. *Alelu*; Singer's *Prayerb.*, 76 f.

<sup>2</sup> J. E., art. *Kaddish*.

<sup>3</sup> Zech. XIV, 9.

and at the same time centered it in Israel, the chosen people of God.

2. The establishment of the kingdom of the One and Only God throughout the entire world constitutes the divine plan of salvation toward which, according to Jewish teaching, the efforts of all the ages are tending. This "Kingdom of God" is not, however, a kingdom of heaven in the world to come, which men are to enter only after death, and then only if redeemed from sin by accepting the belief in a supernatural Savior as their Messiah, as is taught by the Church. Judaism points to God's Kingdom on *earth* as the goal and hope of mankind, to a world in which all men and nations shall turn away from idolatry and wickedness, falsehood and violence, and become united in their recognition of the sovereignty of God, the Holy One, as proclaimed by Israel, His servant and herald, the Messiah of the nations. It is not the hope of bliss in a future life (which is the leading motive of Christianity), but the building up of the divine kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among men by Israel's teaching and practice.<sup>1</sup> In this sense God speaks through the mouth of the prophet, "I will also give thee for a light of the nations, that My salvation may be unto the end of the earth."<sup>2</sup> "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."<sup>3</sup> "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, as dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass."<sup>4</sup>

3. Clearly, the idea of a world-kingdom of God arose only as the result of the gradual development of the Jewish God-consciousness. It was necessary at first that the prophetic idea of God's kingship, the theocracy in Israel, should triumph over the monarchical view and absorb it. The patriarchal life of the shepherd was certainly not favorable to a monarchical rule. "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule

<sup>1</sup> See Schechter: *Aspects*, 89 f., 93 f.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. LII, 10.]

<sup>2</sup> Isa. XLIX, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Micah V, 6.

over you, the Lord shall rule over you," said Gideon in refusing the title of king which the people had offered him.<sup>1</sup> According to one tradition Samuel blamed the people for desiring a king and thereby rejecting the divine kingship.<sup>2</sup> "I give thee a king in Mine anger," says God through Hosea.<sup>3</sup> The more the monarchy, with its exclusively worldly and materialistic aims, came into conflict with the demands of the prophets and their religious truth, the higher rose the prophetic hope for the dawning of a day when God alone would rule in absolute sovereignty over the entire world. Now, in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, with its frequently changing dynasties, the old patriarchal conception was dominant, while in the kingdom of Judah, which remained loyal to the house of David, the monarchical idea developed. Isaiah, living in Jerusalem and favorably disposed towards the monarchy, prophesied that a shoot from the house of David, endowed with marvelous spiritual powers, should come forth, occupying the throne in the place of God, and through his victories would plant righteousness and the knowledge of God everywhere upon earth, and establish throughout the world a wonderful reign of peace.<sup>4</sup> Upon this royal "shoot" of David<sup>5</sup> rested the Messianic hope during the Exile, and amidst the disappointments of the time this vision became all the more idealized. In contrast to this the great prophet of the Exile announced the establishment of the absolute dominion of God as the true "King of Israel"<sup>6</sup> over all the earth by the nucleus of Israel, "the servant of God," who would become conscious of his great historic mission in the world and be willing to offer his very life in its cause. In all this the prophet makes no reference to the royal house of David, but makes

<sup>1</sup> Judg. VIII, 23.

<sup>2</sup> I Sam. VIII, 7; XII, 12, 17 f.

<sup>3</sup> Hos. XIII, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. IX, 5; XI, 1-10.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. IV, 2; Jer. XXIII, 5; XXXIII, 15; and Zech. III, 8; VI, 12. Here Zerubbabel is referred to.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. XLI, 21; XLIII, 15; XLIV, 6. Comp. XLIII, 22.

bold to confer the title of the "anointed of God" — that is, Messiah — upon Cyrus, the king of Persia, as the one who was to usher in the new era.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently these two divergent hopes for the future run parallel in the Psalms and the liturgy as well as in the apocryphal and rabbinic literature.

