

***UNIVERSAL Judaism***

Re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit for Everyone in Today's World

by Michael Shevack

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Dedicated to Charles “Boaz” Duane & Nancy  
“Channah” Miller who chose to live the way of the Israelites.

Dedicated also to Michael and Sarah Coan who were  
born with the knowledge inside them.

And of course, to my children, Christian, Adam and Zoe.

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especially David Waterman, Nelson Rose, Henry Rose who  
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etched in his heart, hidden away for thirteen years, until Life  
(or God) brought us together.

## **Preface**

There are times when a leap must be made. This is such a time.

There is a spiritual truth that springs, powerfully, joyfully, from the Sacred Nature of Life. It should be celebrated. Yet, sadly, it has become lost.

Because this spiritual truth has become lost, we've become lost. We do not know how to co-operate with Life. We've forgotten how to live in accordance with "How Life Works". We've lost the map to Life's territory, and this has resulted in what is commonly called *problems*:

Religious extremism, broken marriages, ecological devastation, sickness, global warming, economic collapses, drug addiction: all these problems "personal", "collective" and "planetary" (These are inseparable.) are the result of losing this same fundamental spiritual truth.

This spiritual truth is the Living, Holy, Essence behind Judaism. Discovered by some ancient nomads, *Hebrews*, it was transmitted, over thousands of years, through various stages of cultural development: Hebrew, Israelite, Israel, Judean, Jewish and now Israeli.

So enormous was this spiritual truth, it could not be contained by any one group. It inspired Christianity, turning the entire Roman Empire towards service of the One God of History. Galvanizing Islam, it brought forth millions upon millions more in devotion.

Today, this same basic spiritual truth now percolates throughout our secular global culture. Indeed, secular life, even when humanist or atheist, still reflects the teachings of ancient Israelite prophets. The secular still embodies the relentless positivism we call *progress*, the hopeful horizon of human *history*. The secular world still embraces Israel's ideal of nations, its hope for a warless civilization where peace and prosperity reign for all.

Scientific secularism, while rejecting unproven or fanciful assertions of religion, nonetheless still searches for One, All-Embracing Unity, some *uber*-understanding or *Theory of Everything*. In doing so, they assume-in-faith (because these can't be proven) the existence of Truth and Causality, necessary characteristics of any "Creator" God. Faith in the One God now has a new form, un-religious, even atheist, but with the same *Unifying Spiritual Essence*. To a great extent, all religions, and all nations, and all individuals, are now islands floating in this powerful, prophetically-inspired secular scientific sea. One might say that the world's largest religion is now *secular-ism*.

Today, there is not one single civilized nation, religion or philosophical perspective in the world that has not been touched, in some fashion, by the spiritual truth of *Universal Judaism*, as I call it: The essential *Hebrew Spirit!*

Sadly though, this spiritual truth has gotten twisted and lost. Its meanings have been mangled by time. Its power has been poisoned by religious bias and evil. Its vision has been fractured by political and economic selfishness. Its core ethics have been violated by excessive, pointless materialism, without spiritual purpose. Its teachings have been distorted by clergy of all varieties, who have aimed a smoking gun of guilt and psychological suffering at innocents “in the name of God”.

Today’s denominations of Judaism are not exempt. No one is exempt. All peoples of faith, and no-faith, religious and non-religious, have lost the core Hebrew Spiritual Truth that inspires us all.

It is sad when spiritual truth is lost. But, oh . . . what joy . . . when it is re-discovered and lived again! It is time to celebrate!

*Universal Judaism* is *universal*, because it’s the core universal Hebrew spiritual truths— *human* spiritual truths— that must be restated, resurrected, and relived if we are to find ourselves. It’s not about customs, rituals, legalisms, or cultural propaganda of Judaism, nor of any other religion, including secular-ism.

*Universal Judaism* is Hebrew spiritual truth. Clear. Unambiguous. So, like a seed, it can be planted in any environment, religious or not, any religion or no religion, and bring forth new light and new life. It re-ignites that spark of Hebrew Spirit that ignited human history.

*Universal Judaism* is also, just for me personally, my personal heeding of the call to righteousness, that, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah (49.5), Israel be a *Light Unto the Nations*.

**As Moses said (Numbers 11:26):  
Would that all the Lord’s people be prophets.**

Yes!

May we all be *A Light unto the Nations!* This is the leap we must take, *together*.

***Hear O World. The Lord is Our God. The Lord is One. (1)***

## Introduction

### Life is Holy. Celebrate.

Welcome to an adventure in Life. It is not for the faint of heart. It is for the brave of heart.

This is an adventure for those human beings— perhaps you are one?— who dare to believe that Life is more than humdrum and glum. This is an adventure for those who refuse to accept that Life is merely ordinary but also know that Life— the Very Nature of Life— is *Extra-ordinary*. Something worth celebrating.

This is no starry-eyed optimism here. This is not about living in an illusionary stratosphere of hopeful, overly idealized “faith”, where your intelligence, and reasonable doubt, must be banished. This is beyond the propaganda of religions or their detractors.

This is a *real world* adventure— or at least what the real world really is, when you begin to pass below the surface, penetrate its depths, and unveil its spiritual truth:

### Life is Holy. Celebrate.

Now you know all there is to know about *Universal Judaism*. Everything else is a footnote. So, it bears repeating: *Life is Holy. Celebrate.*

Holy? Now don't be too scared. You don't have to live in robed isolation. You will not have to cut yourself off out of fear of contamination. There are no sinners to shun, no damned to be damned. You do not have to wash yourself, over and over again, by thought or ritual, to make your humanity acceptable by the standards of some clergy-elite or some sadomasochistic god.

The Hebrew word for *holy*, *kodesh*, while it's been translated *set apart*, is not about this kind of obsession-compulsion. It's not about “I'm right; you're wrong”, “I'm saved; you're damned”. This is not holy!

What *is* Holy? *Holy is what Life IS.*

Holy is *Life in toto*: All Life. Life Known, Unknown and to Be Known. Life Seen and Unseen. The Visible and Invisible. The Material and Spiritual.

Holy is All Living Reality, All Living Existence: Living Being. Being Itself, The Divine Nature, All Nature. Nature Itself, Nature (with a capital “N”), The *Universe*—meaning *The All-Together*— That Universe of all actually-possible universes and universes to come.(3)

Indeed, Life is “Something” so far Beyond our earthly ability to fathom completely that It is, obviously, *Set Apart*. Unique. Incomparable. Ineffable. Beyond Measure. Singular. *The Holy One*, as some religionists call it. Awesome!(4)

Yet, perhaps even more awesome— because Life is truly Holy— our human lives can *become more holy*; after all, we are part of Life and Life is incomplete without us. We human beings can— more and more— reflect the Unique Nature of Life through our unique individual lives. We can grow spiritually. We can evolve. We can begin to *realize*— become aware of, and fulfill— the Holiness that is built into our human nature. And, joyfully, in utter celebration, if not abandon, we can also express it:

**Be thou holy because I am Holy.  
(Leviticus 20:26)**

It is now that the Hebrew adventure of *Universal Judaism* truly begins. Now we enter into a Unique Relationship with Life. Now we begin to mirror the Holy in everything we think, say and do. Now our identities become rooted in the Extraordinary, Beyond the turmoil and tumult of the earth.

And yet, ironically, this permits us to more fully participate in our ordinary earthly lives. We discover we are *both* natural, born of the earth, and *Super-natural*, born from *beyond: human!* So, rephrasing the above biblical quote in more everyday, relevant, language, this is the promise of *Universal Judaism*:

**Experience more of Life: Live bigger. Live wider.  
Live “The More” that IS Life.**

**Get more out of Life!**

This is the fundamental Life-realization of *Universal Judaism*. Its purpose is to set us *free*: Free! Set apart! Free *is* Set Apart! Now, we are set apart, distinct from all other living creatures on the earth, to experience our freedom— *spiritual* freedom. Freedom to experience, *consciously, creatively*, something wondrous, something truly miraculous . . .

**Good.**

Do you want good in your life? In *Universal Judaism*, this is how we celebrate the Holiness of Life: We bring good into our lives. We *live* the good. We celebrate the good. We celebrate *with* good. We create more good from Good!

Our entry into the spiritual adventure of *Universal Judaism*, begins with the experience of increased good in our lives. This signals our joyful “wake-up call” to the Holy. We, just through our simple, everyday mortal lives, begin to have a conscious experience of increased good as a result of embarking upon this adventure. This conscious experience of our good is actually the beginning stage of the conscious living *experience of God*; after all, the word “God” is just a contraction of the word “Good”.

In this budding adventure, we begin to notice that when we act in *alignment* to Life, this produces something good, a “reward” so-to-speak. We begin to experience what’s been called *Providence, Grace, or Hasgacha* in Hebrew: a synchronicity of good fortune happening in surprising, delicious ways. We experience “God’s Blessing”, as religionists often call it. “Good luck”, a secularist might say.

We also begin to experience, when we act in *mis-alignment* or *un-alignment* to Life, that this produces something bad, a “punishment” so-to-speak. “God’s Curse”, religionists like to call it. “Bad luck” or “Mis-fortune” a secularist might say.

As a result, we begin to discern *God’s Ways*: the ways by which Life works *for good*. We discover what we must *do*— Life’s *requirements*— in order to experience that good: acts of loving kindness, acts of charity, the pursuit of justice, the pursuit of knowledge, and many others.

We also discover how Life works for *bad*— what we *should not* do: Do not murder. Do not commit adultery, etc. This is the spiritual basis to law, religious or secular; they’re both based on the experience of *How Life Works for Good*.

Our increasing experience of good is so delicious, it’s as though we have a personal, one-on-one relationship with All Life’s Goodness. We do! Despite the vastness of Life, we begin to experience what some have called a *Personal God*. This awakening is so intimate, so personally transformational, one might actually experience being *Chosen*— special, set apart or distinguished from others who have not had this realization as yet.

Thus, a Chosen *Person* is born! Not unlike an ancient Israelite *prophet*.

But, such a powerful spiritual realization of good proves to be more than just personal. This Personal God proves to be objectively sharable: With family. With community. With nation upon nation. We notice that what we think, do and say, directly affects not only ourselves personally, but also others, and indeed, all

life on earth, and *vice-versa*. Our experience reveals that there is a living foundation to our shared-good, what religion codifies as *morality*.

**Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**

**That which is hateful to you do not do unto another.(5)**

Aha, our experience awakens us! This is not just our Personal God. This is also the God of our people, the God of others too, and by logical-extrapolation, all others and All Life. This is The *Universal* God. The God of all humankind. The God of History. The God of All Creation. This is what the prophet *Jeremiah* (10:10) called [in translation (6)] *The True God. The Living God*.

Thus, a Chosen *People* is born! Not unlike the ancient Israelite *nation*.

This then forms the task of *Universal Judaism*:

**To re-ignite the living spiritual experience of being *Chosen* which sparked the biblically-recorded Hebrew inspiration. And therefore, to put Judaism, Christianity, Islam, today's global secular culture and our entire world back on solid spiritual and historical *Ground: God's Goodness*:**

**Only by re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit** can today's bankrupt religions be replenished.

**Only by re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit** can today's empty Secular materialism be filled.

**Only by re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit** can true prosperity be attained.

**Only by re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit** can we understand what our scriptures actually record, so we can interpret these correctly.

**Only by re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit** can science embrace true wisdom of the heart.

**Only by re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit**, can we have all the good that is human nature to experience.

**Only by re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit**, can we begin to fathom, objectively, any meaning to the troublesome word "God".



“God”? Are you as afraid of this word as I am, because of all the destruction it has brought? Then, allow me to put your mind at ease:

I do not know God. I do not know who God is, or even if God exists. While I am clergy, I am no authority. “God”, for me, is one possible *theory* to explain my spiritual experience. But, it is not the only theory. I’m open to others. For me, anyone who claims to know, absolutely, that God exists, let alone Who God is, is overstating their case (and that’s being kind to them!) *Universal Judaism* is not a cult. Beware cults! Beware so-called authorities! Beware idolatry!

However, what I *do* know— after over 40 years in the wilderness of spiritual practice— is that there is, truly, such a thing as the *experience of God*; the more one progresses the more profound the experience of *The Good*.

I also know— that this experience is *rational*: It has an objective structure to it. It can be understood. It can be communicated to others. It can be taught.(7) The experience produces knowledge that can be talked about, written down, transmitted, learned and studied. It is a spiritual *science*! Indeed, the knowledge is so *real*, it can be *used* as a *tool* for good. It is practical. It helps people. It changes lives. It changes behavior. It evolves and expands human culture and its achievements.

This experience of God has POWER! It can be experienced personally, inter-personally and trans-personally.

That’s why, for me, it’s not hard to imagine, some thousands of years ago, that there might have been one or two Hebrew nomads who had this experience; they were, after all, human beings. It’s not hard for me to imagine that this spiritual truth gave them and their nation a power to survive the most brutal empires in the history of the world and live to contribute— disproportionately to their insignificant numbers— more to human civilization than any other people that has ever existed.

Would you like to share in this spiritual experience too?

This experience is open to you, no matter what is your formal faith or lack-of-faith. It is open to you whether you believe in a deity or not. It is not dependent upon belief (though correct belief can facilitate the experience.)

This experience is simply *How Life Works for Good*, the spiritual laws built-into Life so that good can be planted, flourish and harvested, generation after generation.

**This is the fundamental spiritual experience that was described by the ancient Hebrew word *brit* or *covenant*: a living, co-operative relationship with the Living God.**

In this book, I will just describe covenant differently, for today's more secular, scientific, spiritual and individualistic world.

Welcome to an adventure of the Holy.

This is an adventure so profound that it was once described as "Lord", "Master", *Adonai*, in the original Hebrew. (It's still a good description, with *caveats*.)

This is the experience of *Adonai Echad* (8). The One Lord: Creator and Redeemer of Israel and our entire world. Also, quite a good theory!

This is the experience I offer you here: It's the adventure of a lifetime: My lifetime. Perhaps yours too. It is the experience of Life— *for Goodness Sake!*

Welcome to *Universal Judaism*.

Life is Holy. Come celebrate with us!

**Life is Holy. Celebrate *Creation*.**

## Chapter One:

### **In the beginning, God created humility.**

Our beginning is what has been called the *Doctrine . . .* (a word that means *teaching*, not some cement “belief” that imprisons you) . . . *of Creation*.

This is one of the most powerful of Hebrew teachings. Please take the time to learn it. Take it to heart. Everything else that follows depends upon a correct understanding of it.

The *Doctrine of Creation* teaches that *prior* to our particular world— indeed, *before* any and all known existence— there is an *Originating Existence*. Prior to *our* being, there *is* Being. Prior to our particular reality, there *is* Reality. Prior to our existence *is* Existence. Any and everything else that arose from within this Existence— some *new* existence, our universe, us— had a *beginning*.

**God first. Everything else second.**

**God always. Everything else began.**

**This is the Doctrine of Creation.**

For *Universal Judaism*, we consider Existence, as discussed in the introduction, to be *Life, The Source, Reality, The Universe of all universes, Being, Truth Itself, Life in toto*, The Nature of all natures, Nature Itself, Nature (with a capital “L”) etc. We, reverentially, call it *The Holy One*, because It is Totally Unique, *Set Apart*— kavod in Hebrew— like *nothing* else that could ever possibly exist. We, sentimentally but accurately, call It *God*, because we human beings can *experience* it as *Good*, like a Good Father or Good Mother (if you were one of the lucky ones.)

However, the Holy One— Life Itself— Goodness Itself— Truth Itself— is not just some “thing” someone dreamt up in a theology book. It is not just a rumor, or superstition, or fantasy.

**The Holy One is *real*. The Holy One is Real Life.**

**We can all see It. We can all observe It. We can all experience It. Believers and atheists alike.**

**We all experience The Holy One by experiencing Life— through our humble, human faculties, and on our humble scale of earthly life.**

**We all experience Living Nature, on the scale of earthly nature (small “n”), and beyond.**

When we do, there are certain things we can readily notice about Life. We can notice, for example, that Life *is* or *has* a *Nature*, with certain qualities and capacities, such as Intelligence and Feeling. We'll speak more about this in Chapter Fifteen, because it requires a profound healing in Hebrew thought.

