

**Plan of Discussion
For the Hebraic
Society.**

Introduction, written out on Israel as the “self-chosen” people; & the problem of its mission today.

Answer to the problem: —

1. Loyalty is the solution for all men.
2. Israel’s foundation for loyalty, also its hindrance in loyalty, is the strong individuality of its notable men who by nature, so soon as they break with tradition, tend to Detachment.
3. Types of Detachment: —
 1. The Prophet.
 2. The Cynic and Destructive Critic.
 3. The Nietzschean Individualist.
 4. The Detached Men of the World.
 5. The Invalid. [2]
3. The forms of Social Control in Judaism. (a) Solidarity of Israel, contrasted with caste system of India. (b) Formalism, as opposed to the Japanese chivalry. (c) Use of the schematizing Understanding; fondness for abstractions. Resulting defects of Judaism.
4. Motives of a more positive sort: — Brotherhood; charity towards one’s own people; sense of justice; essentially liberality as to varieties of conviction.
5. Problem how to weave these tendencies into a new Loyalty.
 - a. Universalism and brotherhood are not opposed.
 - b. What are as brethren contributing to the universal human end?
 - c. Fable of the three rings.

Address before the Hebraic Society

A good many years ago, as I remember, I had just been reading the opening volume of Stadt's *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, — a book which was then new. It was natural to me, I brought my decidedly lively interest in this volume to William James, to hear what he would say about the matter. As we talked together, I recall mentioning the "Moabite stone" (which Stadt of course incidentally discusses); and I uttered a passing fanciful thought which the [2] mention of that famous fragment still often brings to my mind. The Moabite stone, as you remember, contains a record, prepared from the Moabite point of view, and dealing with an ancient campaign which is also mentioned in a well known passage of the Hebrew narrative. There was war between the peoples in question. The comparison of the two records of the same contest led me to note how strange are the fortunes which in history have often brought so far apart the later fates of peoples who, in earlier ages, were close together in their social types, and in their grades of civilization. I said to James: — How nearly [3] alike, to us, as merely foreign observers, the tribes of Israel on the one hand, and the little kingdom of Moab upon the other, would have seemed to us if we could have looked down upon them as at that time they were; or if we could have witnessed from our distance the petty local feuds that made them war together, or if we could have heard, merely as news of the day, that in those remote provinces some disturbances were taking place between two groups of Oriental tribesmen of whom one called upon the name of a God called Jahve [sic], while the other trusted in a certain divinity named Kemosh. Wherein, should we have said, [4] is one of these two petty nationalities better than the other? As for Jahweh and Kemosh, why choose between them? And as for the great world, what does it care whose tribe or whose God wins such a skirmish?

But history, as we know, later distinguished vastly and fatally between these two petty rivals. Moab has vanished. Israel not only remains, but it has both kept [illegible] its religion and transformed its tribal God into a world power. Yes it has given its God to the world of all Christendom. How little, so I said, to say might have changed the fortunes that have thus determined the whole story of all later religious civilization. But a little, and Moab might have survived, when Israel had vanished. And then if Moab surviving had only later developed some prophets, as devoted to righteousness [5] as was Amos or Isaiah, and if these prophets had in time duly aroused, and if posterity had continued a faith in a righteous world ruler, — well, then we might all of us be calling our God Kemosh, instead by some name due to Israel; and instead of our Christianity we should perhaps be enjoying a faith whose whole theology would also have been diversified by the presence in heaven of a female as well as of a male deity.

To my idle fancy James responded with a characteristic comment of his own. "The lesson," he said, is this, "that the faith has won whose adherents stuck to it fastest, believed it hardest, were most

unconquerable [6] in clinging to their own. If you want to mould the world's religion you must first be the most stubborn and unyielding in your conviction that you have a right to mould the world's religion. In this field it is the obstinately steadfast in faith who win."

