

Lessons from the Past: Mutation as a Mode of Jewish Survival

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The Jewish people are unique among the peoples of the world because they are the only people who have successfully traversed the jagged and turbulent path marking the rise and expansion of Western civilization. And Judaism is unique among the religions of the world because of its proven capacity for creative problem-solving. The Jewish people had their origins as a simple, semi-nomadic society in the Ancient Near East; its formative development in the crucible of ancient Empires; its breakthrough as a world people in the ruins of Graeco-Roman civilization; its time of testing in the ebbs and flows of medieval Moslem and Christian societies; its resilience in surviving the ecstasy and the agony of modernization and Westernization. Other people may have had a history reaching back farther in time, but no other people flourishing at the dawn of Western civilization has preserved an unbroken continuity from semi-nomadism to post-industrial society. And other religions may indeed pride themselves as having been born earlier than Judaism, but not a single one has demonstrated its capacity to solve that array of ever more complex problems spawned by the tempestuous evolution of Western civilization. And when it is furthermore remembered that these achievements were accomplished by a people who, when independent, were but a tiny mite among the grand imperial masters of the ancient world, and who, when dispersed among the peoples of the world, were always a minority, dependent for their physical survival on the graciousness of gentile sovereigns, the phenomenon of Jewish survival—not as some surd, billowing on the periphery of Western civilization—but always fermenting in its vital center, is indeed remarkable.

Where, then, does the secret lodge? Is it to be found in form and content, or is it to be found in some dynamic principle? Is Jewish identity something fixed, permanent and eternal by which Jews can be authenticated, or is Jewish identity open-ended and self-authenticating? Is Judaism a specific, eternal body of ideas and concepts, a permanent array of forms, an immutable fixation to Sabbaths, festivals, and appropriate rites of passage—the *bris*, the bar mitzvah, the *huppah*, the burial service—or is it a dynamic principle which shapes the ideas, concepts, forms and rituals which it needs to spiritualize and sacralize the novel and unanticipated breakthroughs occasioned by qualitative change?

The ultimate fate of the Jewish people and the ultimate destiny of Judaism may dangle on the answer to this question, for never in their long and remarkable history of creative adaptation to change have Jews been compelled to face up to changes of such extraordinary complexity as that being generated by the outreaches of technology and by the agonizing transition from an age of nation states to global community.

As an analytical historian, searching for pattern and meaning in the bewildering and awesome odyssey of the Jewish people and its religion, I can only conclude that Jewish identity is open-ended and self-authenticating, and that Judaism reveals a dynamic principle which shapes the ideas, concepts, forms, and rituals vital for sacralizing and spiritualizing qualitative historical change. The Jewish people have forged five innovating identities. Judaism has shaped no fewer than four innovating forms.

The history of Jews and Judaism thus reveals that the Jewish people are a developmental people and Judaism a developmental religion. And the dynamic energizing this

developmental quality has, throughout the millennia, been *effective* problem-solving for *creative* survival. *Effective* problem-solving means the nature of the problem to be solved was correctly assessed and the solution worked through was not a solution for survival *per se* but a creative solution. This has required an uncanny sensitivity as to the nature of the problem being faced and as to the kind of solution which would prove to be effective. For some kind of problems, the only solution required was simple *replication*, *i.e.*, holding on to a Jewish identity and a form of Judaism without compromise; for other kinds of problems, the solution lay in *variations* of ongoing themes; and for certain infrequent but traumatic and bewildering problems, the only viable and effective solution lay in *innovation* or *mutation* or *synergy*—indeed, any concept that conveys the notion of a radical transformation, where innovating discontinuity plays a more vital role than replications or variation on a theme. It was this capacity for sensing whether *replication*, *variation* or *innovation* was the vital choice for creative Jewish survival that marks Jewish leadership through the ages as distinguished. And because the founders of Reform Judaism, reflecting a leadership correctly sensing that modernization and Westernization was a unique historical phenomenon, took the path of *innovation*, and because we Jews today are on the edge of crisis, I shall focus my analysis on those four or five occasions in the Jewish past when *innovation*, *mutation*, and *synergy* proved to be the only effective solution to the problem of creative Jewish survival, and seek to determine whether, underlying each of these occasions, there is to be found an equivalent causal matrix. And should such a matrix be revealed, we should be in a position to determine whether the problems we face now require innovative, mutative and synergistic solutions.

II.

The first of these innovating solutions occurred when the prophetic form of Judaism was phased out by the priestly form. This radical transformation took place sometime during the fifth century BCE, when the Pentateuch was canonized and made operative. With remarkable suddenness, a class which had been functioning for hundreds of years as the authoritative spokesmen for God, a class that could boast of a Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, a class which only yesterday had produced a Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, was, overnight, ushered out by the canonized Pentateuch and the Aaronide-priesthood whose hegemony the Pentateuch proclaimed in the name of Yahweh and Moses. Whereas in the past, the people inquired of the prophet when they sought out God's will, they now turned to a book, the Pentateuch, in his stead. Whereas in the past, the prophet bent his ear to listen to God's voice, now the voice of God echoed and reechoed throughout the pages of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Whereas in the past, God was accessible to solve problems as they arose, now He was the God who long ago had already solved all problems that could ever arise, when He revealed His total and immutable will to Moses on Sinai and in the course of the wilderness wanderings of His people. A transformation so radical can only be called innovational, mutational or synergistic, since it was not foreshadowed, but came about quickly, suddenly. It was *mutational* because it did not follow as a logical consequence of the dominant prophetic mode. Indeed, the very contrary was true. Nothing could have been deemed more *essential* to the religion of Israel prior to the canonization than the belief that God would always make His will known through His prophets. The notion that

a book could totally replace living prophecy was a shocking idea, utterly alien to the spirit of Israel's religion. That priests, of whatever lineage, could ever lay claim to preeminent leadership at the expense of the prophet would have been viewed by the pre-exilic and, until the canonization of the Pentateuch, the post-exilic Israelite, as utterly beyond belief. Yet the record is absolutely clear that prophecy was not only phased out, but was outlawed, *i.e.*, anyone proclaiming himself to be a prophet after the Pentateuch was canonized was *ipso facto* viewed as threatening the essential core of Israel's religion, namely the immutable revelation given to Moses and preserved in a book. The record is no less clear that the Aaronide priesthood exercised hegemony over the religion of Israel from the time of the promulgation of the Pentateuch sometime in the fourth century BCE till the eve of the Hasmonean Revolt about 169 BCE. Since what had been regarded as essential, namely prophecy, was superseded by what hitherto had been regarded as non-essential, namely priestly hegemony, and since there was no inherent logic within prophecy to phase itself out, then the transference of authority from living prophets to the Pentateuch with its fixed immutable laws and institutions, and with its underpinning of Aaronide priestly power, must be considered as *mutational*.

