



Man is Not Alone

What does it mean to be faithful?

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, who created us in your own image:
Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil
and to make no peace with oppression; and, that
we may reverently use our freedom, help us to
employ it in the maintenance of justice in our
communities and among the nations, to the glory
of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our
Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Beyond Faith

- Faith is not a substitute for ignorance; it doesn't fill in the gaps
- Faith is liable to seek out untrustworthy, even evil objects
- Remembering is at the core of Jewish faith
 - One must remember the commandments
 - One recalls the God's actions in the past & so has faith

Beyond Faith

- *“In the realm of spirit only he who is a pioneer is able to be an heir.”¹*
 - *Abraham, Isaac & Jacob were spiritual pioneers who did not rely on their parents for their faith*
- *“Faith is not the assent to an idea, but the consent to God.”²*
- *“Faith is a relation to God; belief a relation to an idea or a dogma.”³*

Beyond Faith

- Idolatry of creeds can lead to violence, so Heschel argues for “a minimum of creed and a maximum of faith”¹
- Using reason to evaluate the validity of faith is a category mistake; one doesn't expect art to be judged on the basis of its scientific validity
- *“Reason's great conflict is not with faith but with belief.”*²

Beyond Faith

- Jews pray for knowledge 3 times a day
- Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages saw no problem with acquiring knowledge through both revelation and reason
- *“Faith is awareness of divine mutuality and companionship, a form of communion between God and man.”*
- *Faith moves outward, towards its object, God*

The Problem of Needs

- Humanity's needs rather than sin the primary problem in right living
- Needs are those things we lack that are required for personal well-being
- Needs force people into interaction with the world
- No limit to the perceived needs of a human being; there is a basic level of needs

The Problem of Needs

- Humanity's needs have stimulated the development of civilization, and in so doing, have threatened the persistence of that civilization
- Ethics is inadequate to solving this problem
 - *“Ethics expects man to consult his power of judgment, decide what action to take in the light of general principles and faithfully carry out the wise decision.”*

The Problem of Needs

- *“Man is not made for neutrality, for being aloof or indifferent, nor can the world remain a vacuum; unless we make it an altar to God, it is invaded by demons.”*
- *Heschel points out the irony that while the anthropocentric view is no longer acceptable in academic circles, the egocentric view is enthusiastically embraced in modern society*

The Problem of Needs

- Real problem is distinguishing between authentic and artificial needs
- Right living means overriding our desires to do what is required
- *“To be an iconoclast of idolized needs, to defy our own immoral interests, though they seem to be vital and have long been cherished, we must be able to say **no** to ourselves in the name of a higher **yes**.”*

The Meaning of Existence

- Contemplation of a meaningful existence often begins with the awareness of mortality
- *“It is a most significant fact that man is not sufficient to himself, that life is not meaningful to him unless it is serving an end beyond itself, unless it is of value to someone else.”¹*
- *“Be a need rather than an end”²*

The Meaning of Existence

- Being needed
 - Doesn't reduce to a utilitarian role
 - Not derived from our role in society
- Humanity is *“an abundance of specific individuals; as a community of persons rather than as a herd”*
- *Search for meaning is a search for that which will outlast us*

The Meaning of Existence

■ Existence

- Independence
- Temporality – *“the only property we own we never possess”*¹
- Uninterruptedness – *“Consciousness of time...presupposes a principle that is not temporal and does not, like each instant, vanish to give birth to the next one.”*²

■ *“Existence is a compliance, not a desire; an agreement, not an impulse. In being we obey.”*³

The Meaning of Existence

- Our independence makes us capable of disobedience & of missing the meaning of our lives
- Our concept of immortality is rooted in concern for those who die before us
- *“The lasting begins not beyond but **within time**, within the moment, within the concrete. Time can be seen from two aspects: from the aspect of **temporality** and from the aspect of **eternity**.”*