4. While the Messianic aspirations as such bore rather a political and national character in Judaism (as will be explained in Chapter LIII), yet the religious hope for a universal kingdom of God took root even more deeply in the heart of the Jewish people. It created the conception of Israel's mission and also the literature and activity of the Hellenistic propaganda, and it gave a new impetus to the making of proselytes among the heathen, to which both Christianity and Islam owe their existence. The words of Isaiah, repeated later by Habakkuk, "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,"<sup>2</sup> became now an article of faith. While in earlier times the rule of Israel's God, JHVH, was attached to Zion, from whose holy mount He ruled as invisible King,<sup>3</sup> later on we find Zechariah proclaiming Him who was enthroned in heaven as having dominion over the entire earth,<sup>4</sup> and the Psalter summons all nations to acknowledge, adore, and extol Him as King of the world.<sup>5</sup> Nay, at the very time when Judah lay humbled to the ground, the prophet exclaimed, "Who would not fear Thee, O King of the nations? for it befitteth Thee; forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their royalty there is none like unto Thee."<sup>6</sup> Israel's great hope for the future is expressed most completely and in most sublime language in the New Year liturgy: "O Lord our God, impose Thine

<sup>1</sup> Isa. XLV, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. XI, 9; Hab. II, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. VI, 5; XXIV, 23. Comp. Jer. XLVI, 18; XLVIII, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Zech. XIV, 9; Mal. I, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. XXII, 29; XCIII, 1; XCV, 99.

<sup>6</sup> Jer. X, 7. This chapter is post-exilic; comp. Jer. XLVI, 18; XLVIII, 15 and I Chron. XXIX, 11.

awe upon all Thy works, and let Thy dread be upon all that Thou hast created, that they may all form one single band to do Thy will with a perfect heart. . . . Our God and God of our fathers, reveal Thyself in Thy splendor as King over all the inhabitants of the world, that every handiwork of Thine may know that Thou hast made it, and every creature may acknowledge that Thou hast created it, and whatsoever hath breath in its nostrils may say: the Lord God of Israel is King, and His dominion ruleth over all."<sup>1</sup>

5. In the earlier period, then, the rule of JHVH seems to have been confined to Israel as the people of His covenant. During the Second Temple Jerusalem was called the "city of the great King"<sup>2</sup> and the constitution was considered by Josephus to have been a theocracy, that is, a government by God.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the entire Mosaic code has as its main purpose to make Israel a "kingdom of priests," over which JHVH, the God of the covenant, was alone to rule as King. The chief object of the strict nationalists, in opposition to the cosmopolitanism of the Hellenists, was that this government of God, in its intimate association with the Holy Land and the Holy People, should be maintained unchanged for all the future. Thus the book of Daniel predicts the speedy downfall of the fourth world-kingdom and the establishment of the kingdom of God through Israel, "the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."<sup>4</sup> Naturally, such a purely nationalistic conception of the rulership of God does not admit the thought of a mission or its corollary, the conversion of the heathen.<sup>5</sup> These appear among the liberal school of Hillel in their opposition to the more rigorous Shammaites and the party of the Zealots.<sup>6</sup> It is, therefore, quite consistent that the modern nationalists should again dispute the mission of Israel.

<sup>1</sup> Singer's *Prayerb.*, 239.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. XLVIII, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Cont. Apion.* II, 16, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Dan. VII, 27.

<sup>5</sup> See J. E., art. Zealots.

<sup>6</sup> Shab. 31 a.

6. As soon as Jewish monotheism had once been conceived by the Jewish mind as the universal truth, the idea of the mission of Israel as a bearer of light and a witness of God for the nations, as enunciated by Deutero-Isaiah, became ever more firmly established. Many Psalms exhort the people to make known the wondrous doings of God among the nations, so that the heathen world might at last acknowledge the One and Only God.<sup>1</sup> Nay, Israel is even called God's anointed and prophet,<sup>2</sup> and in one Psalm we find Zion, the city of God, elevated to be the religious metropolis of the world.<sup>3</sup> The book of Jonah is simply a refutation of the narrow nationalistic conception of Judaism; it holds forth the hope of the conversion of the heathen to the true knowledge of God. In the same spirit Ruth the Moabitess became the type of the heathen who are eager to "take refuge under the wings of God's majesty."<sup>4</sup> The author of the book of Job no longer knows of a national God; to him God is the highest ideal of morality as it lives and grows in the human heart. The wisdom literature also teaches a God of humanity. Under His wings Shem and Japheth, the teaching of the Jew and the wisdom of the Greek, can join hands; the religious truth of the one and the philosophic truth of the other may harmoniously blend.