A mutation thus indeed occurred, but why? For hundreds of years, a wide array of sticky problems had been handled under the aegis of prophecy, yet with seeming abruptness the prophetic mode of problem-solving evaporated. How do we account for this? The answer that most readily comes to mind is that there must have arisen a problem of such magnitude, and of such novelty, that a response to it with another variation of the prophetic mode would block rather than encourage creative survival.

What was this stubborn problem? Simply put, it revolved around the question of how Israel could best cope with a Persian imperial hegemony which precluded any realistic hopes for the revival of an independent state. Until the exile, and indeed for some considerable years thereafter, the tacit assumption had prevailed that some form of independence, presumably under a restored Davidic line, would eventuate. Such an assumption was finally recognized as being incompatible with Persia's notions of how subject people were to be governed. The Persian imperial masters preferred to exercise control through indigenous priestly classes, whenever possible, rather than through puppet kings. It was, therefore, essential that the newly restored Israelite community not only recognize this fact, but take advantage of the opportunities which a hierocratically run society opened up for them. Priestly hegemony as proclaimed by the Pentateuch was thus a far more viable solution than a dogged persistence in hoping for a monarchical restoration, especially in view of the miserable record that the kings of Israel and Judah had earned for themselves during the years of independence and quasi-independence.

The phasing-out of monarchy is thus satisfactorily explained, but why the phasing-out of prophecy as well? The answer lies in the essential nature of prophecy itself. Prophets enjoyed their preeminence because they were believed to have direct access to Yahweh's will. This meant that, in principle, their authority was bound up in their role as *ad hoc* problem solvers. If an issue arose, the prophets were looked to for a guidance which was open-ended; *i.e.*, not dependent on some fixed and immutable repository of God's eternal will. Prophets had, therefore, always been chary of acknowledging the permanence of any institutions or law, since *permanence* threatened their ongoing role as intermediaries between Israel's problems and God's current solutions. At most, prophets granted grudging recognition that kingship and priesthood might be in accord with Yahweh's wishes, but

only contingently, *i.e.*, the prophets at any time might thunder in Yahweh's name that He was displeased with these institutions and wished them either tossed aside or radically modified. The castigation of an Amos, an Hosea, an Isaiah, a Micah, a Jeremiah confirm the absolute right of the prophet to speak out Yahweh's wishes *now*, without any restriction by virtue of what His wishes had been *then*. Indeed, the only pre-commitment of the prophet was that Yahweh was singular, omnipotent, just, righteous and gracious, and that He had chosen Israel to be His people and His prophets to be His spokesmen.

Any effort, therefore, to create permanent institutions or fixed and dependable laws was, in principle, doomed to failure so long as a prophet at any time could cry out, in Yahweh's name, that they be brushed aside. Compounding this threat was the proliferation, in Exilic and post-Exilic years, of dissonant and conflicting prophetic voices. It was one thing to acknowledge that the prophet spoke for Yahweh; it was quite another to discriminate between competing oracles as to what Yahweh's will truly was. Did Yahweh speak through Ezekiel or Second Isaiah? Did he favor a restored kingship or not? Did He reject the Levites for the Sons of Zadok, or did his covenant with Levi hold eternally? Or did He look upon the sacrificial cult as altogether out of joint with his global sovereignty?

Since seemingly *bona fide* prophets were offering utterly contradictory oracles in Yahweh's name, the people were at a loss as to which prophet was to be believed. Prophecy had thus forced itself into a *cul de sac* by exposing its incapacity for effective and decisive leadership. Prophecy could not offer a creative response to a series of post-Exilic problems, problems so grievous in nature that a failure to solve them threatened the total disintegration of the Jewish community and of Judaism.

What was needed above all else was a far-sighted, vigorous leadership dedicated to the creation of *permanent* institutions and a dependable system of laws. Prophetic intrusion had to be stopped once and for all, lest the foundation of a viable Yahwistic society crumble at the voice of an angry prophet. The people had to be given a chance to build a Yahwistic society that would work, a society which reassured the people that Yahweh Himself had revealed institutions and laws to operate forever. When, therefore, a priestly class, the Aaronides, offered precisely this solution by promulgating the Pentateuch, not only did they win the approval of their imperial masters, but they successfully sundered the umbilical cord binding Yahweh to the prophets. By boldly affirming that Yahweh had revealed to Hosea His wish for an *eternal* priesthood, an *eternal cultus*, an *eternal* system of laws, the Aaronides through the promulgation of the Pentateuch swept away the need for the *ad hoc* revelations of prophecy.

And prophecy was indeed swept away. What had for centuries been an authenticating hallmark was now acknowledged as a hallmark only of a bygone age. To lay claim to prophetic powers in the post-Pentateuchal period was to expose one as a fraud, and not as a spokesman of God's will. So thoroughly overwhelming was the Pentateuchal-Aaronide transformation that to this day, even in Reform temples, sacred preeminence is accorded the Pentateuch, which struck the death knell of prophecy, and not the books of prophets proclaiming God's ongoing revelation of His will.

The mutation thus proved more hardy than the species from which it evolved, and as a consequence fell heir to the hallmark hitherto identified with prophetic prowess. This *successful* transference confirms that *mutation* is not only legitimate, but essential *if the problem blocking effective and creative survival of Judaism is of so anomalous a character that neither replication nor variation has any realistic chance for success*. Though the

mutational solution is rarely needed, it is a thoroughly legitimate option when creative Jewish survival is threatened by unique and seemingly insuperable problems.