Such in substance was James's reply, as far as I recall it. And of course this reply was sound. Whether God chose the people of Israel is a matter which I am not here at all adequately to discuss. But certain it is that the seeming miracle of their history, whereby they, of all the tribes of the Semites, were singled out for their miraculous mission, with [7] its worldly defeat, and its world wide influence, its agony and its glory was due at least in an important measure to one fact, which nobody can question. Israel chose itself. It chose itself not merely in the sense in which every tribe of mankind has at sometime said: "We are the people; there is no one like us." Israel's self choice, its decision to be the chosen people of its God, was a decision that has always asserted itself, for religious Israel at least, in the form of a practically efficient stubbornness, lasting through defeat and persecution and chance and change, after a fashion which certainly has few parallels in human history, and which I need not attempt further to characterize in your presence. [8]

Israel chose itself, — chose itself not only with the ordinary blind vanity of the tribesman, — although this vanity Israel also had — but also (and here lay the decisive matter), Israel chose itself with a certain steadfast power of self idealization, with a strange union of piety and of shrewdness of blind stubbornness and of prophetic vision, of stubbornness and devotion, — a paradoxical union of traits which still makes whatever is most characteristic about the Jewish people a mystery to all who observe, — a mystery which I for one do not for a moment pretend to fathom.

I suppose, merely upon an inductive basis, — merely as a result of the lesson of history, that Israel is today engaged [9] in the old process of making itself, under wholly new and modern conditions, some sort of chosen people. I suppose that, despite all change and chance, something of the old unconquerable will still remains, and that, unless the Jewish people decide in time gradually to pass away by amalgamation with others, the old power to adapt itself to new world conditions will still be represented in the mental equipment and in the traditions of the Judaism of the future.

I am asked this evening to say something to you as representatives of the Judaism of today, regarding the ideals in terms of which you may [10] think it worth while to respect the process whereby ancient Judaism differentiated itself from the life of other petty tribes of Western Asia, — the process whereby Jahweh, and not Kemosh or some other local deity became a nucleus about which the faith of universal ethical monotheism was to grow. The process of history is long and weary. But something of the quality that made Israel win long after Moab was swept away, — win even through loss, and hold its own even after dispersion, is still represented in your views of life, however divergent those may now be. I make no attempt to understand the Israel of the past. I cannot comprehend the seeming miracle of your faith, of

your stubbornness, of your steadfastness through defeat, of your spiritual triumphs despite worldly disaster. But looking at your strange heritage of faith, of wisdom, and of national and social tasks and burdens from without, I can perhaps say a very little to help some few of you to face for yourselves problems which you of course understand as I can never hope to do.

The problems of the Judaism of today, the choices that still lie before you if, in any sense whatever, you are to make yourselves a chosen people in the future seem to me to be definable in terms which I shall try to sketch for you [12] from the point of view of a relatively neutral, but certainly not unsympathetic outsider. If I judge these problems ill, refer that to my ignorance. If I by any word of mine help you, who know better, to judge any of these problems for yourselves more wisely for the stimulation that my comments, however imperfect may contain, that is all that I can hope to accomplish.

The Judaism of today, as I suppose, stands in presence of a simply inevitable problem of change. The old faith that your fathers held cannot remain, in its earlier forms, permanently authoritative [13] for any of those amongst you who are willing to come into close touch with the modern movements of thought and of civilization in general. The reasons why this is true are well known to you. I need hardly insist upon them. Let me enumerate a few of the best known.

First: The God whom your fathers helped the world to conceive as the God of righteousness, has become, for those who still in any sense believe in him, the world's God, in a sense which even the beautifully universal vision of the prophets of Israel never adequately revealed, and which the ritual observance of the Law never sufficiently either illustrated or symbolized. Your fathers called you [14] his chosen people. But, at best, those who have any even symbolical sense in which they can still speak of the Divine and righteous government of the world can now indeed assert only that God, if righteous, chooses those who, as I have just said, choose themselves for the service of a righteous cause. Such choice is open to anybody amongst men who is strong enough. Herein, in so far as this is indeed a righteous world, you have no supernatural advantage of position. This fact, I suppose, you all recognize. The question of the mission of Israel in future is therefore simply the question of the mission that you may be men strong [15] enough to choose for yourselves. Your history, your traditions, the memory of your fathers, give you a right to assert that you can make for yourselves still a world mission. In so far as there is, in any sense a righteous Divine government of the world, you can be, in this sense and to this degree a peculiar people, with a worthy divine mission, but only in case your own will continues to give you, under the coming conditions that worth. You have the right to will to make yourselves God's servants in a peculiar sense, if you are strong enough. Only in this sense can you claim any peculiar place in the [16] world order.

Secondly, the ritual, the formal practices of your fathers, can mean at best, for the enlightened, only a [manuscript ends]