The Meaning of Existence

- *“Seen as eternity, the essence of time is attachment, communion. It is within time rather than within space that we are able to commune, to worship, to love. It is within time that one day may be worth a thousand years.”*
- Love involves communion; being together

The Meaning of Existence

- *“Significantly, the Bible describes love in the following way: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy **meod**.’” What does **meod** mean? It can only mean what it means everywhere in the Bible: the adverb ‘**very**,’ ‘**much**,’ in a superlative degree. In trying to qualify the verb ‘to love’ the text was suddenly short of expression. Progressively it states: ‘with all thy heart.’ And even more: with all thy soul. But even that was not sufficiently expressed until it said: with all thy **veriness**....”*

The Essence of Man

- *When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Ps. 8:3-4*
- Humanity occupies a unique position among all creatures
 - Has the ability to choose to obey
 - Can conceive of abstract ideas, such as contemplating his own value
 - Has the power to alter other parts of the universe
- *“The essence of man is not in what he is, but in what he is able to be.”*

The Essence of Man

“Man is continuous both with the rest of organic nature and with the infinite outpouring of the spirit of God. A minority in the realm of being, he stands somewhere between God and the beasts. Unable to live alone, he must commune with either of the two....Man is always faced with the choice of listening either to God or to the snake.

Our existence seesaws between animality and divinity, between that which is more and that which is less than humanity: below is evanescence, futility, and above is the open door of the divine exchequer where we lay up the sterling coin of piety and spirit, the immortal remains of our dying lives....

Because of his immense power, man is potentially the most wicked of beings. He often has a passion for cruel deeds that only fear of God can soothe, suffocating flushes of envy that only holiness can ventilate.”

The Essence of Man

- We find meaning by living beyond our needs
- God's question of us begins in the garden: "Where are you?"
- *"Religious living consists in serving ends which are in need of us....Man is needed, he is a need of God."*

The Problem of Ends

- Great works of art have value because they point to ends that matter to many people, and not the artist alone
- People orient themselves towards a goal
- Heschel argues with psychology for confusing laws and principles with the psychosocial setting in which they originated
- *“Man does not regard his attitude as a mere expression of a feeling: he is sure of reflecting objective **requiredness**, of striving for a goal which is valid regardless of his own liking.”*

The Problem of Ends

- It is possible to think of egocentric needs as being met indirectly by apparently altruistic actions
- *“Yet what constitutes the consciousness of good and evil, of right and wrong is the requiredness to act not for my own sake, to do the right even if no advantage would accrue to myself.”*
- *God has made us in such a way that we may achieve something beyond ourselves even when we believe we act to satisfy our own needs*

The Problem of Ends

- *“Whatever man does to man, he also does to God.”¹*
- Humanity may evaluate what is good and bad in different ways through history, but holds to a concept that there is good and bad, that justice is a worthy aim
- *“Man is neither the lord of the universe nor even the master of his own destiny. Our life is not our own property but a possession of God. And it is this divine ownership that makes life a sacred thing.”²*

What is Religion?

- Heschel argues with psychological theories that see the origins of religion in needs that humanity encounters in the fear of death
- How did the following satisfy personal needs?
 - Binding of Isaac
 - Decalogue's command to have no graven images
 - Prophetic teachings
- *“To define religion primarily as a quest for personal satisfaction or salvation is to make it a refined kind of magic.”*

What is Religion?

- *“To believe in God is to fight for Him, to fight whatever is against Him within ourselves, including our interests when they collide with His will. Only when, forgetting the ego, we begin to love Him, God becomes our need, interest and concern. But the way to love leads through fear lest we transgress His unconditional command, lest we forget His need for man’s righteousness.”*
- Our relationship with God takes all of life; it is not limited to ritual

What is Religion?