III.

The Pentateuchal-Aaronide priestly mutation proved to be a virile and durable strain. For more than two hundred years, the Aaronides exercised effective and creative leadership. They far excelled prophets and kings in making a Yahwistic society work. They had that very rare capacity for sustaining economic prosperity, exercising firm authority and encouraging a high degree of intellectual and spiritual creativity. For though the Aaronides phased out the prophets, they gave free rein to Psalmists, purveyors of Wisdom (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Ben Sira), and profound explorers of the human condition (Job). During their more than two centuries of hegemony they faced only one serious challenge, the Samaritan schism, and this they handled without either loss of authority or bloody civil war. This is no mean achievement, since even the United States Constitution has not yet functioned for two hundred years, [*Editor's Note: This article was written c. 1963*] and when the Constitution was challenged less than one hundred years after its ratification, its authority was preserved only after four years of tragic bloodshed. The Aaronide leadership thus proved the viability of their solution by making it superbly operational.

But even this gifted leadership did not have an answer for every problem. When confronted by a direct and powerful challenge to their hegemony emanating from a coalition of radical Jewish Hellenists and a Hellenizing Seleucid emperor, Antiochus IV, the Aaronide leadership dissolved. Betrayed by their own kith and kin, first Jason, and then Menelaus, the legitimate High Priest was tossed out of office and the high priesthood degenerated into an instrument for cowing Jews into supporting the Hellenization of Judea.

Here was a problem which could be solved neither by the Aaronide priestly class nor by resources to the literal meaning of the Pentateuch. There was need for a very different kind of leadership, not only because the legitimate high priest had been ousted, but even more so because the pervasive spread of Hellenistic civilization, combined with the steady growth of urbanization in Judea, had exposed Pentateuchal teachings as inadequate. And for good reason. The Pentateuch had been framed to operate in a predominantly agricultural society, and it therefore addresses itself preciously little to the needs and interests of urban populations. The sacrificial *cultus* stressed the dues and the gifts of peasants, not artisans, craftsmen or shopkeepers. The rewards and punishments are keyed to the hopes and anxieties of tillers of the soil and not to city dwellers. The Pentateuch has literally nothing to say to the individual who has been cut loose from his agricultural moorings and finds himself alone and alienated in an urban setting. His yearnings spring from an awareness of his individuality, an awareness especially heightened by ever more exposure to Hellenistic culture with its ceaseless probings of man's tragic dilemma.

For a very long time, this buildup of potential dissatisfaction with the Pentateuch was offset by the free rein the Aaronides gave to the Psalmists and wisdom-seeking scribes. The Psalmists especially touched the individual who sorely needed a compassionate and powerful God to lean deeply into wellsprings of despair and hopelessness. Indeed, the Psalmist was so attuned to the agony, suffering and piteous yearning of the individual's soul, that we find ourselves at a loss even today to articulate such feelings with equivalent

resonance. Little wonder, then, that so long as Aaronide leadership was in the saddle, there was insufficient provocation for expressing dissatisfaction with the growing irrelevance of Pentateuchal teachings.

But when the crisis of leadership, bound up as it was with a searing challenge from alluring aspects of Hellenistic culture, suddenly confronted loyal Jews with the need to offer some viable alternative, a scholar class, known to us as the Pharisees, stepped into the breach and offered a *mutational* solution, one that not only solved the crisis of leadership but also the problem of the alienated individual.

By any measure, the form of Judaism which this scholar class, the Pharisees, fashioned was a mutation. Far from following out of Pentateuchal Judaism, Pharisaic Judaism negates some of the most essential underpinnings of the Judaism of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch assigns hegemony to a specially privileged priestly class, the Aaronides; the Pharisees assign hegemony to themselves, a scholar class—a class never even mentioned in the Pentateuch, much less clothed with ultimate authority—at the same time that they reduced the priests to honored functionaries. The Pentateuch proclaims that God revealed His laws to Moses with the injunction that they remain immutable and unaltered and that they neither be added to nor subtracted from. These laws, in turn, were written down by Moses in the Pentateuch. There was thus only one set of laws, the laws written down for all generations in the Pentateuch. The Pharisees, by contrast, affirmed that God had given Moses not one system of laws, but two; the Written Law, the Pentateuch, and the Oral Law, which was not permitted to be written down. The essential teaching of this Oral Law was that God had given this twofold Law to Moses, who had transmitted it to Joshua, who had transmitted it to the Elders, who had transmitted it to the Prophets, who had transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly, who, in turn, transmitted it to the leaders of the Pharisaic scholar class. Each successive leadership class, by virtue of this transmission, was clothed with authority to determine the provenance, scope and meaning of the Written Law, the operative status of already existing oral laws, and the framing of whatever new oral laws the exigencies of time and circumstance might necessitate. The literal Pentateuch had no meaning other than that which the Pharisaic scholar class attached to it. Whereas, then, the logic of the Pentateuch demanded that the Aaronides rule in perpetuity, the Pharisees denied that they had ever enjoyed any right to hegemony at all. The Pharisaic chain of authority included Moses, Joshua, Elders and Prophets, but did not include Aaron, nor his sons, nor for that matter any priestly class at all. Whereas the logic of the Pentateuch demanded that no laws be added to or subtracted from the Pentateuch; that the laws said what they meant; that written laws alone were authentic, and oral laws *prima facie* evidence of fraudulent tampering and subversive intent, the Pharisees proclaimed that the written laws had no meaning outside that attached to them by the Oral Law, and that adherence to the literal written laws was *prima facie* evidence of subversion. Since Pharisaic Judaism does not logically follow from Pentateuchal Judaism, it must be typed as a *mutational* form.

And if we ask what made so radical a transformation possible, the answer is that Pharisaism's core teaching articulated the deepest yearning of the individual, the firm reassurance that his individual self would enjoy eternal life. The Pharisees offered the individual what the Aaronide priesthood and the Pentateuch could not, a God who rewarded and punished, not in this world, but in the world to come. They offered the individual the Father God who so loved man that He revealed to Israel the twofold Law, mapping out the

sure road to salvation in the world to come, and, ultimately, in the resurrection of the righteous.