We can also observe— if we have our eyes open— that Life is always *creative*; the Holy One does not produce any two things that are exactly the same. There is continuous differentiation and innovation. There is constant *newness* brought into existence, every new moment, with every new thing. There is *evolution*, as we shall speak about in the next chapter.

This insight is enormous! Essential *Universal Judaism* pops right out of it:

- 1. The Holy One, Life Itself—*The Living God*— is The Creative Force *with-in* and *of* Creation. The Nature of all natures, we might call it *Divine Nature*. The Creation of all creations, we might call it “*The Creator*”.**
- 2. Being Living, The Creator always creates *more* of Itself. So, there's always Life, and always *more* of Life.**
- 3. Creating more of Itself, The Creator always *changes* as It creates. The Creator grows as new creations grow. As we grow, so The Creator grows.**
- 4. Thus, there is an innate, and intimate relationship between The Creator, any creation, and us. There is an innate, and intimate relationship between Nature, any nature, and our nature. We're somewhat separated, on different scales, levels or dimensions of existence, but we are inseparable.**
- 5. This deep relationship is always operating, unconsciously, in human beings. Human beings can also become *conscious* of this relationship, so we have the potential for *covenant*.**
- 6. Because The Creator is creative— anything and everything— *in* Creation, *of* Creation, *through* Creation (every possible preposition)— is *also* creative to some degree, according to its nature.**
- 7. The ability to be creative is especially true for human beings. That's why human beings are said to be *Made in the Image and Likeness of God*.(Genesis 1:27)**

Sadly, the marvelous *Teaching of Creation* became very distorted in centuries past. Certain philosophies arose which summed up this teaching in the Latin phrase *creatio ex nihilo*, *yesh mi-ayin* in Hebrew: *Creation Out of Nothing*. Then, unfortunately, they misinterpreted its meaning, creating quite a religious mess!

Just as a thought pops into our mind, seemingly from “nothing”, many came to believe that Creation just popped out of God’s Mind with nothing real preceding it. It was as if God’s Mind was some kind of “Abstraction”, some *tabula rasa*— an empty, blank slate or some imaginary perfect state. Creation seemed to be totally *external* to God, not having a relationship with It.

*The Living God* now seemed to be some kind of *Void*, some kind of “O” that was *forever there* in Its barren-emptiness, all alone, even lonely. God seemed to be *Eternal*— not just meaning “always existing”, “Existence Itself”; God now also seemed “ever the same”, “not growing”, “non-changing”.(9)

How could God create, *out of Itself*, something like our world— always changing, always growing, always differentiating into a myriad of forms— if God has none of these living qualities Itself? Creation seemed a “loss of purity” of God, an imperfect being arising from a Perfect Being, a Perfect-being now degraded.

Excessive purification of God seemed to imply that there was no real “substance” to God; God had no dimensions, no aspects, no characteristics to It, no Intelligence and Feeling. Excessive philosophizing stripped away God’s Actual Livingness, turning God into some kind of “Potential”, “Pure Being”, or even “Non-Being”. In mystical paradox, God was declared existing— yet to exist— not really existing— seeming to exist— but not really existing— although, It was claimed to be the *only* existence, bringing all existences into existence— but these weren’t really existing, but were only “illusion”. Such insanities still run around rampant in certain religions and sects.

Worse, God seemed “Totally Separate”— absolutely disconnected, totally divorced from an externalized Creation. There was God/There was Creation; there was an austere “division” within the Unity of All, with nothing in between. This created a real human problem: How can we, personally, have any connection to God? How can human beings know God? How can we relate to God? How can we pray and “be heard”, if there is such a radical disconnection between Creation and God, and between God and us? Was the Divine Nature, *not* really One?

To handle this dilemma, angels flew in to mediate Creation’s making. Or, God became “composed” of mystical sub-realities, *sephiroth* in *Kabbala*, Jewish mysticism. Or, God had just three aspects, forming all varieties of *Trinities*.(10) Or, a “Celestial Torah” mediated God’s Creating.(11) The excessive distancing of God required excessive bridging. All this was because *creatio ex nihilo* was

interpreted too extremely; God seemed an Absolute Nothing, radically *apart* from any real something!

This God Who sits on His Throne, all Alone, surrounded by His Own Nothingness, out of which some Creation just pops “outside Him”, also has another serious complication. It produces the “Santa Claus fib”: God seems to be up there, high on some cosmic mountain, able to look down upon all creation, and know in advance, what’s going to happen. God can watch everything we’re doing, knowing everything we are going to do *before* we actually think about doing it, and judge us “naughty or nice”.

With this distorted *theo-logic*, God seemed to *ordain* everything that happens. God orders us around, like a military commander ordering troops, a cosmic bully. We, ourselves, have no human input, or, if we *do* have input, there is no meaning or consequence to our actions.(12)

This leads to a sheepish *fatalism*, where we have no power over our own destiny, no independence of human creativity and existence. All of us are just playing some kind of blind, often stumbling role in a pre-ordained Life, as in a Greek tragedy. Not Hebrew! (13)

Such a view quickly lead to confusions around “Why does evil happen?”. If God determines everything, and God is Good, how does non-Good happen? Maybe there’s a “devil” to compete with God?(14) Maybe God just created us to be imperfect. But how could God create something imperfect, if God is perfect? Are we actually all born evil, sinners? But how can we be “made in the Image and Likeness of God”, if we are sinners? Is God a sinner?

Overtime, such theologies became so complex, so ridiculous, so poisonous that it’s not surprising people stopped believing in God– this nonsense “god” that is. We *naturally*, pun intended, found the secular and scientific viewpoint to be a far more reliable measure of Truth in today’s world.

Sad.

Now, you can appreciate the value *Universal Judaism’s*, theo-logic. God– The Creator, The Creation of all creations, the Being of all beings, the Life of all life, the Nature including all natures, Truth Itself– is truly “No-thing” like anything else. Everything else seems to may appear to have some kind of identifiable “form”, but God is, relatively, “Form-less”: No Form! (*Nothing* we can fully identify through our puny senses and faculties. More humility!)

*Universal Judaism’s* theo-logic makes spiritual sense and common sense. It cleans up a lot of the god-mess and re-ignites the Hebrew Spirit for everyone in today’s world. Reframing ancient Hebrew knowledge for more secular, scientific,

spiritual and individual times, for believers or non-believers alike, can be done a lot more simply:

1. **Life always exists, and is always prior to any new life that springs from It.**
2. **There is a distinction between Life and any new life that comes from It. *Holy, Set apart*, is an accurate descriptor.**
3. **Any and all creations occurring *with-in The Creator*, and are “*of God*”– Made out of (ex) God’s Living Nature” (*nihilo*, like nothing else.)**
4. ***Nothing* created by God is the Origin of itself. To consider anything created to be the Source of itself is *idolatry*.**
5. **There is always a deep relationship between The Creator, Creation and us.**
6. **So, human beings (even clergy) might actually gain reliable knowledge about God to share. (More Humility still!)**
7. **There is always a *Mystery to Life*. “New” is always surprising! Something next! Something different! Something unheard-of or unforeseen!**

Truly, with a Living, Creative God– Creation-ever-expanding-out-of-Itself– the adventure of Life always stands before us. There are always new happenings, new experiences, new adventures. The Creator creates a *future* which draws us *forward* . . . from the present . . . to some unknown, perhaps unlimited, horizon. We are a living part of that horizon. Our actions have *meaning!* To God. To us.

This is the *consciousness shift* that seized the Hebrews on their wanderings. With a Creative God, “moving forward”, out of the wilderness, into “something better”, was actually possible. This was not possible with an authoritarian, Pharaoh “god”. This was not possible with aimlessly, forever-cycling “nature god”. They were far too two-dimensional.

Only now, are we ready to fully appreciate the newness, the dynamism, and the mystery in the opening first sentence of *Genesis*:

***B’reshit Elohim barah et ha shamayim v’et ha ahretz.***

**In beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**



***In beginning***– (the start of a new creation, more of God)– ***Elohim***– (a plural word originally meaning multiple “gods”)– **created**– (using the singular Hebrew verb, *barah*, not the plural *baru*, hence *creating* as a *Single Entity*– including all aspects, creations, dimensions, gods, angels etc., with-in its Nature)– **the heavens and the earth**– (All is created, out of Itself).

That which created all existence, is *Elohim*, revered as our *Master (Adonai*, in Hebrew) or *The Lord* as they might have described it in ancient times.(15) In short . . .

**God is One. Creation is created out of God.  
And we are created out of God too.**

**Welcome to *monotheism*! The “One God” perspective with which the Hebrews ignited world!**

Because God is Living Nature, and Life can be experienced– *Knowledge* of God can come from all areas of human life: secular, scientific, spiritual and through each and every individual life and experience. Knowledge of God can be found in religion too, provided they have purged their superstition and psychological imbalances and gotten *real*.

Knowledge of God can be found in philosophy. Knowledge of God can be found in economics. Knowledge of God can be found in science, of course, too.

However, consider this first chapter a warning:

There are, humbly, real human *limits* to our knowledge about God’s Creation. Sure, some have proposed the so-called *Big Bang Theory*. Yet, similar as this scientific theory seems with *Genesis*, so that overly-ambitious clergy have declared it “proof”, it’s still just a theory. New scientific versions have already popped up which explain many of the observed facts, a completely different way.(16)

New philosophical inquires, new spiritual models, new religious theories also pop up every single day, including, of course *Universal Judaism*.

Be careful:

**Do not, ever, totally accept any particular Teaching of Creation, without question.** They are all theories or opinions or views.

**Some views are more useful than others.** Some are more coherent or complete. Some correspond more to observed reality,

so they can be said to be “more true” or “less true”. Some are, in fact, false.

**Never mistake any mortal viewpoint of God as God.** Never mistake any view of truth as the “Absolute Truth”!

**Never lapse into the most ancient and most dangerous of Hebrew scourges: *idolatry***– mistaking the “created” for the “Creator”.(17)

**This is what the doctrine of *Creatio ex nihilo* was trying to prevent.**

The point of this first chapter, as well as the first sentence of the Bible, cannot be repeated enough.

**Humility!**

**Life is Holy. Celebrate Humility.**

*God first! Everything else second . . . and much, much smaller.*

The “doctrine of humility” (humbly, lower case) is the closest thing to a cement doctrine that *Universal Judaism* will ever teach.

But, it’s flexible cement. So it won’t crack when it grows and evolves.

## Chapter Two:

### Evolve or Perish

Evolution is a no-brainer for *Universal Judaism*. Obviously, if you have a *Living God* That is continuously expanding and growing in newness, and Its living expansions— us, for example— are advancing *Its* growth, which advances *our* growth even further, then, there is continual evolution and *co-evolution*.

In fact, there is *only evolution*. There cannot not be evolution! Why?

**Evolution is Life. There is no Life without Evolution, and no Evolution without Life. Evolution is the Force of Nature.**

*Evolution in toto*, beyond any scale of evolution, such as our earth, that we might observe and study— *is Life in toto*, *The Creator*, “*The Creative Creation of All Creations Creating*”..

**Creating is Evolving; Creating is bringing more of life into Life, as already discussed.**

*Universal Judaism’s* view is that evolution exists on all levels of Reality. Evolution *is* Reality. Everything that is, is also becoming. Whether it is deep within the depths of so-called “inanimate” matter, with its unpredictable (creative) quantum fluctuations, or whether it’s the trail of a snail, everything percolates with new possibilities, new probabilities, new realities, because it ‘s all “The Creator’s- Creation-Creating Out of Itself: *The Living God*.”

The problem that some people have with evolution is that they’ve taken the Darwinian *theory* of evolution and considered it to be, in its original formulation, absolute *fact*. The issue is not whether evolution exists or doesn’t exist. It does exist! But the theory— the theoretical *mechanism* by which it takes place— is not completely understood; there are plenty of holes in it, which remain even today, including some big *spiritual* holes.(17) The theory itself is not a fixed *idol*; it still has to breathe, grow and evolve; it is not to be worshipped.

**“Theories” occur, no less with-in The Living God; they too are compelled to evolve.**

**How, in an evolving Creation, could any theory of Life be so complete it would *not* evolve?**

**That would place our thinking outside of Creation. That would make a theory more ;erfect than an Evolving God.**

The *idolatry* of excessive human intellect— that a human being can completely pronounce “truth”— and that this will remain unchanged, without growth, without living responsiveness to new circumstances, without evolution— is a lie of the human mind. We think our thinking is detached from Life, and then, we measure Life from this “fixed ruler”, when the ruler itself, is always growing, changing, and evolving too.

This is especially a problem for many who are pious. In their devotion to their religion, they’ve tended to turn their scripture and their beliefs about scripture into a fixed, eternal, *idol*. The *Torah* and/or Bible is often considered to be written by God or guided, perfectly, by the *Holy Spirit*; it is considered, itself, to be a divine *revelation*: a sudden interference by God into the earthly plane, pure absolute *fact*.

But scripture is not this.(18) It is not a revelation; it is a *canon*— an authorized redaction, an officially-sanctioned book. The confusion between *revelation* and *canon* is a serious confusion for many religions. It is the cause of much unnecessary guilt and suffering for religious folk of all kinds.

When we take the Bible as absolute fact, we create the same kind of *cognitive distortion*(19) that happens when we accept any viewpoint, scientific or otherwise, as absolute fact. We then trust a *view* of Truth as Truth Itself. We trust an opinion as actual knowledge. We make the idolatrous mistake that the great British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead termed *misplaced concreteness*. We are construing our *map* of Reality to *be* Reality. We are taking a theory of our universe to be the actual working of our universe. We are taking a human understanding and considering it Total understanding. And when we do that, we stop growing, because we are, in essence, worshipping ourselves and our viewpoint. We can’t see beyond our eyes. We don’t look beyond ourselves. We cease to evolve.

*Universal Judaism* considers this kind of scriptural-idolatry which asserts scripture as perfect, inerrant, a fixed fixture in our thinking, to be very dangerous. It prevents us from learning, growing and evolving because we treat this very human document, however inspired, as 100% perfect, a “god” in itself. We are imprisoned by this narrowness and cannot evolve.

This does not mean that scripture is not valuable. It is! It contains irreplaceable knowledge drawn from previous *experiences of God*— How Life Works for Good. Precious knowledge! Should we ever lose valuable human spiritual experience? Should we ever be forced to regain the knowledge that our ancestors might have known and transmitted, however clumsily, through their ancient languages, symbols and words?

You see, if we lose scripture, if we lose any valuable piece of sacred human spiritual knowledge, this too can prevent our evolution. Then, we have to re-learn what was already learned and we don't move forward as readily; we don't *evolve*. We retread what was trod.

So the issue for *Universal Judaism* is not whether scripture is "from God" or "not from God". The issue for *Universal Judaism* is the *excessive trusting* of the *authority* of scripture— or the excessive trusting of anything mortal, including religious traditions or any scientific theory such as evolution— so that we fail to expand, grow, and evolve, physically, mentally, spiritually . . . in all ways. For then, we are no longer participating in our evolving Reality; then, we are no longer acting like a creature Made in the Image and Likeness of The Holy One; then we are no longer consciously living in a way that reflects the Nature of Life Itself. We have become idolaters, worshipping finite representations of the Truth, rather than Truth Itself. We then have de-evolved, and de-evolution means only one thing: we're headed for a downward spiral.

What is most remarkable about the Hebrew culture, which is ancient— some 4000 or more years old, depending upon the dating system employed— is that they evolved. Perhaps it was built into their early nomadic way of living; they could only start where they were— never dwelling in any one place long enough to make it a fixed idol— and from there, they could only move forward, and move forward more, continuously evolving in a *progressive* living experience of *The Living God*. Whatever is the origin of their evolution, it nonetheless remains inspiring to us, even today:

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate your Evolution!**

Over the many, many centuries, this evolving Hebrew culture faced the most horrific challenges imaginable. Attacks, enslavements, domination, destruction from such ancient empires as Egypt, Assyria, Philistia, Greco-Syria, Babylonia, Rome, Christendom, Nazism, Soviet Communism . . . etc. etc. But, because the Hebrew culture worshiped nothing "second" over what is "first", they never gave away their power to others. Instead, the Hebrews kept moving forward, mirroring the Nature of God, growing, evolving. They always retained their inner spiritual *sovereignty* as a nation under God, even when they were, temporarily, forcefully dominated by some foreign false-god worshipping empire.