7. Thus a new impulse was given to Jewish proselytism in Alexandria, and the earlier history of Israel, especially the pre-Israelite epoch with its simple human types, was read in a new light. Enoch<sup>5</sup> and Noah<sup>6</sup> became preachers of penitence, heralds of the pure monotheism from which the heathen world had departed. Abraham especially, the progenitor of Israel, was looked upon as a prototype of the wandering

<sup>1</sup> Ps. XXII, 28; LXVII, 3; LXXXVI, 10; CXVII, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. CV, 15. <sup>3</sup> Ps. LXXXVII, 5. See Commentaries and LXX.

<sup>4</sup> Ruth II, 12. Comp. Lev. R. II, 8.

<sup>5</sup> See both Enoch books and B. Sira XLIV, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Sibyll. I, 128-170; Sanh. 108 a.

missionary people, converting the heathen.<sup>1</sup> Wherever he journeyed, his teaching and his example of true benevolence won souls for the Lord proclaimed by him as the "God of the heaven and the earth."<sup>2</sup> In this sense of missionary activity were now interpreted the words, "Be thou a blessing . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."<sup>3</sup> This was no longer understood in the original sense, that Abraham by his prosperity should be an example of a blessed man, to be pointed out in blessing others; the words were given the higher meaning that Abraham with his descendants should become a source of blessing for mankind through his teachings and his conduct, so that all the families of men should attain blessing and salvation by following his doctrine and example. Thus the idea of the Jewish mission was connected with Abraham, the "father of a multitude of nations,"<sup>4</sup> and this was later on adopted by Paul and Mohammed in establishing the Church and the Mosque.

8. In contradistinction, then, to the political concept of the kingdom of God, which Ezekiel still hoped to see established by the exercise of external power,<sup>5</sup> the idea assumed now a purely spiritual meaning. This kingdom of God is accepted by the pious Jew every morning through his confession of the divine Unity in the Shema. Abraham had anticipated this, say the rabbis, when he swore by the God of heaven and earth, and so also had Israel in accepting the Torah at Sinai and at the Red Sea.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the kingdom of God began, we are told, with the first man, since, when he adored God freely as King of the world, every living creature acknowledged Him also. But only when Israel as a people proclaimed God's dominion at the Red Sea, was the throne

<sup>1</sup> Gen. R. XXXIX, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Sifre Deut. 313, with ref. to Gen. XXIV, 3.

<sup>3</sup> See Dillmann's Comm. to Gen. XII, 2; XXII, 18; and Kuenen: *The Prophets and Prophecy*, 373, 457.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. XVII, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek. XX, 33.

<sup>6</sup> Sifre, l. c.



of God and His kingdom on earth established for eternity.<sup>1</sup> And when Ezekiel says: "With a mighty hand will I be King over you," they explain this to mean that the people chosen as the servant of God will be continually constrained anew by the prophets to recognize His kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Yea, the closing words of the Song at the Red Sea, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" were taken to imply that all the nations would in the end recognize only Israel's One God as King of the world.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, the rabbinical view is that every proselyte, in "taking upon himself the yoke of the sovereignty of God," enters that divine Kingdom which at the end of time will embrace all men and nations.<sup>4</sup> In the book of Tobit and the Sibylline Oracles also we find this universalistic conception of the Messianic age expressed.<sup>5</sup>

9. Accordingly, proselytism found open and solemn recognition both before and after the time of the Maccabees, as we see in the Psalms, — especially those which speak of proselytes in the term, "they that fear the Lord,"<sup>6</sup> and also in the ancient synagogal liturgy, where the "proselytes of righteousness" are especially mentioned.<sup>7</sup> The school of Hillel followed precisely this course. Matters changed, however, under the Roman dominion, which was contrasted to the dominion of God especially from the time of Herod, when the belief became current that "only when the one is destroyed, will the other arise."<sup>8</sup> Particularly after the Christian Church had become identified with Rome, all missionary endeavors by the Jews were considered dangerous and were therefore discouraged as much as possible. In their

<sup>1</sup> P. D. R. El. XI; Mek. Yithro 6; Lev. R. II, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Sifra* Behukothai VIII with ref. to Ezek. XX, 33; Sanh. 105 a.

<sup>3</sup> Mek. Beshallah X, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Tanh. Lek leka 6.