This good news that the individual could earn for himself eternal life was so exhilarating, so expressive of what Jews drawn to the cities had been yearning for, so relevant for their day-to-day living, that the overwhelming majority of Jews welcomed the mutation as the long lost original. They brushed aside the claims of the Aaronide priests as spurious; spurned the onefold Law, the literally rendered Pentateuch, as inauthentic; hailed the Pharisaic triad—(1) the one and only Father God who so loved man that (2) He revealed the twofold Law to Israel so that (3) the twofold Law-abiding individual could earn for himself eternal life and resurrection.

The Pharisaic mutation, even more than its Pentateuchal predecessor, proved to be a virile, vigorous and hardy strain. So much so, in fact that it not only set the foundations for the Christian triad—(1) the one and only Father God so loved the individual that (2) He revealed His saving grace through Christ so that (3) the individual might earn eternal life and resurrection through faith in Him (Christ)—but also for the Islamic triad as well; (1) God so loved the individual that (2) He made known His will through Mohammed His Prophet so that (3) the individual might enjoy eternal life and resurrection. Indeed, so virile, vigorous, and durable was the Pharisaic mutation that it superseded both prophetic and Pentateuchal Judaism as *the* authentic Judaism. This Pharisaic mutation is the *traditional* Judaism whose teachings are to be found in the Mishnah, the Talmud, the responsa and medieval commentaries, the Shulḥan Arukh, and which underpins the ecclesiastical authority of the orthodox Rabbinate in modern Israel. Following on the Pharisaic revolution, the majority of Jews never ever again read either the Pentateuch or the prophets or any other of the biblical books in a literal way. Not even the heretical Karaites, who in the eighth century built a movement on the rejection of the twofold Law and a reaffirmation of biblical authority, read the Pentateuch or the prophets, or the Psalms in the way a pre-Pharisaic Aaronide High Priest had read them. Not indeed until the rise of modern critical scholarship did anyone, Jew, Christian or Moslem, seek to determine what the biblical writings might have meant to their pre-Pharisaic contemporaries.

Similarly, the novel institutions spawned by the Pharisaic mutation superseded the institutions fashioned by the Aaronide priests. The *Beth Din Ha-Gadol* (the Grand Legislature), though without any Pentateuchal or biblical institution as model—indeed, it was patterned after the Hellenistic *boule*—was shaped by the Pharisaic scholar class to exercise ultimate authority over God's revelation and effectively reduced the Aaronide priests to Temple functionaries. The synagogue, which has no biblical foundations or warrant whatsoever, not only sprang up as a Pharisaic stronghold alongside the Temple and throughout the diaspora, but exposed the Temple *cultus* as a dysfunctional hangover from an earlier agricultural epoch, when, following its destruction by the Romans, Judaism flourished through the synagogue as it had never flourished before.

The mutation thus proved itself to be authentic Judaism, and the form from which it originated was rejected as unauthentic. And what is particularly instructive is the fact that precisely that class, the Aaronides; and that institution, the Temple; and that Law, the written Pentateuch; and that sanction system geared to this-worldly rewards and punishments set forth in the Pentateuch—all of these which would have been affirmed by pre-Pharisaic Jews as the essential, basic, authentic, non-negotiable foundations of Judaism, were the very elements which were swept away and discarded. And precisely that class, which took

over the reins of authority, and the Synagogue which superseded the Temple; and that Law, the twofold, written and Oral Law which gained preeminence over the onefold Law, the Pentateuch; and that sanction system offering eternal life and resurrection were all *de novo* creations. Yet it was the Pharisaic mutation—the unanticipated, the novel, the ungrounded, the unrooted, usurping form—which to this day is regarded by Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Nationalist and Secularist Jews as *traditional* Judaism.

That a mutation occurred and became the normative, authentic, and dominant form of Judaism for more than 2,000 years is confirmed by the historic record.

It remains only for us to determine the dynamics which brought this mutation about. On the most fundamental level, we note a problem had arisen of such novelty and magnitude that an effective and creative solution was beyond the scope and range of Pentateuchal Judaism. The Pentateuch had been fashioned to solve problems spawned by ancient Near Eastern empires, but now the Jews were confronted with problems generated by Hellenistic civilization. The Pentateuch had been promulgated to win over the enthusiastic support of peasants, but now Jews in ever larger numbers were living in cities and experiencing alienation, loneliness and heightened individual awareness. Since the solutions to these problems necessitated inputs drawn from the Hellenistic world, and since such inputs were not available in the Pentateuch, only a mutation could bridge the civilization gap by a quantum jump. Holding fast to the belief that God was one, and omnipotent, and reaffirming that he had revealed His will to Israel, the Pharisees vaulted over the Pentateuchal obstacles (immutable written laws, Aaronide priestly hegemony, the preeminence of sacrificial worship, terrestrial rewards and punishments) by proclaiming the existence of an Oral Law in which was to be found all the essential elements for vigorous survival in the Graeco-Roman world (flexible oral laws, a resolute and problem-oriented scholar class, reassurance that the Father God so loved the individual that He had revealed His twofold Law so that the individual might earn for himself eternal individuation and the dissolution of his loneliness, alienation and low self-esteem.

We thus see that the Pharisaic mutation emerged out of the identical situational matrix which had given birth to the Pentateuchal mutation; a problem raised by an historical juncture which simply could not be solved effectively *and* creatively without highly novel inputs necessitating a quantum jump from the Judaism that had *hitherto* been dominant to the Judaism that was *subsequently* to become dominant. The Pentateuchal Mutation leaped over the obstacle of prophecy; the Pharisees leaped over the obstacle of immutable, written laws upholding priestly-cultic hegemony. But, in each instance, it should be noted, the quantum jump *preserved* the belief that God was one, omnipotent, and committed to Israel as the bearers of His revelation.

IV.