They *survived*, from the Latin root meaning *to live above*, i.e. not get dragged down below. In fact, the great British historian, Arnold Toynbee, was quick to observe, that of all the ancient nations originating in the Mesopotamian region, only *one* has survived, and has flourished, with a continuous, evolving, culture: the Hebrews.

How the Hebrews discovered this survival advantage (in Darwinian terms) remains a mystery. Indeed, it can sometime seem like a sudden revelation. But,

what is clear is that somehow, the Hebrews came to realize that the best way to evolve (and not perish) is to view every challenge, every assault, as a spiritual *opportunity*. Each and every challenge was looked at *prophetically*, with an eye *for good*, i.e. How should they approach the challenge for Good, i.e. in devotion to God? What was God “saying” to them through this living experience?

By so doing, they were embracing the Unity of Life. By so doing, they were embracing That Wholeness so much Greater than any of their challenges, it rendered their challenges a mere passing moment in time. Since everything is *evolving* (though they’d not have used this term back then), even dangerous challenges would have to, eventually, evolve away, i.e. they would be *delivered by God to freedom*.

**Do you live this way? Do you see all challenges for good?**

**Do you trust Life’s evolution as your freedom?  
Or, do you stay fixed and fixated in the past?**

*Continual Evolution towards Increased Freedom!* This is quite a stunning spiritual perspective, distinct from all the other nations around them. It accounts for the supreme ability, the sheer Hebrew *relentlessness* to endure the crucible of history. Such *relentlessness* is simply absolute *living faith* in evolution, preventing them from perishing, leading them to greater survivability (in Darwinian terms) and *freedom* in all ways: physical, mental, spiritual.

So, using more religious terms, evolution might be said to be *The Hand-of-God*. It guides us, moves us forward, delivers us away from our *natural predators* (in Darwinian terms) towards the so-called *Promised Land*, be it actual or metaphorical. We survive. We do not perish. We *align ourselves* to the Creator—How Life works for Good— so, we prosper in all ways.

Want to think like a Hebrew? Want to evolve and not perish? When you are faced with any personal challenge, ask yourself these prophetic questions:

**How can we turn this challenge from bad to good?**

**What did we do that opened us up to *not* good?**

**How can we learn, change and evolve to not do that again?**

**How can we actually see this seemingly negative challenge as good, however, unpleasant, or lethal, it is?**

This is called *optimism*. This is called *progress*. This is the *Way of Life* that the ancient Hebrew prophets taught their people, and passed on to other peoples, sharing this evolving, progressive, historical perspective with the world: Future-oriented. Forward-moving.

Evolve or perish! This is the theme of *Universal Judaism*. This is the theme of all Hebrew-based cultures, including prophetically-inspired Christianity, Islam, and our world secular culture. This is the great Hebrew contribution towards the healing, the prospering, and, in religious-language, the *salvation* of humankind.

Do you hear God's call to evolve? Do you want to evolve for Good? Do you wish to add your light to this 4000 year old flame? Evolution- *the Hand of God in Creation*- is "THE HOW" in How Life Works for Good. It's HOW good happens!

**How does Life always work for Good?  
Because Life Evolves.  
Evolution means "always working for Good".**

When we live with an eye to evolution, to improved goodness in all things, we don't get a descending, life-ebbing spiral. We get an ascending, life-engendering *helix*:

Like our DNA.

## Chapter Three

### A Super-natural Animal

Now, the capacity to evolve exists in all creatures. All species grow and evolve with the challenges of their earthly (environmental) experiences— the cornerstone of Darwin's theory of *natural selection*.

However, no other creature equals the human capacity to evolve *consciously*. No other creature is as conscious. No other creature is as *conceptual*.

We human beings have the extraordinary ability to conceptualize Reality, to form a workable picture, an understanding, an abstract *model* of the world we are experiencing. That's why, except for minor efforts on the part of chimpanzees and some birds, we're the only major *tool maker* in the animal kingdom.

To create a tool means one must be able to look at raw nature, take it in hand, and re-shape it according to an *idea*, a *concept*. We look at a stick, imagine it in our mind, shape it according to our imagination, alter it for our needs, and use it often differently than intended by nature. A stick now becomes an awl to help a chimp pry insects from a log. With a few modifications, it becomes an arrow to help a human shoot prey.

Most creatures might be called *natural* (lower case, not Upper Case), bound to the *earthly* nature from which their bodies arose, living in synch with the cycles of nature and the seasons of the year. But, we human beings, while natural, are also *Super-natural*: literally *Beyond nature*. We have a *Higher Nature*.

Other creatures tend to be stuck in their environmental niches, an ancient observation which the Bible records (*Genesis 1:24*). But, human beings are not so stuck. Through our conceptual abilities, we can explore the seas, the mountains, the sky, and now way "above"— moon, planets, sun, galaxies, universes beyond our universe— all the natures with-in Nature.

It is no mere evolutionary artifact but, in fact, a *living symbol*— a *sign* of our Super-natural status— that the human being is the only near perpendicular animal. We are a vertical, living connector between "the heavens and the earth". We human beings are not just in a *taxonomic* class of our own, but also in a *spiritual* class of our own.

**Our physical body is a living sign of our spiritual nature.**

**Our spiritual nature is expressed through the physical form of body, inseparably so.(20)**



To explain this, the Bible describes God breathing Its *Spirit* into the relatively “inanimate” dust to evolve a *living soul* (*Genesis 2:7*). We receive a higher nature beyond our earth nature. Others contend that we *have* a “soul”, some *piece* or *spark* of God that we *possess*, accounting for our conceptual, Super-natural or *rational* abilities. These views— like “God”— are nice working theories, useful explanatory tools; better models may evolve as human beings evolve.(21)

From a contemporary scientific viewpoint, no one knows exactly how the human being evolved to be so remarkable, how we can be earth born, yet not earth bound. But, with all respect to Darwin, it is highly unlikely that we could ever evolve beyond the earth if *only* earthly forces were at work.

**Human evolution *must* be cosmic or our evolution makes no sense.**

The human being is, as the second chapter of *Genesis* describes, a *cosmic* being. We are not born merely of nature but of Divine Nature, Nature Itself, beyond the nature of the dust-filled earth. After all, only human beings can vault the heavens and come back with knowledge beyond the earth. Only we can reveal unseen universes in so-called *theoretical* equations. Only we can fathom, abstractly, the *governing principles* or *laws* of the universe, and apply them personally. And, yes, only we can understand, abstractly, *spiritual* laws— How Life Works for Good— and learn to govern ourselves, consciously, by them.(22)

That’s because we are not just Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic; we are also something else, something thrilling: *Individuals*.

Just as God brings new possible existences into Its Existence from Its Existing Existence, individuals also bring new possible existences into our existence from an existing existence with-in that Existence.

**Made *in the Image of God*, means that we *reflect* (as the Hebrew word *tzelem*, translated *Image*, implies) **That Nature called “God”.****

**Made *in the Likeness of God*, means that we are separate, *cut off*, (as the Hebrew word *demut*, translated *likeness*, means), **possessing individuality.****

***We reflect, in our individuality, The Nature of God.*(23) **Made in the Image and Likeness.****

Individuality allows us to consciously *focus* and *concentrate* the aspects and qualities that exist in nature. We *comprehend* them— in dual sense of *encompass* and *understand*.

Bringing them, comprehensively, under our *dominion* (*Genesis 1:26*), we can master them and direct them for our individual benefit. For example, animals run wild in nature. But we Super-natural animals can focus our intelligence upon them, conceptualize them within our minds, and *domesticate* them, farming them for our needs.(24)

Flight exists in nature. But, through the power of our Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuality, we can comprehend, abstractly, the laws governing flight. Then, we can re-produce this natural phenomenon whenever we want, creating a jet or rocket. This is how we invent all our technologies: farming, house-building, computers, even controversial technologies, like abortion and genetic engineering. We "simply" find a quality within nature, focus and concentrate upon it, abstract it, and direct it for our individuals needs.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate your Individuality.**

Our individuality also allows us to comprehend often restrictive laws of nature and *neutralize* them. While a block of iron will sink in water and will not levitate off the ground, human beings can study the laws of flotation, shape the metal accordingly, so that the upward force of buoyancy neutralizes the downward force of gravity. Metal ceases to sink, but floats. In water. In air. A seemingly fixed law of nature has now been neutralized for human needs.

The result?

### ***Freedom.***

**There is nothing more precious to human life than freedom.**

**Freedom is what it means to feel human!**

Freedom lies at the very core identity of the Hebrew people, through our *Exodus* from enslavement in Egypt. Freedom is the gift of contemporary democracy that we all enjoy, thanks to the Enlightenment philosophy that re-discovered Hebrew thinking forgotten or ignored. Freedom is delicious, like a bite of the apple in the *Garden of Eden*.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate your Freedom.**

We Super-natural animals have a far greater range of freedom than all other animals. We Super-natural animals have far more *options* available to us. One such option is that we can comprehend *all* the options available to us. Then, we can consider them, weigh them, contemplate their possible effects *before we act*. We have an amazing ability that is the hallmark of human freedom: *choice*.

## **Life is Holy. Celebrate your Choice.**

Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic, Individuality is what grants us, as religious philosophers call it, *free will*, so, we can choose, *will-fully*, how we shall direct our lives and talents. Shall we do this? Shall we do that? How else could we be individuals without free will or choice?

Upon this ability to consciously choose is founded the spiritual science that religions call *morality*, which we will talk about more about later.

Now you may not believe that the biblical story of the *Garden of Eden* was *factually* true. You may not believe that there was a real Adam and Eve, or an evil serpent, seducing them to eat the forbidden fruit.

But, you cannot deny the *meaning* of this story:

We human beings *do* have an intelligent faculty within us that *tempts* us to explore and be curious, and go beyond natural earthly limits, to discover our Super-natural gifts.

We human beings *do* have the ability to taste the *fruit* (experience the *consequences*) of having knowledge (*Genesis 2:9*). We have the ability to ingest, digest, catabolize, metabolize and assimilate knowledge— “food for thought”. And ironically, in this computer age, we even process the knowledge through *bytes* of an *Apple*.

In spite of its primitive, Near Eastern imagery and mythic vestiges, the biblical story, fictional though it is, expresses a real human truth. We all are somewhat disconnected from earthly nature (*The Garden*) because we are all Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuals, Beyond mere earthly nature, partaking of “Divine” Nature.

**Although the phrase has been grossly misused, causing unnecessary guilt and suffering, we all *do* live in a kind of “*original sin*”.**

**We all do live somewhat separated from our natural state. It’s actually our *original gift*.**

You are human. You are special. You evolved to be a Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic, Individual. You are— spirit, mind and body, together— a *living soul*, *nephesh chaya*— as the Bible describes you. (*Genesis 2:7*).

Are you ready to own your talents? And use them for *good*?

## Chapter Four:

### **The Good, The Bad, The Ugly.**

Because we human beings have a greater degree of creative freedom, we also create a greater degree of problems.

Being able to act consciously creative upon the natural order can certainly bring great benefits to human life. But, it can also bring great troubles. Let's look at a very simple, but familiar example:

Sure, we can super-naturally create an automobile to propel us, faster than a cheetah, the fastest natural creature in the world. This marvelous invention allows us to stay in touch with long-distance relatives and keep families together. However, with this great benefit comes great trouble: air pollution and resulting diseases like asthma and cancer. These cause sickness and even death which, ironically, tear families apart.

This is an illustration of what is commonly called *sin* in the Bible, or rather, *chet*, in Hebrew(25) poorly translated. While there are many Hebrew words translated into the English word *sin* (quite a mess!), this "sin" really means *to miss the mark*. One aims— like an arrow— to target one thing, yet shoots something else, the opposite target, even yourself or a loved-one, as in the car example above.

Are you one of those people who ask:

**Why does a supposed Good God allow so much pain and suffering in the world?**

If so, let me give you the definitive answer; you need look no further:

**God cannot do otherwise!**

For *Universal Judaism*, pain and suffering in this world is not surprising. Pain and suffering is not a threat, at all, to a Real God. From our perspective, pain suffering is a "non-problem" however painful to the human heart.

**"Why is there pain suffering if there is God?" is like asking the question "Why do toddlers stumble and skin a knee when learning how to walk?"**

Why? Because we are *learning* and don't know, yet, how to use our talents *correctly*. The word "correct", comes from the Latin *co-regire*, *to govern together*,

or to *co-govern*. Like a toddler, learning a new skill, we all need to learn how to operate *correctly* with How Life Works for Good. We spiritual toddlers have to learn How God Designed or Evolved our World, for instance, hard surfaces scratch soft skin. Then, we need to learn to *co-govern* with It. Virtually all unnecessary pain and suffering occurs for the same reason.

Just as humans can concentrate “positive” aspects of nature to produce miracles of technology— funneling electricity into light bulbs for light anytime we want it— we can also concentrate the more “negative” aspects nature, such as electrical shocks and its fires. Nature includes so-called “negative” or “bad” aspects— *natural evils*, as they are sometimes called. Natural evils can include decay, destruction, disease and death, delivered by pestilence, earthquakes, volcanoes, tornados, and floods, etc.

Of course, “natural evils” such as decay, destruction, disease and death, are not, in themselves, “negative” or “bad”. Life is *Good*, remember? Without decay there is no composting and therefore, no natural fertilizer. Without destruction, one cannot clear away past constructions and make room for new. Without death, we’d soon overpopulate and choke on ourselves. Within the healthy fabric of how Creation on earth is designed, these “bad” things are facets within an overall, evolving, goodness, including both relative “bad” and “good” (*Isaiah 45:7*).

But, as we do with all qualities or aspects of nature, we Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuals can focus and concentrate these seeming “negatives”, creating more decay, more destruction, more disease and more death than nature alone might produce on its own. Today, we can actually engineer bacteria to be far more lethal than anything in nature and use them to annihilate our enemies. We have the capability to out-do nature’s worst volcano, incinerating the entire planet at the touch of a button.

Our conceptual minds actually can amplify the negative aspects of nature, and make them far more lethal than they would be otherwise. This is how we create technologies gone mad. It is actually *we* who have gone mad! We’ve disassociated, radically, mind from body. We disconnect human thought from nature. We exalt our creativity first, and the Creator’s second, a dangerous reversal of evolution. This is *idolatry, moral sickness!*

This was exactly the lethal situation back in the ancient world with many of the primitive tribes surrounding the Hebrews: the Canaanites, Hittites, Amelkites, and others. These cultures of these tribes were devoted to amplifying the decaying and destructive aspects of nature. They engaged in cultic bestiality and rapacious orgies. They practiced child sacrifice by burning. Their perverted incest undermined positive family structures and prevented the progressive, evolution of their civilizations and human history.

Worse, they actually came to *enjoy* their destructive creativity. They relished their vile behaviors, amplified them to sadomasochistic, cultic levels. This is not just pain and suffering. This is not just natural evil, the negative or bad happenings that occur in an otherwise healthy, natural learning process. This is true *evil!*  
**TRUE EVIL!**

**True evil is the *conscious choice* to accentuate and delight in the pain and suffering of oneself, another, undermining the Good in Creation. It is the ultimate attempt to pervert and subvert Life's Goodness for one's delight alone.**

**Life is Holy. Celebrate the end of evil.**

Of course, it's our ability to be Conceptual and Super-natural that permits us to do such evil in the first place. Ironically, evil has— at its pristine center— a great blessing. It is the same blessing we use to bring more good into Good: *freedom*. At the center of evil is our *original gift*. It's just being used *incorrectly, not co-governing* with nature.