- *“Religion is for God’s sake. The human side of religion, its creeds, rituals and institutions, is a way rather than the goal. The goal is ‘to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly **with** thy God.’ When the human side of religion becomes the goal, injustice becomes a way.”¹*
- *“What gives rise to faith is not a sentiment, a state of mind, an aspiration, but an everlasting fact in the universe, something which is prior to and independent of human knowledge and experience—**the holy dimension** of all existence.”²*
- Awareness of this “holy dimension” and responding appropriately is piety

A Definition of Jewish Religion

- “[Jewish religion] is the **awareness of God’s interest in man**, the awareness of a **covenant**, of a responsibility that lies on Him as well as on us. Our task is to concur with His interest, to carry out His vision of our task.”¹
- Covenant is a partnership between God and man
- “The essence of Judaism is the awareness of the **reciprocity** of God and man, of man’s **togetherness** with Him who abides in eternal otherness.”²

A Definition of Jewish Religion

- In contrast to the God of the philosophers, the Jewish God is passionately concerned with humanity within an intimate relationship
- “What does God desire?”
 - Music
 - *Take away from me the noise of your songs, And to the melody of your lyres I will not listen. Amos 5:23*
 - Prayer
 - *When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; Though you make many a prayer, I will not listen. Your hands are full of bloodshed. Is. 1:15-16*
 - Sacrifice
 - *Does the Lord delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? I Sam. 15:22*

A Definition of Jewish Religion

■ God's desire

– *And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to stand in awe of the Lord your God, walk in His ways, love Him, serve the Lord your God with all your mind and heart, and keep the commands of the Lord and His statutes that I am commanding you today, for your good? Deut. 10:12*

■ *“It is God who teaches us our ultimate ends.”*

The Great Yearning

- *“[Judaism] teaches man never to be pleased, to despise satisfaction, to crave for the utmost, to appreciate objectives to which he is usually indifferent. It plants in him a seed of endless yearning, a need of spiritual needs rather than a need of achievements, teaching him to be content with what he **has**, but never with what he **is**.”¹*
- Prophets urge a yearning for justice
- *“A person **is** what he aspires for.”²*

A Pattern for Living

- *“Our hearts do not breed the desire to be righteous or holy.”¹*
- *“To the Jewish mind, ..., desires are neither benign nor pernicious but, like fire, they do not agree with straw....Rather than worship fire and be consumed by it, we should let a light come out of the flames. **Needs are spiritual opportunities.**”²*
- No original sin in Judaism
- No concept of corrupt body or flesh

A Pattern for Living

- *“Our flesh is not evil but material for applying the spirit....The enemy is not in the flesh; it is in the heart, in the ego.”¹*
- *“Jewish existence is living shared with God.”²*
 - Commandments to sanctify life
 - Bread & wine given to bless Shabat
 - A pattern of living life
- God is concerned with all aspects of life, even those we call secular

The Pious Man

- Piety is not a collection of actions, but an attitude of the individual
- Piety points to the transcendent
- *“Piety is thus a mode of living. It is the orientation of human inwardness toward the holy. It is a predominant interest in the ultimate value of all acts, feelings and thoughts. With his heart open to and attracted by some spiritual gravitation, the pious man moves, as it were, toward the center of a universal stillness, and his conscience is so placed as to listen to the voice of God.”*

The Pious Man

- Has the character of wisdom
- *“The pious man is possessed by his awareness of the presence and nearness of God. Everywhere and at all times he lives as in His sight, whether he remains always heedful of His proximity or not. He feels embraced by God’s mercy as by a vast encircling space.”*
- An attitude of “expectant reverence”
- All of life is gift, even one’s thoughts and feelings
- Freedom carries with it responsibility for how life is lived

The Pious Man

- Recognizes that all that exists belongs to God
- *“The purpose of sacrifice does not lie in self-pauperization as such, but in the yielding of all aspirations to God, thus creating space for Him in the heart. Moreover it is an **imitatio Dei**, for it is done after the manner of the divine Giver, and reminds man that he is created in the likeness of the divine, and is thus related to God.”¹*
- *“This is the meaning of existence: To reconcile liberty with service, the passing with the lasting, to weave the threads of temporality into the fabric of eternity.”²*

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