<sup>5</sup> Tobit XIII, 1-11; Sibyll. III, 47, 76 b.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. CXVII; CXVIII, 4. See chapter LVI.

<sup>7</sup> Singer's *Prayerb.*, 48.

<sup>8</sup> Mek. Amalek at close; Cant. R. II, 28; IV Ezra VI, 9-10.

place arose the hope for a miraculous intervention of God. In Hellenistic circles the Messiah was believed to be the future founder of the kingdom of God,<sup>1</sup> which assumed more and more of an other-worldly nature, such as the Church developed for it later on.

10. The more the harsh oppression of the times forced the Jew to isolate himself and to spend his life in studying and practicing the law, — which was tantamount to "placing himself under the kingdom of God,"<sup>2</sup> the more he lost sight of his sublime mission for the world at large. Only individual thinkers, such as Jehuda ha Levi and Maimonides, kept a vision of the world-mission of Israel, when they called Jesus and Mohammed, as founders of Christianity and Islam, messengers of God to the idolatrous nations, divinely appointed to bring them nearer to Israel's truth,<sup>3</sup> or when they pointed forward to the time when all peoples will recognize in the truth their common mother and in God the Father of all mankind.<sup>4</sup> A most instructive Midrash on Zechariah IX, 9 gives the keynote of this belief. "At that time God as the King of Zion will speak to the righteous of all times, and say to them, 'Dear as the words of My teaching are to Me, yet have ye erred in that ye have followed only My Torah, and have not waited for My world-kingdom. I swear to you that I shall remember for good him who has waited for My kingdom, as it is said, Wait ye for Me until the day that I rise up as a witness.'" <sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, it was owing to the sad consequences of the missionary endeavors of the Church that the idea of the mission of Judaism was given a different direction. Not conversion, but conviction by teaching and example, is the

<sup>1</sup> B. Wisdom V, 16; Sibyll. III, 76 b.

<sup>2</sup> *Sifra* Kedoshim at close; Sifre Deut. 323.

<sup>3</sup> *Cuzari* IV, 23; Maim. H. *Melakim* XI, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Maim. : Commentary to Eduyoth at close.

<sup>5</sup> Pes. R. XXXIV, p. 158 ref. to Zeph. III, 8. See Friedman's note.

historic task of Judaism, whose maxim is expressed in the verse of Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."<sup>1</sup> It is not the creed, but the deed, which tells. Not the confession, but conduct, with the moral principles which govern it, counts. Such a view is implied in the well-known teaching of Joshua ben Hananiah, "The righteous of all nations will have a share in the world of eternal bliss."<sup>2</sup> Judaism does not deny salvation to those professing other religions, which would tend to undermine the foundation of their spiritual life. Standing upon the high watchtower of time, it rather strives ever to clarify and strengthen the universal longing for truth and righteousness which lies at the heart of all religion, and is thus to become a bond of union, an all-illuminating light for the world. To quote the beautiful words of Leopold Stein in his *Schrift des Lebens*:<sup>3</sup> "Judaism, while recognizing the historic justification of all systems of thought and faith, does not cherish the ambition to become the Church Universal in the usual sense of the term, but aims rather to be the focus, or mirror, of religious unity for all the rest. 'The people from of old,' as the prophet called them, are to accompany mankind in its progress through the ages and the continents, until it reaches the goal of the kingdom of God on earth, the 'new heaven and new earth' of the prophetic vision."<sup>4</sup> The thought of the Jewish mission is most adequately expressed in the Neilah service of the Union Prayer Book, based upon the Einhorn Prayerbook, which reads as follows:<sup>5</sup> "Endow us, our Guardian, with strength and patience for our holy mission. Grant that all the children of Thy people may recognize the goal of our changeful career, so that they may exemplify by their zeal and love for mankind the truth of Israel's watchword: One humanity on earth, even as there is but One God

<sup>1</sup> Zech. IV, 6.<sup>2</sup> Tos. Sanh. XIII, 2.<sup>3</sup> P. 374-378.<sup>4</sup> Isa. LXVI, 22.<sup>5</sup> Part II, p. 332.

in heaven. Enlighten all that call themselves by Thy name with the knowledge that the sanctuary of wood and stone, which erst crowned Zion's hill, was but a gate through which Israel should step out into the world, to reconcile all mankind unto Thee!"