And, of course, no one would ever *desire* to become so evil, if there wasn't some kind of good, some kind of emotional payback they were getting out of it. Even sadomasochistic delight has a tiny bit of good in it: heightened pleasure in one's ego-power, some twisted curiosity. Again, *All is Good; Life is Good.*(26)

However, once any tidbit of good in their perversions topped out, these savage tribes turned utterly *degenerate— de-generate*. These tribes *ceased to generate*. They ceased to reproduce, to progress, to flourish, to evolve. They concentrated the decay, destruction, disease and death in nature until it imploded on them. Soon, their individualities rotted back into the dust of the earth, their lives and cultures buried.

Their behaviors had become *abomination, toevah*. Life became repulsed by them. Nature abhorred them. Those committing these abominations were *vomited out* of the land they were attempting to settle (*Leviticus 18:28*). Good did not tolerate such vile, excessive non-good! Nature annihilated them.

Out of this mess, arose the Hebrews. The Hebrews awoke to the living fact that there is an *Order here*. They began to realize that there is an *integrated fabric* to Life— and the biblical Hebrew word for *Good, Tov*, means just that: an *integrated wholeness*.

The Hebrews began to notice that Life was arranged, structured, designed and *ordered for good*: to generate more life from Life. While they claimed their individuality and right to alter nature for their individual needs and wants, the Hebrews were very conscious of not doing this out of context with God's Order in

nature. This was the fundamental *teaching* or *Torah* they followed and bequeathed to today's world, in a recorded, canonized, scriptural form.

The Hebrews discovered that when we act in *alignment* to this Order– How God Designed or Evolved the World for Good– there are good results from our actions; we concentrate the good that already exists and make it even more good. God's Order– governing the weather, the natural elements, the seasons, the plant, animal and insect life– work in harmony with us, because we work in harmony with It. As a result, our fields and families blossom; our civilization grows, matures, flourishes. We can harvest all its gifts, both God-created and human-invented. We experience *God's blessing*. (*Deuteronomy 11:4.*) More life from Life! More good from Good! This positive *alignment* between God and humankind was called *brit* or *covenant*.

The Hebrews also discovered that when we act in *un-alignment* to this Order, there are bad results from our actions; we concentrate the bad that already exists in nature and produce pain and suffering: no rain, dried up land, scarcity of crops, hunger and starvation, foreign invasions. We experience God's *curse*, due to a breach of *covenant*. (*Deuteronomy 11:17*)

True Hebrew life seeks to *obey* God's Order; the word *obey* comes from the Latin meaning *to listen or hearken*, as in the Hebrew *Shema!*

***Shema Yisrael! Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.  
Hearken, O Yisrael, to the Creator, The One Master.***

Obey God's Order in Creation! *Hearken* to it– hear and obey. (*Exodus 24:3-7*)

To re-ignite the Hebrew Spirit for everyone in today's world, requires us to respect God's *Order*. The word *order* is a delightful synonym for the word *commandment*. God orders or commands the design or structural organization of nature. God's *commandments* outline certain boundaries necessary for How Life Works for Good.

**If we do not hearken to God's *Order* or *Commandments*, respecting nature's design *before* we assert our free will, suffering and even evil will be the result.**

**This is not the result of a mean, "Wrathful" God. It's just How Life works!**

Re-igniting the Hebrew Spirit for everyone today's world urges us to act with *discernment*– *correct, governing together*, discernment of *The Hand of God* in all things. We must co-operate, co-create– "form a *covenant*"– respecting the *Order*

or *Commandments* built into the Design of our World. This is correct Hebrew spirituality. This is correct *human* spirituality.

So now, returning to our simple, but familiar example above– looking at today's automotive challenges with Hebrew eyes– we can now learn a lot about the good, the bad, and the ugly:

It is because we created our automobile *incorrectly*– not co-governing with God's commandment or *law* in nature– that we were “punished” with increased asthma and cancer. This is not the mark of a vicious, vengeful god. It is actually more like a Loving, Parental, God, (A “Father”? *Deuteronomy* 1:31) That punishes a child for his own good. The punishment makes us realize our mistake: *We sinned against God's Will, broke The Commandments*– if you like traditional-sounding language. We did not use our free will *correctly*, in *alignment*, or *covenant* with God's Will in nature.

However, all is not lost. Fortunately, in an ever-evolving world, there's always an opportunity to grow and change. So, we can *repent*– correctly creating new cars that are more eco-friendly, more obedient with God's Commandment in nature. Then, God will “show us *mercy* and *forgive us*”, reducing the cases of disease, prolonging our days on the land. (*Deuteronomy* 5:33).

Our *redemption* comes as a result of new learning!

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate *New Learning*, always!**

Do you see? This whole confusing “good/evil thing” is, basically, very, very simple. and natural; religions complicated it to the point of insanity. When we look at Life nakedly (like Adam and Eve before they fall?) sin, suffering, and repentance makes commonsense:

**What we do has consequences.**

**What we cause affects us.**

**What we affect has an effect.**

**What we sow, we reap (27)**

Reflecting upon ourselves after any experience that may be unpleasant or cause suffering, we can discover our mistakes, learn anew, correct them, and evolve again/ We will experience going from Less Good to More Good, “God Cursed”, to “God Blessed”. This is the simple, spiritual foundation of *moral consciousness*. It's no different for you and me, than for the ancient Hebrews during their path in the wilderness. It's a universal human experience.



**Spiritual fact:**

**Our actions rebound upon ourselves, for good, or, for bad, depending on how we interact with *God's Design* in nature. How we interact with God's *Design*– God's *Order* or *Commandments*– depends upon two things:**

- 1. our knowledge**
- 2. our choices**

We may not always be aware of what we are creating or mis-creating. Alas, we don't just have a conscious mind, but also a subconscious and unconscious mind. They're creative also! Without our realizing it, they may be creating trouble for ourselves. Without realizing it, we may be "programmed" incorrectly, with incorrect knowledge. So, even if we're acting with the best intentions, sometimes suffering can result. That's another reason "Why do bad things happen to good people?"(28)

There's a lot that we spiritual toddlers have to learn so we can walk, perhaps even run, without skinning our knees or falling. The Order here has many *boundaries*, which is what a "command" or "law" is. There are boundaries between us and all Life in Creation. There are boundaries between us and each other. There are boundaries between us all and our various human institutions.

But, rather than go into so many detailed moral boundaries right now, and this being just a primer on *Universal Judaism*, let's just keep it simple. All moral boundaries boil down to this:

**Freedom requires responsibility.**

If you're going to operate like a mini-creator, you've got to learn the spiritual ropes:

**Life is Holy. Celebrate *Responsibility*.**

**Life is Holy. Celebrate *Responsibly*.**

Do you wish to avoid pain and suffering? Are you willing to learn how to *align* yourself to Life?

Are you willing to embark on a *covenant* for today– without all the religious guilt and insanity of the past?

**Life is Holy. Celebrate *Covenant*.**

## Chapter Five:

### **A Holy Nation. A Holy People.**

The Bible states– with certainty– our right to *dominion, radah*, in Hebrew (*Genesis 1:26*). We humans have a right to express our Supernatural, Conceptual, Cosmic, Individual creativity in a healthy relationship with All Life and Creation, stewardship over the planet (29).

Dominion, yes! But, do we have a right to *domination*– placing our human inventions first, and God’s Creation second–as, sadly, people, both religious and secular, have done in the past and continue to do in the present? Do we have the right to assert “good” or “bad”, only according to self-interested desires and needs? Ransack the earth?

The Hebrew Spirit says “*Never!*” We are entitled to our creativity as humans, but we must– always –seek *alignment* to God’s *Order* or *Commandments* in Creation, harmonizing our actions with that. This, of course, includes the earth. But, as we spread outward into space, it, in principle, includes not littering the moon.

This profound principle is the spiritual significance of Biblical story of the *Tower of Babel*.(30) Here, the conceptual might of human beings is misused to erect a *tower to their own power*, declaring human ego the #1 priority of Life. This we’re all too familiar with today, as we witness the excessiveness of corporations, governments, religions, the military, and any human institution where individuals band together to assert power and influence, without concerning themselves with *Goodness for All Life and Creation* (a *Relationship Priority*, we will discuss ahead.) This is the human fast track to pointless destruction, suffering, mindless wars, and of course, when indulged and delighted in, true evil.

To counter such egoist machinations, immediately after the Tower story, the Bible presents the story of Abraham.

Abraham, together with his wife Sarah,(31) were to be the progenitors of a *nation*, from the same root word as *native* or *natural*– an *am*, in Hebrew, a *nation* or *people*. There were to be a people *living under God*; a people living in *alignment* to God’s Order; a people devoted to seeking and spreading of Goodness– both human invented goodness, and God-given Goodness.

This was not a nation to be run by megalomaniac extremists as in the Tower story. This nation was not to be gentile, in Hebrew, *goy*, perhaps best translated a *country*, from the early English for *conflict*– nations continuously warring for their own egos’ ascendancy.

This was not to be any ordinary nation either. There are many, good peoples that seek good with good intention. But, like toddlers– like *Noah* in the story– they possess no native comprehension or conscious knowledge of How Life Works for Good. They are good, loyal followers of goodness, rather than true, self-aware *leaders* of goodness, which Abraham biblically exemplifies.(32)

And unlike nations in today’s political arena, this nation was not what we might commonly call a *state*, people grouped together merely by some legislative accord of government, some official document, like a constitution or such.(33)

Abraham’s people begin as real-life biological entity, a *family*– not an invention of human thought, but a real-idea of The Creator. Abraham’s people were to be *bred* for Goodness, raising up a People of God, encoding their experience of God into their tissues, into our human genome.

**Is it actually possible to encode an *experience of God* into genetic structure? Or, is this Hebrew biblical “hype”?**

Abraham’s nation was to be different, special, a *Holy Nation*, a *Holy People*, reflective of the *Holy God*, distinct and distinguished from all other surrounding nations by their sacred purpose: *Universal Good*. For this reason, Abraham is the biblical figure that most represents the intention of *Universal Judaism*.

Abraham was to sire a *living people* that would *reflect in their individuality* (Made in the Image and Likeness) *The Living God*. This purpose, decidedly less egoistical than the Tower builders, would begin with Abraham and his wife Sarah; it would extend from their family, to their extended family, and from there, to the family of all humankind. It would even include Abraham’s other “wife”, Hagar, and her children, the progenitors of Islam. They were all to breed *righteousness*.

**Is that actually possible? To actually breed righteous behavior? Or, is this Hebrew biblical “hype”?**

While the story of Abraham frames the rise of the Hebrews from their obscure Mesopotamian(34) origin, many a contemporary biblical scholar are not so convinced that Abraham, as a human being, actually existed.(35) Many believe that as the Hebrews arose and became self-aware of their mission, they expressed this self-understanding retrospectively through this folk story. Abraham may have been an after-the-fact literary construction *representing* the origins of the people, but not an actual human being; he may have been a literary character expressing the “concept of being Hebrew”, formulated long after it was experienced and could be verbalized.

For *Universal Judaism*, as discussed in Chapter Two, whether Abraham was fact or fiction is largely irrelevant. He still represents the Truth of the Hebrew God-

experience, its devotion to The Creator, and its purpose as the living origin of a progressive, evolving, universal movement of *history*. Abraham's family is paradigmatic for *Universal History*; it is Universal History expressing itself, initially, through a relatively small tribal scale. However, there's nothing small about Abraham's story. As a teaching tool, it conveys huge spiritual knowledge that each and every person needs if we're going to embark on the spiritual path of *Universal Judaism*.

**Abraham's story, fact or fiction, is still *our* story: Can we spiritually-ignite the world, evolve, and not perish, as other nations had? Or, is this Hebrew biblical "hype"?**

In this regard, it is rather curious— and instructive in this scientific era— that God's Promise to Abraham, *I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore* (Genesis 22:17)— is virtually identical to the "promise" of Darwin's theory of *natural selection*.<sup>(35)</sup> Because Abraham could better align to the laws-in-nature, "God's Will-on-earth" so-to-speak, he possessed greater capacity to reproduce and transmit knowledge to his future heirs. This is fundamentally the same as *natural selection* which breeds a greater capacity to reproduce and transmit *traits* to future generations. And, these days, we know that "traits" mean "knowledge": How Life is Structured and Transmitted— communicated cell to cell, encoded through the language of DNA.

Even more curious and instructive, is that the word *selection* which Darwin used to describe such preferential survival is a synonym for the traditional religious descriptor *chosen*. Both systems of thought speak of an enduring, more nature-protected species, genetically-programmed to better evolve and not perish. More life from Life. More good from Good.

These astonishing similarities are not happenstance. When Darwin originally framed his theory of natural selection, there was one phenomenon of natural life, especially *human* life that Darwin could not explain by his proposed mechanism: *altruism*, kindness to another, the foundation of *morality* in human society.

Darwin's theory of natural selection asserted that it is through the experience of the *individual* organism with its environment, including its competition for food, mates and survival, that certain traits would be favored over others, thus breeding an individual organism that was *more good*, i.e. greater ability to survive and pass down its gifts.

But, because the *locus* of natural selection was an individual organism— a particular amoeba, let's say, not the entire species of amoeba as a whole— Darwin's mechanism for evolution could not explain altruism. Any individual would need to survive at the expense of another, at the seeming expense of the

group. It was the survival of the *individual* organism that was the evolutionary thrust, not survival of the particular *group*.

It is fascinating that Darwin, the son of a minister, was not able explain essential morality in human society through his naturalist theory. No wonder so many religious people had difficulties with the theory! It was not just the initial shock and “insult” of imagining human beings arising from apes, rather than being directly created by God. It was also that a conscious morality, one which did not render us mere prey to the nature’s impulses and seasons that also included the sacredness of human individuality– was not fathomable. Darwin could not, in essence, explain “the soul”. He could explain natural evolution. But, he could not explain Super-natural evolution.

Today, because of advances in Darwinism called *macroevolutionary theory*, which expand upon Darwin’s original theory and somewhat correct it, we now know there is *selection or chosen-ness* that takes place through the group level too, not just through individual members. There is not just survival advantages in the individual, but also for the group as a whole. In more spiritual Hebrew language, there is not just *hasgacha prati* or *Individual Providence*, there is also *hasgacha klali*, *Group Providence*.

Thus, there is far-sighted Truth to what is described in the second chapter of *Genesis: God created humankind as if a single individual, and a single individual as the embodiment of all humankind*. The possibility of altruism is built into the human species and into each member of the human species, separately and together. Darwin, the minister’s son, should have studied his Bible more closely. His conflict is not Hebrew thought, but more foreign contamination.

We now know that a biological grouping– an Asiatic *sub-phyllum*, such as the Hebrew– or any biological unit, a *phylum*, *family*, *species*, or *clade* (a group of inter-related evolving species)– can be a *locus* for superior natural selection in nature. They can demonstrate preferential breeding and survival, “chosen” over other groups. Indeed, nature (The Creator-on-earth) plays favorites! Some of God’s “living thoughts”, expressing through living lineages of human beings, are more good than others, more aligned to the goodness of Creation-on-earth, or, more “beloved by God” if you like religious language. So, The Creator blesses and prospers them, and they live to transmit their God experiences, perhaps by writing them down in scripture.

However, the transmission of knowledge, let’s say by writing scripture, is not a mere biological activity. It is a different kind of activity. We are, lest we forget, Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuals. We must also address something far more subtle, utterly remarkable, and exclusively human: *culture*.

**Culture? Can culture actually be transmitted genetically?  
Or, is this just biblical Hebrew “hype?”**

In addition to macroevolutionary theory, new research into the field of *epigenetics*(37) has shown that *experiences* in one's environment, which include certain predispositions of culture, can actually alter the DNA, "turning on" certain genes, and "turning off" other genes. It has been proven that there is long-lasting, inter-generational change in genes due to famines, abuse, and other environmental ills. Similarly, more positive genetic changes, which come during times of peace and stability, after a war for example, can be genetically observed.