The Pharisaic mutation proved to be so hardy that it withstood mutational challenge for more than 2,000 years. Its proclamation of that alluring triad—Father God, revelation, eternal life/resurrection—was so attuned to the innermost yearnings of the individual confronting an external reality festering with objective anxieties—hunger, pain, suffering, humiliation, war and premature death—that the Good News—whether preached by Pharisees, Apostles, or teachers of Islam—proclaiming that the individual can gain for himself eternal life and resurrection, was virtually irresistible. So long, then, as objective anxieties were regenerated with each successive failure of man to break out of his bondage

to economic systems incapable of breaking through the barriers to sustained economic growth, some variation of the triadic theme—whether in Judaism or Christianity or Islam—proved effective in solving the wide array of problems thrown up by the disintegrating Roman world and by the kaleidoscope societies of medieval Christianity and Islam. No mutation occurred because no mutation was necessary. There were no quantum jumps because there was no need for variation was simply not enough and the need for something far more audacious became more and more pressing. The emergence of the modern Western world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries unleashed a dynamic so overpowering that even the shock-resistant triad quaked, wobbled and lost its vital balance.

The dynamic which convulsed the citadels of medieval Christendom and Judaism and tore down the old order was a novel economic system which held out the promise of dismantling the barriers blocking sustained economic growth. It was capitalism. Capitalism is a unique economic system because it rewards innovators more handsomely than replicators. Its vital driving principle is the pursuit of profit, a pursuit encouraging inventiveness, ingenuity and originality. Windfall profits always beckon the entrepreneur who extends, widens or deepens the market, who organizes production more efficiently, who devises a more effective means for marshalling capital, who takes advantage of technological breakthroughs. Capitalism is the system which fights off the tendency toward congealment, stagnation, and replication by an even more vital drive toward creative innovation. And since the inner drive of capitalism is directed toward the augmentation of capital as an end in itself, it is ultimately driven to break down all traditional barriers to wealth production, including poverty itself. Far from coming to a halt when the entrepreneurs have themselves accumulated personal wealth far beyond their capacity for spending it, the system keeps driving toward ever more awesome buildups of capital, because its inner dynamic presses it on to capital augmentation as an end in itself.

The rise and spread of capitalism stoked the great classical revolutions—the Revolt of the Netherlands, the Puritan Revolution, the French Revolution, the American Revolution—which overthrew societies sustained by *traditional* and *replicating* economic, social, political and with societies nourished by *innovating* economic, social, political and religious roots. The hallmark of these new societies was the enterprising risk-taking individual who was freed of traditional constraints from applying his ingenuity—be it economic, scientific, or religious—to alter, comprehend, spiritualize reality. Entrepreneurship, *i.e.*, risk-taking, was looked upon as a virtue, not heresy. The individual was freed to bend reality to his aspirations rather than have his aspirations bent by a reality imposed upon him by traditional notions.

Since the *leitmotif* of these classical capitalist revolutions was the freeing of the individual from traditional constraints, it struck at the vital core of Pharisaic Judaism. The latter had built its redemptive triad on the assumption that God had indeed revealed the twofold Law to Israel. This revelation was accepted as an historical fact. To deny that God had given the twofold Law was scandalous heresy. The efficacy of the redemptive triad was thus dependent on this belief. Take this belief away—and in the case of Christianity, take the belief in Christ away, or in Islam, the belief that Mohammed was a true prophet—and there is *no* saving triad; only a spurious claim. The triadic system was resilient, flexible and capable of almost endless variations in the face of economic, social and political changes, so long as its rootage was left untouched. But now there were emerging revolu-

tionary societies whose vital principle was the entrepreneurial, risk-taking individual, whose rootage was the *innovating* capitalistic dynamic and whose rights allowed him to challenge all traditional teachings about reality. How could Pharisaic Judaism solve this kind of problem by a variation on a theme whose mainsprings were beliefs, whose claims had never been subjected to free, critical scrutiny? Since the solution to the fundamental problems being posed by the capitalistic revolutions were *not* to be found in the Pharisaic Judaism, rooted as it was in *traditional replicating* beliefs, the need for a mutation was thrust on the agenda for Jewish survival. And the quantum jump was made by the nineteenth century spokesmen for a liberal and reformed Judaism, a Judaism which could be responsive to the challenge of the capitalist revolutions. It was they who dissolved the umbilical link to the Pharisaic triad.

For virtually 2,000 years, the seemingly essential *sine qua non* of Judaism had been the *halakhah*, the absolute binding character of the twofold Law. Both the salvation of the individual and the salvation of the people were dependent on the strict observance of the Oral and Written Law. To violate the laws inadvertently was sin enough; to violate them intentionally was fraught with dire consequences; but to violate them on the grounds that they were not God-given was to sin beyond God's power to forgive. "All Israel has a share in the world to come . . . , but these have no share in the world to come: one who says that the belief in the resurrection of the dead is not derived from the Torah (i.e., the Written Law); or one who says that the Torah was not revealed from heaven, or an *apikoros* (i.e., an outright scoffer)." (Sanhedrin 10:1) And now an audacious band of learned Jews calls into question the traditional notion of both revelation and the traditional notion that twofold Law was God's will and *essential* for the salvation of the individual Jew and of the people of Israel, and proclaims in their stead that God reveals himself progressively, through the gifted teachers of Israel, as the one and only God of the Universe and of mankind. The laws were but the husks preserving the kernel from the destructive blasts of a rejective world. The twofold Law may have been *temporally* necessary, but it was not *essential*. The laws belonged to history, while the idea of a single omnipotent God of Justice, righteousness and loving-kindness who, through Israel was leading man to a noble destiny, was an *eternal* truth sustained by Israel's *eternal* faith.

This mutation, like the Pentateuchal and Pharisaic, proved to be a hardy specimen. All the fulminations denouncing it as illegitimate came to naught. Indeed its claims were so persuasive that they unleashed a movement whose teachings are now heard around the world. Like the previous mutations, the Reform liberal mutation had proved to be self-authenticating.