Overtime, there would, naturally, be a marked genetic difference between an ancient Semite consumed by bestiality, incest, rapacious orgies, living flesh torn from mutilated animals as well as fecal, dirt and decay contaminated foods. Overtime, the Hebrews, with a considerably more consciously-good culture, would be genetically distinguishable from another semite, and most definitely, preferred by the process of natural selection! Epigenetically altered for good! "God blessed", they might describe it, or "Chosen".

And certainly, that the Hebrews would have proven victorious over such God-unaligned people is also understandable. The Hebrews would have won not because they were, as human beings, innately superior or larger in numbers. They would have won because these others had become diseased, and Life was using the primitive Hebrews as an instrumentality by which nature removed the disease-blight. Naturally-selected or Chosen? Choose your description.  
(Deuteronomy 7:3ff; 20:18)

**Yes, there *is* a rational foundation for the Hebrew claim to have been *chosen*, i.e. to self-witness their preferential ability to evolve and not perish, compared to others. This is no mere religious or spiritual romance, it is a bio-evolutionary human experience-of-Life.**

**Life is Holy. Celebrate being chosen.**

Now, needless to say, such a real possibility of a people being chosen, if misused and improperly taught, could lead to a kind of *biological fascism*, such as the kind that Hitler touted.(38) The idea of the *Chosen People* – often maligned after World War II because of Hitler's attempt to breed of *A Master Race*(36)–need not be discarded. It just needs to be put on its correct, spiritual-biological foundation. It simply needs to be made *real*:

*Universal Judaism* contends that it is time to take the spiritual promise of the Hebrew People out of the realm of mere sentimental, religious reverence or fancy, and make it scientifically credible for today's age.

*Universal Judaism* contends that it is time to understand the tremendous religious devotion to the Promise of the Chosen People not as some misguided elitism, or ethnic racism, but as marking an astonishing scientific fact of about how God's Hand-in-Nature, i.e. Evolution, actually works for *everyone*.

Abraham's potential is the potential of us all. The goal of *Universal Judaism* is to open up this human potential to everyone: Jew, Christian, Muslim, atheist, secular humanist, scientist, *all humankind*, in keeping with the foundational meaning of Abraham's story.

A Holy Nation? A Holy People? A Sacred *Universal Family of Humankind* bred for altruism and moral goodness?

Domination? Or, a Holy Nation? Which shall we seek?

Do we really have a choice, if we wish to be *fully human*?



## Chapter Six:

### Stone Tablets: Moral Law

As we saw in the Chapter Three, the remarkable nature of being spiritual individuals allows us to interface with nature and bring us back, personally, the fruits of our actions. *As you sow, so you reap*, is a famous teaching of a charismatic teacher named *Yehoshuah*, abbreviated *Yeshua*, or, in Greek-derived English, *Jesus*. This is a creative re-phrasing of the profound rabbinic principle *midah k'neged midah*, usually translated *measure for measure*, which the early Rabbis gleaned from scriptural study and saw operating in How Life Works for Good, i.e. their *experience of God*.(39)

As was also discussed, in relationship to the automobile, when we examine an experience marked by pain and suffering, we humans have the capacity to reflect upon our actions, get a rough concept of what is our error. Then, we have the capacity to learn, correct ourselves and evolve again. Thus, we can go from “cursed” to “blessed”, “bad experiences” to “good experiences”, “less God” to “more God”.

As we self-reflect upon ourselves and compare notes with those of others who've had similar experiences, this is how, over time, *moral consciousness* arises. Our personal experiences in Life— action and re-action, cause and effect, reaping and sowing— can be expressed as agreed-upon *general principles* of How Life Works for Good— what is commonly called *moral laws*: *Thou shalt not steal, bear false witness or commit adultery, etc.*

These moral laws, extracted from shared Life experience, can then be transmitted orally as a guide to each other and future generations, provided there is a living legacy of knowledge and authority to teach them correctly.

Over time, one can write these general principles down in a book for reference. This is how we get our scripture, which may also contain certain non-legal materials, like ancient legends, with illustrate important spiritual knowledge.

Moral laws are often considered “religious” because it is through religions that we have learned them. But, they are not, at their very core, religious. They are spiritual-natural, built into the nature of Life for human beings on earth. They are necessary boundaries— often critical boundaries— which if they are crossed, will cause immediate pain and suffering, such as the timeless moral law *Thou Shalt Not Murder*.

Moral boundaries are quite obvious, quite scientific. The foundation of moral laws— How Life Works for Good— is right there, built into the design of Life. They

are not (yet!) scientific by today's standards of double-blind testing. But, just try (God forbid) breaking a moral law, such as *Thou shalt not Murder*, on the scale of one person! Next, try breaking it on a statistically-significant scale! You will quickly notice destruction on both the personal and massive world scale, like Stalin or Hitler. Moral laws are like that! Whether on a small scale or big scale, they are just as precise.

Moral laws operate overtly, but also subtly. There are some moral laws which are less obvious than murder, such as "tell the truth". If these are violated repeatedly, this will cause the sowing and reaping to accumulate, often unbeknown to us. Sowings that are similar to each other, will join together to form more forceful sowings— effect plus effect, action plus reaction— until a kind of *critical mass* builds up. Then, all that is needed is one conscious spark to ignite the gasoline and . . . BOOM! . . . a world conflagration can take place: for instance, a revolution, due to repeated government lies. This is how both our shared dreams and our shared nightmares take place in this world. It is a building up of similar sowing and reaping, by all individuals and groups-of-individuals, over time.

Moral laws are not just ordinary concepts like "dog" or "love". They are highly generalized concepts and apply to so many different situations. They are extraordinarily *comprehensive*. They are *global* in scope. They are also *predictive* of what will take place if not enacted. They are *prophetically-inspired*— generalized as if we are looking down from a mountaintop, universal, powerful, affecting the fate of all humankind.

That's why there's a tendency to view moral laws as factually coming "from God". As universal boundaries, critical for maintaining goodness for the overwhelming vast majority of humanity, they are clear insights into the design of the Order we live in. There can be no experience of enduring good, or God, without consciousness of moral law.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate Moral Law.**

Moral laws require us to take responsibility for our actions. Scripture describes different degrees of responsibility that we, as human beings, can take. This is accomplished by portraying the spiritual evolution of Noah, followed by Abraham and finally Moses.

In the story of Noah, because of the repeated, cumulative sowing of human-created evil, nature responds: a flood is reaped. Human evil is reduced the most lethal way possible, by wiping human beings out. Nature has rebelled against us.(40)

Those few remaining good human beings, i.e. Noah and his family, are required to take responsibility by demonstrating, minimally, the willingness to *safeguard*

Life's goodness from destruction i.e. building an Ark to protect Life. Because of their actions, God's experiment, life-on-earth, once cleansed of human moral disease, can start all over again.

In the story of Abraham, Noah's more passive safeguarding of goodness, matures, to become more a more active *increasing* of goodness. With Abraham, we see the emergence of more self-aware, thoughtful, human which begins to consciously cooperate with God, producing more life from Life. This marks the building of a positive, progressive, evolving human cultural and biological force: *Universal History*– the gift of the Hebrews to the world, and the beginning of *Universal Judaism*.

Finally, in the story of Moses, what we see is a new level of responsibility entirely. Unlike in the story of Noah and Abraham, here, the Israelites no longer possess a living, direct connection to The Living God, at least that they are consciously aware of. The natural human spiritual connection has been lost–tragically lost– not unlike the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden. This occurred due to the horrific experience of enslavement. Enslavement to Pharaoh broke the living prophetic spiritual connection inherited from Abraham and his heirs. Instead of a living relationship with the Power of Life, the formal, dictatorial power of Pharaoh was substituted. Instead of a Living People of God, what we left was a deadening cult. Enslavement broke the spirit of the Hebrews, bringing them perhaps even lower than animals in nature.

It is then, as scripture tells us, that the God of Abraham broke through the darkness, remembering the covenant (*Exodus 2:24*). What happened was that the accumulated pain and suffering, reached its zenith. Life, *the Living God*, stepped in, *middah keneged midah, measure for measure*. A resurgence of Hebrew spirit took place, embodied in the figure of Moses. (41)

Now, we know very little about the figure of Moses other than the story. We have no real evidence outside of scripture that he existed. We do know however, that there was an enslavement of the Hebrews, for we have found archeological evidence, the *Mernepteh Stele*, dating from approximately 1213-1203 B.C.E. , narrating the conquering of the Hebrews by Egypt.

When one takes into account the tremendous impact of Moses upon the consciousness of Israel– when one also takes into account the enormous editing of the *Torah*, consolidating new societal changes, phases and authorities under the literary “device” of Moses– I think it is highly probable that Moses, the actual person, existed. He just seems too important to be merely made up. But, we cannot know, for sure, if or who Moses actually was.(42) No one knows for sure.

But, Moses, compared to Noah and Abraham, represents the ultimate level of responsibility towards Moral Law. He becomes a framer and teacher of Moral Law. He teaches hard, fast guidelines designed to force the Israelites to wake up,

and shape up, after their ordeal. They needed these guidelines more than ever because they had grown from a small tribal unit to a huge, multitudinous nation.

Many people, who are angry at the excessive authoritarianism of religious laws, fail to see the pure genius of law, and its value. In our era, especially due to democracy, we mistrust the government, and with this perspective, it is very hard to look backwards at Moses' revolution, and appreciate the brilliance of "Do this". "Don't do this".

But, law, as is all human invention, is really, when you think about it, it a kind of *technology*. These laws always exist, somewhat in nature. Any animal can kill another animal, make it suffer, experiencing "badness". But, as we discussed, human beings have the ability to focus and concentrate this aspect of nature. Then, we can generalize it, as an understanding, principle or law: *Thou Shalt not Murder*. This process is fundamentally no different from how we formulate the laws of gravity, only instead of mathematical language we use verbal language; underlying both is a Conceptual, Supernatural, Cosmic, Individual.

The technology of law assures human beings, although natural, that we need not be "recycled" like other mere natural creatures, but can Super-naturally ascend, grow and flourish:

**Law is a technology of goodness that allows us to consciously further our evolution.**

**Law is a technology of goodness that helps *prevent* natural degeneration– death, disease, decay, destruction– which might threaten us.**

**Law is a technology of goodness that help ensure our *freedom* to evolve– from a natural creation to a Super-natural creation.**

**Law is a technology of goodness to help structure a world, human civilization, so all may come to experience *Unity*– Life Itself, Divine Nature, God.**

The legendary stone tablets of Moses are hardly hard, lifeless, inanimate stones. The stone tablets are not just "religious control" designed to make us feel guilty. Their purpose is not to inhibit us from expressing our "natural selves", as we tend to think of them today.

These stone tablets, and their extraordinary *Ten Words* or *Commandments* (43), are etched into nature's memory, rock-solid. They are broad, sweeping, conscious organizing principles that ensure our continuity as a People of God, so human *bio-genetic-historical-spiritual* groupings do not go the way of the dinosaur, an evolutionary moment, born, dead.

Stone tablets are *heavy*, from the same Hebrew root word *kvd*, as the word *Holy*. They have profound *gravitas*, with a profound *gravity* to their words, without which we might just float away.

These stone tablets, and all the many surrounding laws— too many to examine here— are a precious Hebrew legacy. *Universal Judaism* does not fear them, with obsessive-compulsive religious neurosis. We do not live in terror that some fictional God that will smite us for testing or disobeying the “rule book”. *Universal Judaism* applauds moral law, and learns from our ancestor’s insights, in a healthy, psychologically-astute environment with correct checks and balances upon the religious authority of clergy.

And, *Universal Judaism* is very careful so that moral laws do not overstep the *limit of their own generalization*. No law should ever become a conceptual idol, returning us to religious, fundamentalist, mental enslavement.

Beware! Moral boundaries, without a flexibly-correct spirit by which they are interpreted and applied to Life, can return you back to that place of *constriction*— as the Hebrew root word *mtzr* for *Mitzrayim*, *Egypt*, means.

There is still much more to learn about law, before our whole world can leave the wilderness and enter the *Promised Land*.

## Chapter Seven:

### The Spirit of Law

A challenge emerges once laws-of-Life are discerned, then generalized, then promulgated as legal statutes codified in some book, whether some scripture legal textbook or some “law of the Land”, a constitution for example.

The laws, in a sense, become “set in stone”, meaning promulgated for the purpose of being *obeyed*. Over time, the impression sets in that these laws are rigidly fixed, not in the sense of being *solid principles or relationships* to guide us, but in the sense of being strict, inflexible, unchanging, hard, obdurate, like stone itself. Over time, a spiritual distortion sets in where these laws are actually thought to be *absolute*— meaning “no room for discussion”, “no room for negotiation”, “dictatorial”— from some false, dictatorial god.

Moral laws **are absolute**, from the Greek, meaning *to be loosed from*. Because they are highly efficient, highly generalized and comprehensive, they are, like all such generalities, proclaimed with over-arching insight, as if from a mountaintop. They seem loosed from, detached from, all the many particular circumstances from which the moral insight was originally drawn. *Thou Shalt Not Murder* need not take into consideration if the person is British or French, or wears trousers or skirts, and is of one faith or another, in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century. Spiritual experience proves, very easily, that they all die when murdered. So, as a spiritual generality, *Thou Shalt Not Murder* can become loosed from these particularities; it can function as a moral principle overarching them all, like an umbrella.(44)

But, never, not ever, are moral laws *absolute*, meaning *perfect*: some ideal fantasy of legal flawlessness that human beings romance, fantasize about, project into their thought processes, that isn't real and attainable, however admirable or hopeful.

*Universal Judaism* does not live under such delusion:

**There is no such thing as a perfect law.**

Laws can be excellent. Laws can be superb, extraordinarily insightful, generalized principles, with an astonishing comprehensiveness for an array of particular experiences in human life. But, no law is perfect. What *is* perfect? Does anyone really know?

Even if laws become codified and somewhat fixed, they nonetheless take their beginning through *living* experience. Because of that, laws must always continue to evolve or they are not in alignment to Life. The Living God still evolves, Life on earth still evolves. Human evolution, biologically and culturally, still evolves. So, over time, even a moral principle that has become highly generalized and

reliable— loosed from a vast majority of particular circumstances— will have new spiritual challenges.

**No law is ever set loose from Life itself.  
It is never, ever, completely absolute.**

Human beings will always have new experiences that take place in Life. There will always bring more lessons about How Life Works for Good. There will always be more unforeseen, surprising, particulars that force any moral law to expand and include. This is why there is no generalization of moral law which does not have to be *interpreted*, and *re-interpreted*, for different times, different places, and different circumstances.

These days, we would never think of stoning someone for not honoring the *Sabbath (Exodus 31:14)*. These days, we are not so concerned about an ox goring a neighbor if one lives in a condominium high rise. (*Exodus 21:28*) But, we *are* concerned about gross neglect by some neighbor in a condominium, causing an electrical fire which endangers an infant's life. And of course, today, despite seeming biblical laws to the contrary, we would never render the verdict of capital punishment(45) to someone who had a different sexual orientation (*Leviticus 18:22; 20:13*), or to someone whose gender self-expression compels them to cross-dress regularly. (*Deuteronomy 22:5*).

Even the most agreed-upon and least contested moral law, *Thou Shalt Murder*, must evolve and be interpreted: Is it manslaughter? Self defense? Insanity? What were the circumstances involved? If even the most agreed-upon and least contested moral law requires interpretation, certainly any lesser, more debated laws, would require that even more?

**To a law that is etched in stone— a valuable, rock-solid principle for safeguarding an evolving, human society— there must always be added a different kind of law. This law is a living moral principle that's been termed *The Spirit of the Law*.**

*The Spirit of the Law* means that even if a law must change for new circumstances, the goodness of its *intention* and *purpose* should be maintained. We might not be concerned about a neighbor being gored by an ox, but, the fire endangering the infant in the neighboring apartment is *essentially* the same legal issue: neglect. The written law must be flexibly interpreted for new times, but there is an undercurrent of Truth, its Spirit, its Goodness, which must be preserved.

*The Spirit of the Law* is a reassertion of our fundamental *spiritual perspective* which is the foundation of the *Universal Judaism* perspective. No matter how fixed a law becomes, no matter how many millennia it has been written down, and revered, a law must always be evaluated for How Life Works for Good—

generation after generation. After all, what good is a law if it doesn't produce good, but produces evil? In the U.S., a law called *Prohibition*, outlawed alcohol, but caused more drunkenness, bootlegging, theft and debauchery than any legal cocktail ever inspired.(46) This law was not good, not aligned to God's Order of Goodness in Creation. We sowed a nightmare. We reaped a nightmare.

Through the application of *The Spirit of the Law*, a previous generation's legal insights can be examined for its Life Goodness by the next generation of human beings, and can be consciously evolved. Past legal insights can remain a living contributor in our biological and cultural evolution. The tremendous knowledge encoded in a law can continue to evolve and evolve. Knowledge need not get lost, which would only slow human progress, and de-stabilize history.

Throughout the history of the Hebrew People in its various forms— Israelite, Judean, Jewish (many denominations) and now Israeli— there have had to be continual interpretations and reinterpretations of generation after generation of laws for new circumstances, in new countries, at different times, under different political circumstances.

The most formative moment in this historical-legal evolution, was at the time when Rome ransacked Israel, destroying the great Temple. Up until that time Israel was controlled very much by a priesthood who had received authority after the Babylonian Exile(47). They implemented and enforced a written law we call the *Torah*, *The Five books of Moses*, the same scrolls we might see today in a synagogue. But, when the Temple was destroyed, the priests were very much "out of a job", so-to-speak

To fill this crisis of authority, there arose a class of scholars who took a different approach to *Torah* authority. These scholars would *study* these books. They would think about the philosophical and legal implications in them. They would compare the words of *Torah* with other sacred books, especially the prophets and other writings. They would interpret the former priestly-controlled law for new times and new circumstances, a new way.

Because, in a very real sense, Israel was now expelled from its sacred land, returned to the "wilderness", as in their Exodus from Egypt, these scholars had a sudden flash of spiritual insight. They realized that they were historically functioning in the role of Moses, as spiritual leaders of the nation. The new wilderness was now the *Diaspora*, the Greek word for *dispersion*. These scholars, who were the prototype for what would eventually become *rabbis*, the Hebrew word meaning *teachers*, began to draw upon the knowledge of the *Torah*, viewing Moses as their teacher: *Moshe Rabbenu*, *Moses our Teacher*, they would reverentially refer to him.(48)

Applying a spirit of goodness, justice, love, and respect for individuality, which they gleaned from the many books of the prophets, *The Rabbis* applied *The*



*Spirit of the Law* to the stricter, previously-priest-controlled written law, and developed new interpretations for the historical circumstances they were facing. New life, like moss, began to grow on the stone.

Following the spiritual model discussed above, over time, these new laws, originally *oral laws*, eventually, under threat that they might become lost, were written down, becoming yet another “layer” of written law known as the *Talmud*—from the same Hebrew root as *student*. Indeed, that’s what these teachers were: students of previous generations of legal-insights past, if not students of the scriptural Moses himself (fact or fiction).

Sadly, these days, there has been a huge degree of *ossification* of legal thinking. This is largely due to the fact that, until recently, there has been enormous persecution of the Jewish People. The stricter implementation of these laws became a way of keeping social cohesion and cultural identity in tact— often with a lot of excessive guilt and dysfunctional familial behavior, reinforcing it.

*Universal Judaism* realizes that it’s time to change this. So, once again, as has been done over and over again in the past, we are taking a new look, for new circumstances, for new places, for new times, at our ancient, inherited system of law. We will talk about this more later on.

For now though, what is most important for any newcomer to *Universal Judaism*, is that they begin to fathom the general principles that are involved in spiritual laws: how they become discerned, how they become codified, and how to continuously evolve them— to preserve, and advance, a living experience of good for all!

**Remember: When the living experience of goodness is not put first, but laws are put before Life itself, then, serious problems emerge.**

Never forget what happened in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, when *Thou Shalt Not Steal* was so rigidly enforced that people, starving from the inequities of the economic system, had to steal bread to stay alive. Never forget how they were all put into jail with no opportunity to be set free, so they couldn’t earn a living and improve their circumstances. Such a rigid application of law is always, very dangerous, disharmonious, and not from God, i.e. it did not produce *good*, but *evil*.

Eventually, these inmates were exported to Australia, where they could get a fresh start in a fresh society. And, over time, these punitively strict “moral laws” were redacted, including the end of the so-called “Debtor’s Prison”. Life taught us a lesson!

**Life's Goodness is the original Law, everything else is built up upon it. Law is a technology that should intensify the good, not undermine it.**

Without proper interpretation, according to *The Spirit of the Law*, any written law, no matter how time-honored or revered, can be lethal!

Without spiritual discernment, without *Wisdom*, law itself is the prison.

**Life is Holy. Celebrate The Spirit of the Law.**

Let us celebrate wisely! Very wisely!

**Life is Holy. Celebrate Spirituality.**

## Chapter Eight:

### Values for Life

You are one of the most powerful creatures in existence. That's because you have free will. You can, consciously, as a Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individual, re-shape Creation for your personal dreams, aspirations, desires, and sheer delight. Because of that, The Rabbis speculated that you might even be more advanced than the angels.(49)

You have the power to amplify the goodness already in nature, or, destroy the goodness already in nature. You stand, in a sense, as a colossus, the flow of human history passing beneath you, because you are *Made in the Image and Likeness of the Creative Force of All*.

As we've seen, the enormous power to creatively sow and reap, comes moral consequences, legal consequences, and spiritual consequences for yourself, and our entire world. So, if one does not learn how to manage one's prodigious gifts, it affects not just you, but all of us. Pain, suffering, unnecessary death can arise, to "teach" us how to manage our spiritual gifts correctly.

But a far better "teacher" than pain and suffering, is to joyfully learn how to use our human talents correctly in the first. This is where *covenant*, and the correct transmission of knowledge, from one generation to the next, is indispensable for the sake of a good world.

**Correct education is how we can learn to correctly sow and reap the fruits of human invention, diminishing or eliminating unnecessary pain and suffering in Life.**

**Correct education is necessary to celebrate your gift of Life.**

It is very sad that education in our so-called "modern" world has sometimes strayed away from the fundamental values which shaped Hebrew culture in the ancient world. Yes, this was a more primitive time, with often brutal measures applied to misconduct. No one can glorify or romanticize the biblical Hebrews and get away with it!

Nonetheless, as we've discussed, the *structure* of Hebrew thinking— the core skeleton of values— is solid, sturdy and remains infinitely adaptable and evolvable for any age, because it is based upon a correct priority: Life first!

**Hebrew values are *Life-Centered!***

*Life-Centered Values* distinguish ancient Hebrew culture from their surrounding nations (and many in today's world, too.) *Universal Judaism* is dedicated to teaching *Life-Centered Values*, and here, we are very fortunate to be able to draw upon a 4000 year old legacy of irreplaceable knowledge and God experience.

Life-Centered Values are not arbitrary, invented by some human being, subject to the whim of their opinion, with no real substance. Life-Centered Values are values that are based, first and foremost, upon Life: How Life Works for Good. How Life is Designed. How the Order of Life-on-earth operates. They are at the core teaching of *Universal Judaism*.

Life-Centered Values place *God's Creativity first*– Reality, Existence, Nature, Creation, as we witness it through our human experience. Life-Centered Values consider *human creativity second*– our thoughts, our imagination, our buildings, technology, desires, economies.

**Life first. Us second.  
God first. Humans second.  
That's Life-Centered Values.**

Because Life-Centered Values are built into the design of Life, if you organize your Life according to them, you will find that, over time, your Life will become more God-blessed. You will notice more *goodness* comes into your life, an increased *experience of God*. This is because you, yourself, will be living more in *alignment* to how the world is designed. You will be operating *with* the evolution of Life, not against it. This is the foundation of *covenant*.

The curious thing about Life-Centered Values is that they create goodness *both* short-term *and* long-term. The fruits of all actions– near-sighted or far-sighted– tend to endure, because they built on solid spiritual ground. They are, what the ancients called, “God blessed”, having *lasting* value, i.e. possessing a greater measure of Eternity in them.

Even more curious about Life-Centered Values is that they produce a kind of *ripple effect*. More Life-Centered sowing and reaping can actually spread to others, fostering greater goodness from the community surrounding you. It's truly as if your actions were a pebble dropped in water, and everyone around you were receiving wave upon wave of goodness. This is not poetry. This is not metaphor. This is an amazing spiritual fact, once you learn to discern it happening, for it often an unconscious process.(50)

And, never forget: Life-Centered Values are also the values necessary to morally-organize our society, as well as re-frame our complicated legal systems,

so they are consonant with the Hebrew Spirit upon which *Universal History* is based. Our whole world depends upon them! Indeed, you could say that the entirety of the biblical value system, is reducible to *Life-Centered* values.

Now, there are six fundamental Life-Centered values if we wish to re-ignite the Hebrew Spirit in our lives. I've organized them here as *priorities*. If you wish to have a Life which is Good, an experience of God, some values are more important than others. The following are the core *Value Priorities*, if you wish to have a good, Hebrew-inspired, life:

### ***Value Priority #1: Health***

After the value of Life Itself, the most important *Value Priority* is *health*. If we do not have our health, then an experience of goodness can feel far, far away. That's why in the ancient world, sickness, such as what was called *leprosy*(51), was considered a sign of *God's curse*. In a way, it is! When you get sick, it is usually because one has lived in a way that is not in *alignment* to God's Order or Commandment in nature, weakening your defenses (body-providence), and leaving you open to disease.

If we do not have our health, then human industry becomes feeble. Our workers do not have the strength to be productive. Our companies are weak. Our Gross Domestic Product decreases.

Health is the primary reason for the Hebrew institution of the *Sabbath*. For the first time in human existence, a day of rest was legally-required for all creatures living. After all, should human industry, our corporations, our governments, push living creatures— God's creatures— beyond their natural, biological limits? Should we be slaves to ourselves? Or, are we noble creations of God?

Health is also the reason for the Hebrew insight of *kasher*— that which is *fitting* for a human being to eat (*Leviticus 11:13*). Any animal that comes in contact with dirt, decay, dung, destruction, disease is not How Life Works for Good. Desecrating evolution— killing a mother bird and her eggs simultaneously, (*Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 22:28; Deuteronomy 22:6*) or boiling a calf in its mother's milk (*Exodus 23:19*) — is not in harmony with *The Living God*, i.e. a bio-evolutionary process.

In spite of commonplace thinking, *Universal Judaism* does not consider the *Sabbath* and so-called "kosher" to be, primarily, "religious laws". They are based upon How Life Works for Good. Eventually, they became thought of as being "religious", as religions taught them in a modified form. How they are honored, healthfully, in *Universal Judaism* will be discussed later.(52)

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Health.***

## **Value Priority #2: Peace**

The Rabbis of Blessed Memory were very clear: We are not just to live peacefully, but actually “pursue peace”. (*Psalms 34:14*) Peace is not passive. The seeking of peace is an active, evolutionary thrust of all human activity.

If there is contention, confusion, all gradients of warfare in the human mind and heart, the fabric of our world is destroyed. Not only does human society falter and fail to create a blossoming culture that concentrates goodness, but also, nature-on-earth, becomes victimized, torn apart as we sow and reap the fracture-lines in our own hearts.

Peace is necessary for the correct functioning of our physiology; stress levels, becoming too high, contribute to heart attacks, cancer, and a slew of other psychogenic diseases.

Wars, while sometimes necessary, must always be carefully, spiritually, circumscribed. Indiscriminate geo-political wars-of-greed, like many that are taking place these days, are not Hebrew. (*Deuteronomy 20ff*)

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Peace.***

## **Value Priority #3: Freedom**

As we discussed earlier, with freedom comes responsibility, which, minimally, requires the first two *Value Priorities*, *health* and *peace*.

If we are using our freedom to wreck our bodies, amplifying the destructive force in nature, turning peace into conflict, then our freedom is being used incorrectly. We will sow and reap, as a consequence, our own *lack-of-freedom* as a sign, a lesson, that we are not exercising our freedom correctly— *for Goodness sake*— in accordance with God's Order in Creation.

The correct exercising for freedom has become a difficulty in today's democratic nations, where the value of the individual has been given greater priority than moral responsibility within the group. This was very much a reaction-formation, from previous stages, where the group was given excessive dominance of the individual. The truth is beyond both!

Remember, evolution takes place through the individual as well as the group. Freedom must be exercised in a way that benefits *both* the individual *and* the group. Full freedom must include individual and group expression, which we speak about more in the next chapter.

This is the fundamental spiritual lesson of the Hebrew's *Exodus* from Egypt, and of the "giving of the law" at Mt. Sinai: responsible freedom!

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Freedom.***

***Value Priority #4: Wisdom***

Law, as spoken about in the last chapter, must be promulgated *wisely*. Human actions should be deliberated with wisdom, to ensure that we will sow and reap with goodness, having the maximum beneficial effect for all.

Certainly, it would be helpful to have a living legacy of education, so that the wisdom of previous generations is correctly taught to the next generation and wisdom can build, historically.

However, sometimes living legacies can become derailed and lose their natural, spiritual foundation in Truth; then, provided there is freedom to sow and reap and experiment with life, wisdom can be re-discovered. For this reason, I have prioritized wisdom after freedom. However, if there exists a living legacy of wisdom one can trust, it is always best to seek wisdom first before exercising your freedom. Then, you, as an individual, are co-operating with your community, and both are enhanced simultaneously.

There are three basic components to wisdom: 1) Truth 2) care 3) balance. Everything we do in human life should seek Truth in all things. Everything we do in human life, should be caring, indeed, lovingly-kind (*Exodus 34:7*). Everything we do in human life, should seek correct balance: a balance between mind and heart, which is then expressed through a focused will, in keeping with the great words *Deuteronomy, 6:5-9*) known in Hebrew as the *V'Ahavtah, And you shall love . . .*

When truth, care and balance are in alignment, over time, the wise course to take in any decision becomes discernable. This is why the *elder* in a healthy society should always be respected; elders are *living wisdom-of-experience* that can prevent us from making errors due to youthful "enthusiasm".

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Wisdom.***

***Value Priority #5: Full Potential***

The Hebrew principle of *history*— the positive, progressive, evolutionary thrust of human civilization within creation-on-earth— the great contribution of the Hebrews to the world— implies that the full potential of anything and everything, anyone and everyone, should be fulfilled.



There is no human being that does not have, indwelling within him or her, a unique gift of Life for the purpose of enhancing not just their own personal life, but also the life we all share together.

To release the full potential of a human being requires *education*, from the Latin, *educare*, which means *to draw out*. True education is not the conditioning and training of skills that are alien to the person. True education is the drawing out of the innate gifts of the individual, and then, supporting and training them, so that they can find their fullest potential.

Full potential transcends human self-interest, encircling the globe, embracing all creatures, great and small, and a healthy destiny for our planet. Full potential points to, in the deepest of reverence, that horizon-of-history, when all the pain and suffering in life will be healed and the goodness, which is the living potential of earthly life, will be fully-realized.

This is the true meaning of the so-called *Messianic Age*, which Universal Judaism holds to as a *principle*, but not necessarily future-fact; we will speak of this more later.

### ***Life is Holy. Celebrate Full Potential.***

#### ***Value Priority #6: Prosperity***

*Universal Judaism* puts prosperity last on the list of Value Priorities for obvious reasons. If you have amassed a fortune by overworking your body until you've made yourself sick, you will have to spend your money to get well. If you have achieved an empire without peace or freedom or wisdom, then your life (and the lives of others around you) will be diminished, and goodness will be dwarfed.

True prosperity includes the fulfillment of all the above *Value Priorities*. And yes, it also includes a lot of that wonderful human invention called *money*. Money is a marvelous tool of spiritual development that allows us to share with others— even total strangers we don't know— and bring about, quickly, new projects and achievements for the advancement of humankind.

There is nothing unspiritual about money. Nothing at all! Money is a gift of “liquid freedom”. Used correctly, it can speed up the bringing of more goodness into Life.