Why the hardiness of his new mutation? The answer lies in its having offered an effective and creative solution to the problems of modernization and Westernization. What distinguishes this process from all others in the past is that it is impelled by the capitalist dynamic to innovate continuously. And innovation is the dread foe of replication and traditionalism, since it requires that men incessantly think unthinkable thoughts, create novel technologies, shape radically new forms and structures. It needs the questioning, questing and restless mind-set. It needs to free the creative individual from the constraints of traditional nurture which threaten to block his innovative surge and to encourage his *developmental* drives which continuously press him toward self-expression and self-fulfillment.

For the self-developing, self-fulfilling individual, traditional Judaism was nonviable, because it denied to him the right to question the first principles undergirding the Pharisaic

triad. So long as these first principles were acknowledged, the individual was given a very wide range of freedom to develop his innate intellectual and spiritual gifts. But the moment he denied that God had given the twofold law to Israel, there was no room for his intellectual and spiritual talents. He either had to have another Judaism to which he could turn, or follow the road of free inquiry and seek his salvation elsewhere. And since the modernization and Westernization process was weighted heavily in favor of innovators rather than replicators, experimentalism rather than traditionalism, there were bound to be ever-larger numbers of Jews swept into this surging maelstrom, clutching for a Judaism which could save their Jewish identity from being snuffed out by an irrelevant traditionalism. The viability of the Reform mutation was thus guaranteed so long as the modernization and Westernization was predominantly *developmental* and *innovative*. Progressive revelation expressed the faith that man's creative energies and ingenuity, once freed of irrational traditional fetters, would shape for mankind a messianic age. And in the nineteenth century the pace of economic development and the steady collapse of the old medieval order gave, with each passing decade, confirmation that this faith was far better grounded than the revelations from Sinai.

V.

This faith, however, proved to be premature. The modernization and Westernization process took a devious and tragic detour. It was ensnared and entrapped by the nation-state. It bartered away the inalienable rights of individuals for sovereign rights of the nation-state. Universal principles succumbed to particularistic ones, and *natural* rights gave way to *national* rights. By the end of the nineteenth century, nationalism was in the saddle from the North Sea to the Urals and had leaped across the Atlantic where its heady doctrines likewise proved irresistible. Squaring off for future battle, statesmen and ideologies stoked the fires of patriotism so that its flame would burn out all other loyalties on the Marne, the Somme, and in Flanders Field.

Triumphant nationalism furrowed the soil for the fourth mutation. When the capitalist bridgehead pressed into Eastern Europe in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it no longer brought in its wake the surge for *natural* rights, but a clamor for *national* rights. In Austria-Hungary, and Russia, the enemies of the old regime did not seek to join together to overthrow the Emperor and Czar in order to establish a viable multi-national territorial state. Instead they rallied around the banner of nationalism. No territorial segment proved to be either too small or too frail to support the cry for a nation-state of its own. The focus was not on removing the barriers to economic growth and development but on stirring up deep feelings for some parcel of land, some hoary custom, some vintage song and dance.

Jews living in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires were no more able to resist this Lorelei than the Poles or the Slovaks, or the Bulgars—or the French, the Germans, the English and the Americans. Despairing of the rights of man, they conjured up the national spirit of the Jewish people, on which they nourished their bruised self-esteem and fed their fantasies of a self-determining people, be it in the diaspora or be it in a restored Zion. But since the Herzls and the Pinskers and the Smolenskis, and the Aḥad Ha'am and the Ber Borechows had become alienated from Judaism and, like their intellectual compeers among the Gentiles had been seduced by the spirit of nationalism, the *élan vital* of the

Jewish people was for them an intrepid national spirit, and not religion. Judaism had been an instrument for national survival during those centuries when less enlightened men had taken religious beliefs seriously, and mistook a national spirit for a religious one. Now, however, sophisticated intellectuals could separate the *élan vital* from its ephemeral manifestations. Thus was born the fourth mutation, the Jewish secular identity.

Here was again a quantum jump. Never in all of its previous history had Jews separated their Jewish identity from their religious identity. The prophets, the Aaronide priests, the Pharisees, the Liberal Reformers—all had affirmed that the religion of Israel could not be severed from the people of Israel. All previous mutations had been mutations designed to keep the people alive because of their religion. But now the deed was done. A quantum jump had vaulted over Judaism and had established an ever-widening bridgehead on non-hallowed ground. Judaism was now proof of authentic Jewishness only if it was a Judaism which proclaimed itself to be compatible with a national identity. Reform Jews who at first balked at this demand were brushed aside as treasonous. Orthodox Jews who devoutly observed the 613 precepts, but who scoffed at secular Jews as heretics and held steadfast to their belief in a supernatural Messiah, were looked upon as enemies of the Jewish people. The ego-ideal was no longer R. Akiba, Yehudah ha-Nasi, Rashi, or Abraham Geiger, but Herzl or Smolenskin or A. D. Gordon.

But like all the previous mutations, Jewish secular nationalism proved to be a hardy plant. Steadily and persistently it wore down all but a stubborn remnant, as the carnage of World War I and its tragic aftermath corroded those grand universals which had once proclaimed there were certain inalienable rights which Nature and Nature's God had bestowed upon the individual. The sagging drift to totalitarian nationalism compelled even the most progressive Jew to find refuge and security among his people, among his co-nationals, among his blood brothers. And when Hitler tore down the few remaining barriers protecting the Jews from physical extermination, only a handful of die-hards could hold themselves back from acknowledging that an ethnic-national identity was essential for effective and creative survival.

VI.

The fourth mutation still reigns, and deservedly. It pulled us through perilous times. It allowed us to keep our heads high even when Hitler and other anti-Semitic ideologies sought to humiliate our spirit. It gave us courage to hold out even when millions of our people were being exterminated. It gave us the vigorous, buoyant, and intrepid state of Israel. It warded off despair with glimmers of hope. This mutation, like that of the priests, Pharisees, and liberal reformers, bears an authentic hallmark.