Any teaching that views money and prosperity as a betrayal of goodness, is an alien teaching. It is not Hebrew thought. Beware. It has, unfortunately, infiltrated mainstream spiritual thought.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Prosperity.***



These six *Value Priorities*, in their correct order, can help us to make decisions that are in greater alignment to How Life Works for Good. As a general guideline before making any major decision, they will help you achieve more successful results, and of course, reduce unnecessary pain and suffering.

Conversely, because these six *Value Priorities* are built-into Life, when something goes wrong in Life, one can examine the consequences of one's actions in light of these *Value Priorities* and more easily discover one's mistakes. This is true for personal errors. This is true for societal errors too. Usually, a problem arises in Life when *Value Priorities* are not in their correct order, when we, for example, sow prosperity before health, or full potential before freedom. That's how we sow and reap a living mess.

Correct *Value Priorities* are essential if human beings are going to learn to use their Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuality in a way that amplifies Life's Goodness, enhancing joy and happiness on all levels.

Learn these *Value Priorities* by heart. Take them with you, as your own portable *Universal Judaism* tabernacle in the wilderness of Life.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Values.***

## Chapter Nine:

### Relationships for Life

As a general spiritual guideline to sowing and reaping *correctly*– again, *correct* meaning *governing together, co-governing or covenantal behavior*– *Value Priorities* are not enough.

For example: If you apply the *Value Priority Freedom* to an infant, who needs to be constantly monitored and cared for, this will be a very different expression of freedom than if you apply it to an adolescent, an adult, or, an elderly person who may be infirmed. Indeed, freedom applied to fetus, brings into play a whole series of challenges, spiritual and societal.

Obviously, *Value Priorities* need to be reflected through the particular nature of relationships. Different kinds of relationships express *Value Priorities* differently.

Just as there are *Value Priorities* that can help guide our decision-making processes, there are also *Relationship Priorities*. One without the other is insufficient and inadequate. Both together, harmonized together, in alignment to *How Life Works for Good*, is a solid, spiritual foundation for a contemporary, covenantal experience-of-God. Truly, without correct *Relationship Priorities*, good will not follow, but pain and suffering will.

The following are the six core *Relationship Priorities*– built into *How Life Works for Good*– if you wish to have a good, Hebrew-inspired, life:

#### ***Relationship Priority #1: Yourself***

The great scholar Hillel put it very succinctly: *If I am not for myself, who will be for me.*(53)

*Universal Judaism* considers the most critical relationship to be your own relationship with *yourself* (provided you are an adult.) If you are not good to yourself, if you are not taking care of yourself, if you are not progressing and evolving positively as yourself, then, you will be dwarfed and debilitated. You will not be able to express *Value Relationship #5: Full Potential*. Not only will your own life be diminished, but also the Life we all share together. Indeed, God will be diminished too.

It is a great sadness, a great mangling of moral teachings, that focusing on *yourself*, as your most critical relationship, is considered an act of selfishness, self-centeredness and egotism. Ignorant religions and moral teachings tend to put the group, group-norms, “them” before your relationship with yourself. Indeed, they often teach a twisted kind of self-sacrifice, where the individual

must submit and self-extinguish before the “greater value” of the group; they don’t just extol the virtue of healthy self-sacrifice, but misplaced *martyrdom*.

Certainly self-sacrifice, and even martyrdom, has value, especially when Life is truly in danger and one must give of oneself to reset the balance to Life—as in the case of a righteous (not geo-political) war. There are times when *correct* martyrdom has critical spiritual value and purpose.(54) But aside from these rare circumstances, most “everyday” martyrdom— “Look at all I do for you”— is excessive and out of whack; it is a dangerous psychological distortion. It causes unnecessary self-punishment and manipulative guilt. It is destructive to your health and well-being!

Each and every individual has the responsibility to take care of him or herself. This is the foundation of our free enterprise system. This is the foundation of enlightened democracy. This is the foundation of a strong, vigorous culture, where each individual is contributing his/her best to the whole. This is the foundation of *Universal Judaism*.

### ***Life is Holy. Celebrate Yourself.***

#### ***Relationship Priority #2: Another***

The great scholar Hillel followed up his previous dictum as follows: *But, if I am only for myself, what am I?*

Putting oneself first to excess— exalting yourself, exiling yourself from meaningful relations— creating an obsession-compulsion or *cult-of-yourself* is dangerously egotistical and selfish. It is less than human. What are you?

After strengthening a solid sense of self, the most powerful of spiritual experiences is sharing yourself with another. To give of oneself— to sow and reap, to act and receive, to cause and effect— a contribution to the well-being of another, brings that well-being back to you. *Middah k’neged middah*.

This observable spiritual fact is the very foundation of the *mitzvah*, that *good deed* that Judaism, in general, has always promoted. A *mitzvah* is a virtuous act that brings goodness to yourself, a recipient, and the entire world. Hence it could be said to be “God’s commandment”, or How Life Works for Good.

Only when the individual person gives, releasing his/her spiritual potential for the benefit of another, can covenant begin to root itself in real, fleshly lives.

The great Rabbi Hananiah Ben Teradion commented that when two or more people are gathered in spiritual study, *The Shechinah*, the Living Presence of God, descends upon them.(55) Goodness is *downloaded*, so-to-speak.

You as a person are incomplete without another. And another, which is another “yourself”, is incomplete without you. Put yourself first, but never *too first!*

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Another.***

***Relationship Priority #3: All Others***

Your relationship to another— one to one— is the spiritual foundation of all success in Life. However, Life is considerably more complicated than one-on-one relationships.

There are relationships of human beings which are, as we’ve already discussed, organized by groups. This, of course, includes our *species, homo sapiens*. This also includes various other groupings, familial, social, societal, governmental, religious, scholastic, cultural to which we may belong.

Our relationship to ourselves and another must expand to embrace all human beings through all the various forms of human groupings that exist. This includes the world of nations, which has been, for 4000 years, the historical mission of the Hebrew People. Can one be a human being, fully, and not care about the state of the entire world’s peoples? No! Not unless you wish to live on an island or, for that matter, a *ghetto*.

Yet, sadly these days, “spirituality”, as it is often taught by others, is considered inwardly-directed, devoted to *personal development* alone, and not to the development of society structures, our legal system, our economic system, etc., all the many *tools* that human beings create, need and share. The *historical dimension* of spiritual growth is something which the Hebrew People emphasize. It is never to be forgotten or our spirituality will be lopsided.

All Others are many more of “yourself”. All Others are inseparable from yourself, even though, you must take care of yourself first.

Now, sometimes, your relationship with All Others can feel overwhelming; there are just too many souls to care so deeply about.

However, if you concentrate your attention within the sphere of your own personal life, if you pay close attention, you will notice an astonishing array of people and groups-of-people that come and go in your life, which, whether you are aware of it or not, your personal life touches upon naturally and effortlessly. One need not become overwhelmed being “all things to all people.” Everyone has his/her *share* of All Others.

Become conscious of your personal effect on All Others, and you are on your way to being a most powerful human expression of goodness.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate All Others.***

***Relationship Priority #4: Future Generations***

Because *Universal Judaism* is historical, meaning, it cares about the world of nations, and the ultimate outcome of human civilization on a *universal* scale, it cannot afford to be near-sighted. It cannot just focus on expedient needs in the present, forgetting that, long-term, actions must be sown and reaped in a way that benefit not just the present generation, but also all future generations as well.

The Book of *Exodus*, describes God as punishing the iniquity of people to the third and fourth *generation*. (34:7) This means, that when we sow and reap incorrectly, the effect of this– unless there is proper repentance (perhaps psychotherapy) – will filter down to three or four generations. Suffering will spread beyond the sphere of one's own self, to others, and it will stay in effect for generations. Contemporary *genograms* have documented this ancient biblical insight in regard to familial traits.(56)

One must always– *always*– consider the effect of one's decision on yourself, another, and all groups of humans, including the next, and next, and next generation– to the best that this is humanly possible.

Future-sighted living– progressing, evolving, historically-focused– is the great gift of the Hebrew people to the world. It is at the core of *prophetic* teachings. Future-thinking is the prophetic foundation of our secular world global culture, too. It is what propels *Universal Judaism* and the Hebrew World View.

Without the future, there is no new present. Without the future, we are not living in harmony with *The Living (and Evolving) God*. Without a new, new present, the past will imprison us. We will have nowhere to go. Your actions should always consider the unseen: the future.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Future Generations.***

***Relationship Priority #5: All Life and Creation.***

We've touched upon this, and we shall touch upon it again, and again. We cannot, as humanity, live without consciousness of the fact that we share life with every living creature on the planet, as well as a *living planet* itself.

And why stop there? We share our life on the earth, with every planet and dimension in all Existence, Reality, Being, Nature– Life on all Scales– The Living Creation-of-all-Creations– “The Creator”– The Source-of-All. The Holy One!

It is impossible for our little mortal minds to completely comprehend everything in all Life and Creation; it is so far beyond our capacity to “take it all in”. But, we human beings *can* transcend our limited minds, with another faculty, a (perhaps more powerful?) gift of our Super-natural natures: our *hearts*.

The human heart is not quite as limited in its scope as our minds. It can expand and expand. It can care. It can reach out with one of the most powerful forces in existence: *Love*. The human heart can even love something with no visual presence, even without provable existence. The human heart can love what it only imagines. The human heart can love an ideal. The human heart can love a future it does not know, or a creation it cannot fully fathom.

The human heart can embrace God without needing to prove God exists. It can love goodness, so it can seek goodness. The human heart can *become* goodness, seeking its own spiritual self-revelation and unfolding, increasingly purifying its own capacity to love, ever more deeply.

All Life and Creation awaits the expansion of your mind. But, it awaits, even more, the greater expansion of your heart. Then, All Life and Creation becomes your family, or at least, your next door neighbor.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate All Life and Creation.***

### **Relationship Priority #6: Continuous Improvement**

Evolve! Evolve! Evolve! Nothing else need be said.

In everything we think, say and do, we should always seek continuous improvement in bringing more goodness into Life.

In our spiritual explorations– in all our learning from sowing and reaping, as individuals, and as part of a living, spiritual civilization– we should always be relentless in seeking, and demanding, continuous improvement in all things.

Continuous improvement is the evolutionary impulse of *The Living God*, translated through every dimension of human life, and indeed, every dimension of existence.

If one is not seeking continuous improvement, a plateau will begin to be reached and the goodness of Life will begin to taper off. If one does not address this plateau with a discerning, wise, thrust of new improvement, the plateau will turn

into a major downturn. This will lead to some pain and suffering, in order to wake us up, and force us to grow once more.

Everything that goes wrong in life usually begins with a failure to seek continuous improvement. Catch your mistake— fast— before things get worse. And evolve, again!

Evolution is the very nature of Life. Do you really want to resist Life?

***Life is Holy. Celebrate with Continuous Improvement***

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These six *Relationship Priorities*, in their correct order, can help us to make decisions that are in greater alignment to How Life Works for Good. As a general guideline before making any major decision, they will help you achieve more successful results, and of course, reduce unnecessary pain and suffering.

Conversely, because these six *Relationship Priorities* are built-into Life, when something goes wrong in Life, one can examine the consequences of one's actions in light of these *Relationship Priorities* and more easily discover one's mistakes. This is true for personal errors. This is true for societal errors too. Usually, a problem arises in Life when *Relationship Priorities* are not in their correct order, when we, for example, sow others before ourselves, or, sow future generations *before* considering the present. That's how we sow and reap a living mess.

Correct *Relationship Priorities* are essential if human beings are going to learn to use their Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuality in a way that amplifies Life's Goodness, enhancing joy and happiness on all levels.

Learn these Relationship Priorities by heart. Take them with you, as your own portable *Universal Judaism* tabernacle, in the wilderness of Life.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Relationships.***

And now, put these six *Relationship Priorities* together with the previous six *Value Priorities*. You now you have a double *Star of David*, that six pointed star, that has become the symbol of the People of Israel.(57)

Together, they form the basic, rational, spiritual guidelines for how to approach *Life*, sowing and reaping, step by step, learning from Life how to create goodness. That's because both *Relationship Priorities* and *Value Priorities* are built into How Life Works for Good; they are key-boundaries within God's Order,



God's "commandments" or design-elements within Life-on-earth: Learn the ropes to Life.

By learning these in advance, and implementing them, it can save you a lot of pain and suffering. If you don't learn them this way, you'll have to learn it the hard way. But, no one is free to escape these *Value* and *Relationship Priorities*.

Goodness, on a cosmic scale? That, admittedly, is so far beyond our ability to fully know and fully appreciate. After all, we are not God, at least *in toto*.

But, Goodness, on a human scale? That, we can know:

*Health, peace, freedom, wisdom, full potential, prosperity, for yourself, another, all others, future generations, all Life and Creation, with continuous improvement, and continuous improvement upon that.*

This is the mission of *Universal Judaism*. It is accessible and teachable to all, no matter what the age difference and educational background. It will send a spiritual force into All Life and Creation (*Relationship Priority #5*), the more it is practiced and perfected.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Values & Relationships, together***

Goodness will not be far away. The experience of God will be right there, standing exactly where you are!

## Chapter Ten:

### The Science of Prayer

Prayer is terribly misunderstood, because it seems as if we are some kind of worthless creature pleading with the Entirety of All Existence for a crumb. Then, when this “All Powerful Sadist” refuses to grant us our desperate wishes, we either blame ourselves for being unworthy, consider it some kind of inscrutable “Will” on the part of “God”, or, become an atheist from such an insane idea of God (which is actually, the best prayer we could offer.)

*Universal Judaism* seeks to de-mystify prayer and make it, as a spiritual technology, accessible scientifically and systematically. Prayer can be taught. The principles of prayer are rational. *How Prayer Works for Good* is understandable. Knowledge of prayer can build, from one generation to the next. Prayer adds an immeasurable power to the covenantal experience of God.

Prayer is very intimate. You cannot experience *The Personal God*– Life, Nature, Existence, Reality, All, the Holy One *through* the filter of your mind, heart, and will– without that *relationship-with-God* called “prayer”. Prayer is how the Trans-personal God is experienced personally, through you.

The word *prayer*, in Hebrew, *hitpalel*, literally means *to judge oneself*. The word “judge” is a terrible word in English, because it is contaminated with all sorts of authoritarian connotations; it has a nasty flavor of condemnation, control and cruelty. It is better to think of “judging oneself” as meaning *self-evaluation*.

For *Universal Judaism*, that’s what prayer is primarily: *self-evaluation* or *self-reflection*. We reflect upon our actions, and their results. We discern what was not correct about them, and what needs to be corrected. This, of course, we’ve already spoken about. When– sowing and reaping, causing and effecting– we notice something goes awry, then we stop. We pause and self-reflect. We study our mis-creations, our so-called “sin”. After we do such a self-evaluation, we will usually notice, in the vast majority of cases, that some *Value Priority* and/or *Relationship Priority* was forgotten or not in its correct order. By reviewing these priorities, we have an excellent guide to self-evaluation, or prayer.

Correct self-evaluation as a living, intellectual process will help you develop the great control over your conscious ability to be a covenanted human being. Self-evaluation is how we direct the conscious mind to become very powerful! However, human beings are not just conscious beings. We also have a subconscious and unconscious within us. Prayer, when it is limited merely to refining conscious action, however powerful, remains somewhat superficial and

ego-driven. It does not penetrate to the spiritual depths of our extraordinary human nature.

In order to allow prayer to have a deeper effect, penetrating deep into our subconscious and unconscious, it's best that we further remove more of the mystifications and contaminations around prayer that make it unbelievable. This will ensure that any other psychic resistances to prayer, which we may have inherited from the world-at-large, will give way, so we can have a deeper prayer experience.

At a more basic level, prayer is *desire*. Yes, that's what most prayer is. Desire! Even self-evaluation is a form of a desire, because prior to any self-evaluation there is a feeling, a thought, an impulse, a *desire* to self-evaluate and self-reflect. Do not proceed further, unless you understand that prayer is basically *desire*. Everything else follows upon this, at first, shocking assertion.