But a haunting question cannot be suppressed. Is this the last mutation? There have been four, might there not be a fifth, or a sixth? No mutation was ever anticipated. Each quantum jump was made from a precipice. The prophets did not predict their end. The Aaronide priests did not see the Pharisees sitting in Moses' seat. The venerable sages of the twofold Law and the bold affirmers of the Pharisaic triad did not envision a "lawless" Judaism. And rare indeed was that "authentic" Jew who, even as late as 1870, would have believed a non-religious Jewish identity would, in a few short years, put the religious Jew on the defensive. Yet we have seen that whenever a problem of sufficient magnitude and novelty arose, confronting existing forms of Judaism or Jewish identity with a *cul de sac*,

a quantum jump into mutational forms has occurred. This has been the *traditional* way in which Jews have survived both effectively *and* creatively. *History shows that mutation is the only authentic Jewish response to problems which cannot be solved either by replication or variation.*

Does such a problem loom anywhere on our horizons? My feeling is that we are edging toward a new stage in mankind's history. We are experiencing the agony of transit—one might call it the "frights of passage"—from an age of rivalrous nation states to a transnational global community, from an age of scarcity to an age of abundance, from an age of humiliation to an age of heightened self-esteem, from an age of quantity to an age of quality, from an age of replicating conformity to an age of self-development, and self-fulfillment. Since World War II the inner dynamic of capitalism has broken through the barriers which for so many decades had held back the onrush of economic growth and development. These barriers had been erected by the sovereign territorial nation states during the nineteenth century. These barriers had diverted capitalist development from a global strategy of dismantling old regimes and opening the sluice gates for sustained economic growth. They had compelled an abandonment of *natural* rights for the *national* rights. These barriers had allowed no alternative to ever more destructive wars as the only means by which damned-up economic forces could seek the outlets essential for economic growth and development. These barriers had barred the faith in a messianic age from realistic fulfillment. These barriers had compelled Jews to fashion the ethnic-national-secular mutation.

But since World War II, at first imperceptibly, then somewhat more discernibly, and now with ever more clarity, developmental forces have been at work steadily battering these barriers down. They have demonstrated their power by crossing that great economic divide which hitherto had cut off from man access to economic abundance. Each passing day brings fresh news from the developmental frontier of miracle rice and miracle wheat, and miracle this and miracle that. Breathtaking advances in technology assure a growing abundance of goods, and modes of production free of pollution. The massive barriers to the wedding of quantity and quality are dissolving as laser beams and fusion torches drive the archaic technologies into bankruptcy.

These remarkable breakthroughs have all been initiated by a revived capitalism. Neither Marxist Russia nor Marxist China has contributed so much as a single seed to the advance of the green revolution. The agricultural system of the Soviet Union is so inefficient that it has become necessary, now more than ever, to bail it out from the famine that sooner or later would overtake it. Orville Freeman's quip, "The Soviets must be relieved that they were unable to take over the world, for who would feed them," is now even more true than when he first wrote it. And what holds true for agriculture holds equally true for the innovating and pollution-free technologies, symbolized by the computer. Hardly a day goes by now that we are not reminded of the Soviet Union's dependence on the United States, Western Europe and Japan for advanced technologies.

These developments, especially evident over the past decade, have brought to light the operation of a developmental spiral. This developmental spiral is a process energized by what may be called the synergistic technosphere, *i.e.*, the persistent creation of innovating technologies based on man's ever-widening understanding of the most fundamental laws of the Universe. The steady advance on this developmental frontier demands that the most highly developed societies relinquish the less advanced technologies to societies on the

next lower level of the developmental spiral. These societies, in turn, relinquish their lower technologies for societies on the level below them on the developmental spiral. Each society thus *simultaneously acquires* more advanced technologies as it relinquishes the less advanced. As a consequence, the most underdeveloped societies can be drawn onto the developmental spiral, moving upward level by level, endlessly shaping innovating technologies and processes out of the fundamental laws of the Universe.

This developmental process reveals concentric levels, each of which displays its characteristic developmental profile. Thus, the United States is the foremost example of the most advanced developmental profile, since it is here that the older technologies are making way for the innovating, and since it is here that the synergistic technosphere is most active and prominent, and Western Europe, Japan and Canada display the developmental profile of the level just below. Israel enjoys a profile bordering on, if not quite identical with, that of Western Europe, Japan and Canada.

Now if this developmental spiral is sustained, then in the not so distant future every society in the world will have reached a level which guarantees a human *and humane* existence, and which allows for the realistic hope that the next higher level is well within reach and therefore worth striving for. At some point, the spiral will have reached to an overall high enough level so that intermeshing will more and more blur the sharp lines that now set off one developmental profile from the other.

It is this developmental spiral which is sowing the seeds for the next mutation. To the degree that the synergistic technosphere energizes the spiral of development, to that degree does it raise questions which existing forms of Judaism and existing notions of Jewish identity have no ready answer. The developmental spiral at its cutting age is shaping a transnational global community, which renders coercive nation-state sovereignty obsolescent. We see this most vividly in England's entry into the European Market, in the growing economic collaboration between the United States and the Soviet Union and Maoist China, and in the round by round efforts in the SALT talks, to erode the possibilities of nuclear warfare.

The more advanced, then, the developmental profile, the more the pressure to shift from national-ethnic identities, which are sustained and nurtured by traditional values, to transnational, highly individualized, self-developmental identities which are nurtured by innovation, experimentation, and questing for the self-fulfilling life.

All traditional values, whether they be vintage beliefs about God, or the nation, or the family, or sexual morality, or even the assumed biological-psychological boundaries separating man from woman, are opened up for scrutiny and critical reappraisal. The young people, with uncanny perception, have lumped all these traditional values under the label of "establishment," *i.e.*, whatever claims permanence is necessarily an obstacle to self-development, self-fulfillment, and self-choosing. And the sacrosanct value most singled out for blasphemy has been patriotism. The revulsion against the Vietnam War, has brought in its wake a revulsion against nation-state arrogance, imperialism, war and the imposition of alien values on helpless peoples.

American Jewry has been thrust on this developmental frontier as has no other people. Eighty percent, at least, of Jewish youth of college age are in college. A larger percentage of American Jews earn their livelihood in the most advanced sectors of the economy than do their Gentile neighbors. Because virtually no Jews are farmers, and because relatively few Jews are blue collar workers, and because, aside from an older generation, only

a small percentage of Jews fall below the poverty line, American Jews are the most vulnerable to the erosion of traditional values and the institutions grounded in them. This means that every form of Judaism and every kind of Jewish identity is threatened to the degree that such forms and such identities are incompatible with the survival on the developmental frontier. Most vulnerable are the secular-national-ethnic Jewish identity and those forms of Judaism whose survival are dependent on the sanctity of established tradition. The developmental frontier can be manned only by future-oriented minds, by synergistic spirits, by disestablishmentarians because its prime function is to create, fashion and shape innovating technologies essential for energizing the developmental spiral. A failure on the frontier would reverberate throughout the spiral, spin it off on a downward plunge, and plummet man and his hopes into an abyss of economic stagnation and utter despair.

The Fifth Mutation must capture the essence of this process if it is to become a hardy strain like its successful predecessors. It must, first of all, draw attention to the developmental spiral and its energizing, innovating and synergistic frontier. It must then delineate the developmental profiles that mark off the levels, one from another, so that the viable spiritual and identity options be realistically assessed, profile by profile. Finally, it must sacralize the developmental spiral as both good and necessary, both for Jews and for mankind. So long as each profile, irrespective of where it may currently be on the spiral, reveals a developmental bias, its forms of Judaism and its types of Jewish identity are affirmed as authentic. When, however, a profile displays an orientation which endangers the upward-moving spiral and predisposes Jews either to bring the spiral to a halt or to redirect it downward, then the Fifth Mutation would expose it as lethal for both Jews and mankind. There would be no quarrel or quibbling with a Jewish identity or any form of Judaism so long as it does not obstruct the movement from a lower to a higher level.

The Fifth Mutation, while affirming the authenticity of all previous forms of Judaism and all previous modes of Jewish identity, and while affirming the authenticity of all forms of Judaism and modes of Jewish identity currently compatible with the developmental spiral, would focus its own creative and synergistic efforts to forming and shaping a Judaism and a Jewish identity for those on the developmental frontier. For these are the Jews who, because they are compelled to look forward and not backward, need a faith that will reassure them that their innovating and creative endeavors are sacred, and that their synergistic efforts are holy because they energize the developmental spiral vitally essential for the upgrading of Jews and all mankind. Should they falter and fail, the netherworld will swallow up Jews, man, and all the hopes and dreams and aspirations for a paradise regained.

The Fifth Mutation thus authenticates the vital impulses which motivate those on the developmental frontier: experimentation, questing, innovating, and synergistic creativity. Above all, it affirms the self-developing, self-searching, self-motivating and self-fulfilling individual. And it shapes and forms and modifies institutions so that these institutions can be supportive of the values. Such institutions cannot be establishments, since their form will be inseparable from their function; sacralizing the creative, innovating, and synergistic spirit essential for energizing the developmental spiral. Since the Judaism of the Fifth Mutation will be committed to the self-developing individual, *and* the developmental spiral, being Jewish will be inseparable from a commitment to Judaism, since commitment to the developmental spiral cannot be other than a transnational commitment.

An identity which is rooted primarily in nationhood is an identity appropriate for lower levels of the developmental spiral, where the developmental process has been

blocked by imperialism, colonialism or traditionally structured societies. These identities lose their primacy as the upper levels of the spiral are reached, as is so evident in the process by which the European Community is subordinating national rights and claims to Community rights and claims. On the developmental frontier, national, racial, religious and sexual differences become variations of the human species, not essential qualities elevating nation over nation, or race over race, or religion over religion or sex over sex. The Fifth Mutation, by affirming precisely this, offers a Judaism whose teachings are alluring because they are addressed to the self-developing, self-choosing, and self-fulfilling individual and because they sacralize the developmental spiral which ultimately enables all individuals to be self-developing, self-choosing and self-fulfilling. At the same time, by its affirmation that this form of Judaism was generated by the forms of Judaism which preceded it, and that this new Jewish identity was opened up by that prior ethnic-national identity which had pressed the Jews in the United States out onto the developmental frontier, its authenticity and its legitimacy are grounded in the *traditional* right to mutate when a mutation is essential for creative and effective survival.

But there is an even stronger and tighter link binding the Fifth Mutation to the Pentateuchal, Pharisaic, Liberal-Reform, and ethnic-national. That link is the coming to awareness that Judaism is a developmental religion and that the Jewish people are a developmental people. The survival of effective and creative Judaism and of the Jewish people was effectuated by an uncanny knack for problem-solving, sometimes through replication, sometimes through variation, and, at very rare intervals, through mutation. This problem-solving capacity testifies to the fact that the essence of Judaism is not a form, or a substance, but a principle which shapes whatever forms may be necessary for the preservation of the principle. The four mutations show conclusively that no class, institution, law or doctrine, not even the conceptualization of God Himself, is immune from the priority of the principle itself. On the eve of a mutation, there is no way of knowing what form, institution, law or doctrine will be spared.

And what is this principle, this no-substance, this no-thing which must be the essence of Judaism? I would suggest that it is the unity principle, the principle which affirms that the source of all diversity and the power behind all change is a single One. Whenever a problem arose for the Jewish people, they solved it in such a way that it reaffirmed that behind the many, and behind historical change there was *the* One. Even secular Jewish nationalists were compelled to acknowledge that their God-free Jewish identity was rooted in the experiences of their ancestors with a *single* God, and that their claim to the land of Israel goes back to God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Fifth Mutation reaffirms the Unity Principle on a new level. It teaches that all the diversity of nature, be it in the macrosphere or in the microsphere, is the consequence of a single Power; that the wide range of human variation and complexity have the One as their source; that the total sweep of history moves toward the attainment of a higher order of being.

The faith that sustained Israel in the past was the belief that the one God had the power to shape a noble destiny for man, and that He had chosen Israel to lead the way. And this Israel did, sometimes by replication, sometimes by variation, and sometimes by mutation. Perseverance in this faith has in our day thrust Jews on the cutting edge of the developmental spiral and confronted them with the agony and the ecstasy of leading Jews and all mankind to a noble destiny through the Fifth Mutation.