When one prays, one desires. When one desires, one prays. So, in a sense, We are *always praying*. Every single second, every moment of the day, whether we are consciously desiring, or subconsciously desiring or even unconsciously desiring, this is all a form of prayer.

Some desires are more gross, more superficial. Other desires are more subtle, and deeper. Some desires seem more active, on the conscious plane. Some desires seem more passive, on the subconscious or unconscious plane. Some desires engage activity physically. Other desires just engage activity mentally, such as thinking. Still other desires are simple, innocent feelings, little child-like desires like "joy", "beauty", "pleasure", "love".

Prayer is basic: A desire for food, is actually a prayer to Existence for nourishment. We forget that, because we have set up economic and industrial systems to satisfy for that desire, automatically, like a supermarket. But such technology is simply a desire upon a desire, a means to the end. We desire. We eat.

A desire for sex, is a prayer to Existence for pleasure. And Existence quickly reminds us that mere pleasure is not its only purpose, for there would be no continued human existence without sex.

A desire to build an empire, expand one's ego, is prayer— not just for yourself, but also for all humankind, whom you will serve through your empire. Even a very materialistic kind of prayer implies great moral responsibilities towards the world. The bigger the prayer sown, the bigger the responsibilities reaped. Be careful what you ask for.

It is a great, great sadness, which desires for food, sex and power, have been considered filthy, degenerate, sinful things. This has done nothing but divide the

consciousness of human beings into “good” and “bad”, preventing the natural spiritual humanity of a human being from being expressed. The Hebrew viewpoint, in general, has never done this, nor was this traditionally the case in Judaism; it is never the case in *Universal Judaism*. However, sadly, there has been much contamination by alien cultures and different trends in religious thought, including certain unkempt piousness and mysticism, which tended to demean these impulses as “less than”.

**Let us re-ignite the Hebrew Spirit. Let us remove the block from our desires, knowing that what we are doing is opening up the very Life that *is* our life.**

**Let’s remove the block from our desires, and come to know the full, prayerful, power of Life that’s been implanted within us.**

**Let us allow our prayers to be powerful, by not holding back our own power from our own prayers!**

Releasing our desires into Life— naturally, easily, joyfully— is prayer! It is a light that feeds the Light. It is a breath that feeds the Breath. It is humanity’s flame bearing witness to the Creator’s. Enjoy it! This is prayer. This is your life! Indeed, your life *is* your prayer. That’s why we’ve spent so much time up till now, preparing you for the most expansive, most world-embracing, most historically-potent prayers possible. The more expansively-Hebrew your prayers, the more they include correct *Value* and *Relationship Priorities*, the more Life will support your growth and expansion, so you can contribute to your fulfillment, everyone’s fulfillment, and All Life’s Fulfillment. This is how Providence, Grace or *hasgacha* works.

This is how the Hebrew People, in all its various forms, including other “faiths” who received this great spiritual principle, were able to accomplish so very much compared to other nations. We trusted the Light in us! Knowing ourselves to be *Made in the Image and Likeness of God*, we continuously prayed, every moment of our Life. So, we accomplished! We became a powerful witness to prayerful Goodness.

Opening up your desire— truly *living it*— is one way for prayer to penetrate deeper, because you are removing the neurotic fears and inhibitions that are preventing the deeper expression of your spiritual nature. Provided this is done carefully— with correct acknowledgement of law, and with correct awareness of spiritual guidelines (*Value and Relationship Priorities*)— this is a wonderful, unabashed human right and delight.

Another way for prayer to penetrate deeper, is to take the opposite approach. Instead of allowing desires to open outwardly, to be acted out and lived, one can

direct one's desires to open *inwardly*. One can get quiet, close one's eyes— the usual behavior associated with prayer. One can quietly pray within, sending prayers into our inner being, into the depths of our consciousness.

One can then, deeply, innocently, like a child, release our desires, from our conscious awareness of them (to the extent we are), into the deepest recesses of our inner consciousness. This is actually HOW sowing and reaping and creative-spirituality works. When you release a desire through inner-directed-thought or feeling, it initially seeds your subconscious mind. It is very similar to what takes place through *hypnotic* suggestion. This is a desire-seed, which, in a sense, gets planted in the ground of your subconscious. The desire-seed begins to sprout. It sprouts inwardly at first.

However, “inward” is just a relative direction: relative to us. In fact, when a prayer touches our subconscious, it connects to the consciousness of all those human beings who are relationally closest to us. From there, it can be observed to spiral outward to other human beings, less closely related. When a prayer touches our unconscious, it actually touches, (in *principle*, because we cannot fully know the scale), upon All Life and Creation, the Entirety of Existence, which is Unconscious to us.

As one spiritually cleans up from the incorrect effects of past sowing and reaping, this phenomenon is observable. The effect of prayer is discernable, understandable and rational. This is not “mysticism”. It is simply how human consciousness works. Our desires actually interact with Creation Itself, the Creator's Force-of-Consciousness. Our prayer-desires actually co-mingle with the forces of existence and creatively participate in the act of Creation. This is actually how human beings assert their Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuality. Our feelings, thoughts, words and actions— different *degrees* of expression— interact with the other forces in Creation, and weave together the creative-experience of human life, hopefully for good.

Our cars, our computers, our homes— everything human beings invent— occurs by the interaction of our prayer-desiring consciousness with the Larger Consciousness of All Existence and Life. We may use our arms, our hands, our hammers as tools, but, on the deepest of levels, it's our consciousness interacting with the Larger Consciousness that causes all our inventiveness. Arms, hands and hammers are caused by that too.

So, ultimately, and most fundamentally, although prayer is self-evaluation, which is a form of desire, desire itself is really just *creativity*. Self-evaluation is creativity reflected upon one's self. Desire is creativity reflected upon one's self and turned outwardly upon All Life and Creation. Creativity comprehends both.

Ultimately, prayer *is* creativity. Indeed, everything is creativity! Surprising?

No, not if you've been paying attention so far. After all, All is Creativity. All is The Creator. All is The Living God, With-In Which, as dimensions, eddies, formations, "things", anything and everything else exists. All– the *Universe*– literally meaning the *All-Together*, including our particular universe and probably others– is creative!

Realizing the power of Divine Creativity in our life anchors our personal relationship with the God of All Existence. The more we realize our power of creativity, our prayerful gift as a creative being, the more the relationship between us and The Creator is forged. We trust The Holy One more, because we trust ourselves more!

Needless to say, learning to trust prayer is much easier when we can notice our prayers working! Learning to trust prayer is much easier when we can see that our prayers "are heard", so-to-speak, using this human metaphor for "petitioning others". How can we more readily notice that our prayers are being answered? That they truly "come true"? Try this exercise:

**Take some time. Look at your life.  
See what is happening.**

**Now back-track from what is happening  
and try to pair the experience with some  
thought or desire you may have had, either  
consciously or subconsciously, either now  
or earlier in your life.**

If you do this, you will soon notice that your life is a product of your creativity: your self-evaluations, your desires, your prayers, including choices. You will come to know that there is a reason why you are experiencing in Life what you are experiencing. The reason? You! You have been creating it. You have been desiring it. You have been praying it– often together with others, and the entire world, whether you realize it or not.

Prayer is *that* powerful!

**Life is Holy. Celebrate Prayer.**

Because prayer is creativity, there is another, even more subtle level to prayer, which is worth exploring. Perhaps the deepest of all prayers is to not introduce your personal ego-prayer into your subconscious "garden"– to not pray for anything particular or any personal human desire you have. Instead, you invite the Largeness of Life to "pray through you". In this powerful approach to prayer,

you vacate some of your conscious ego desires and permit *The Living God* to direct your heart, your mind and your will for Its own benefit. Traditional Religions call this *Seeking God's Will, Waiting on the Lord, Seeking God's Counsel*.

Now, of course, when you do this, you are hardly desire-less. You certainly still have an ego; after all, you are *choosing* this. Nonetheless, this is a very powerful desire because you are giving All Existence priority over you personally (The way Life is Designed.) You are not vacating *Relationship Priority #1 (Yourself)* nor are you putting *Relationship Priority #5 (All Life and Creation)* first, to the exclusion of yourself. You are simply allowing Something Wider to inform something narrower. You are actually expanding your conscious self to include a much Larger Self– the *Original Adam*, so-to-speak. You are, in a sense, *downloading* Knowledge beyond your own conscious-limits.

When you do this, you will experience something which is often deeper than prayer. It has been called *hitbodedut, meditation*.(58) *Universal Judaism* uses and deeply this kind of Hebrew meditation to help facilitate the opening of a direct covenantal experience. Meditation permits the tremendous power of Life to filter through you, to focus, concentrate, and take material form, for the benefit of yourself and All life and Creation. Through deeper forms of more self-less prayer, or meditation, you essentially make yourself a *servant of God*. Not a slave of God! But a willing, open human, with a blessed ego, ready to serve Life!

**This is a healthy, Hebrew, Spirit!  
Re-ignite it!**

Finally, no chapter on prayer would be complete if we didn't address the painful questions too: Why didn't my prayer work? Why did my child die of cancer? Why didn't God rescue us from the gas chambers? This is a very complex question, and to answer it glibly is somewhat cruel. So, please forgive me, as this is primer on the subject, and the delicacy of this question requires a different forum, if not an entirely separate book.

However, the short answer is simple: *creativity!*

Since self-evaluation and desire and prayer are creativity, then, any self-evaluation, desire or prayer which *contradicts* or *qualifies* one's prayer from taking place will delay or actually prevent one's prayer. This is not a sadistic act by a distant God; this is simply the complex interweaving of all your desires, in harmony with the *Design-specs*, so-to-speak, of our World. For example, you may pray for a beautiful spouse, yet, you may also, subconsciously, be praying "not be tied down". So, you keep searching and never find your spouse, thinking that the problem is "I just haven't found the right person."

Another reason prayers are not fulfilled, is that the scale and range of your prayer is not yours alone. You are praying for something bigger than just you. For example, you may pray for everyone in the world to have peace, but, obviously, you're praying for it is not adequate; it requires the participation of others; it requires *covenant*.

Still, one more reason prayers are not fulfilled, is that one is praying for something which is impossible given the current design of this world. For example, you may pray for the sky to be zebra-striped. Good luck! Even if it is, somehow, actually possible, it will take an interminably long time, and you'll probably die trying.

And of course, a very powerful reason why prayers are not fulfilled, is that there was not enough power-in-the-prayer. If you are going to creatively-desire, you need to put the force-of-your *moedecha*, all of your *will*, into it, as the words of the *V'Ahavtah* describe. Indeed, it has been said that if you say the word "AMEN" with enough will, your prayer will manifest in your Life, quickly answered.

Prayers, being creative, are deeply affected by all our feelings, thoughts and beliefs, as well as the Order or Commandments involved in our world's design. Our prayers are *conditioned* by many, many things, including our *doubt*. If we doubt that an actually-possible prayer can take place, then, we are, in essence, desiring that it *will not* take place. Sometimes people do this, because they're actually afraid of discovering that prayer works; they fear the consequences that this would have had for their life. Sometimes, they simply doubt prayer, in order to "prove" it doesn't exist to themselves. They sow and reap their own convincing arguments to themselves.

*Universal Judaism* teaches *scientific spirituality*, which includes correct instruction on prayer and its mechanics. This is not a cheap mysticism or a silly, irrational "hopefulness" which is not real. The shared, consensual, objective experience of prayer is proof of prayer. There is no such thing as proof– even the so-called "scientific" double-blind kind of proof– which is not based upon this kind of experience.

Prayer is a deeply-intimate and powerfully-active force, shaping, continuously, your *experience of God*.

Are you ready to live life prayer-fully? If you are, I assure you: You will not be praying alone.



**Life is Holy. Celebrate Community.**

## Chapter Eleven:

### Our Place in History

You may not realize it, but *Universal Judaism* has a fascinating history, worthy of celebrating.

#### **Life is Holy. Celebrate Our History.**

It is not commonly known, but, in the course of Jewish history, there have been many different “forms” of Jewish society. At times, we’ve been lead by prophets, guiding us through the wilderness, a Moses or a Joshua. At other times, we have been ruled by a series of prophets, who spoke the Word of God, exhorting righteousness throughout the nation; prophets like Samuel, Amos, Jeremiah, and many others, all belonged to, more or less, a continuous prophetic lineage.

At other times, Israel took the form of a monarchy. The monarchies ruled by King Saul and his successor, King David, were very much sanctioned and informed by the prophets, especially Samuel. Still, at other times, we had a monarchy, such as Solomon’s, where prophecy had somewhat dwindled, and a highly-institutionalized priesthood, possessed of their own Temple (which Solomon built), with elaborate rituals of sacrifice, gained dominance.

Since the return from the Babylonian Exile, about 586 B.C.E., the dominant “form” of Jewish life had been totally priestly dominated. Cyrus, King of Persia, had allowed Israel to return to Judah, to rebuild their Temple, provided they maintain a *hierocratic* form of government, rule by priests. This was the dominant governmental form in Persia. No monarchy would be tolerated, nor prophetic rule under God, because this would undermine Cyrus’ authority.

It was after the Babylonian Exile, that the *Torah*, or the *Five Books of Moses* was promulgated as the “legal constitution” of the land, administered by priests.

However, during the time of the Maccabees, 164 B.C.E. – 63 B.C.E., with the assault on the Great Temple by the Seleucid Greeks, another approach to Jewish society began to emerge. Scholars arose who began to examine and contemplate the words of the *Torah* and other scriptures, notably the prophets, seeking to intellectually place them in a context of Hebrew-based *Universal Truth: One God, One Creation, One Humankind, Universal History*, the four pillars framed by the opening chapters of *Genesis*. These scholars, as was mentioned earlier, were the forerunners of what we today call *rabbis*.

Many of these “proto-rabbis” were invited into the surrounding territories. People

there had become intrigued with Jewish prophetic teachings of One God, Universal Justice, Compassion and Love for all humankind.(59) Moreover, many in these territories, under the influence of Greek philosophy, had begun to develop their own Hebrew-like thought-direction; Plato's "Good" and The One God, which both emphasized moral requirements, began to look quite similar. Also, over time, the Greek pantheon of gods narrowed, and Zeus become more prominent and singular, more "monotheistic", in a sense.

Unfortunately, the early stages of this Jewish universalism became quite threatening to "Roman universalism", which took a far more brutal form. Soon, the Roman emperor Hadrian forbade Jews to spread their knowledge openly, under penalty of extinction. It was then that open teaching of a "Universal Judaism" ceased. After that, Jews would discretely teach only those non-Jews who approached them. Moreover, those "Christians" who had hitherto not broken from Judaism, now had good reason— their very lives— to present themselves and be perceived differently. From one essential accord, two different religious perspectives began to diverge.

Nevertheless, it is a great irony of history that many of the truths of *Universal Judaism* passed into Christianity, which eventually became the religion of the Roman Empire. Over time, the world learned much about our universal viewpoint. Indeed, there is no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth shared the great universal teachings of many of our scholars, such as Hillel and Akiba, and was an inspired, charismatic teacher of core *Universal Judaism*.

Centuries later, with the great inspiration of Islam, also based upon core Jewish knowledge as well as many Christian ideals and beliefs, the truths of *Universal Judaism*, reached an even wider world.

Today, the ethical structure of our increasingly global secular world, as well as the legal system of virtually the entire civilized world, west or east, is firmly rooted in core Jewish prophetic historical insight.

***Life is Holy. Celebrate Universal Judaism.***

**Our time has come, again.**

However, because many of the truths of *Universal Judaism* were taught through alien spiritual perspectives, and because many of these alien spiritual perspectives became antagonistic to Judaism and yet, as the dominant cultures, strongly influenced Jewish thought— there have been dangerous distortions of Hebrew thought over the centuries.

Would the horrific history of slavery in Europe and the Americas ever have taken place, if Christians had actually adhered to the slavery laws in the Hebrew Bible, which is *their* Bible, at least in part? Absolutely not! Scripture forbade the hurting and maiming of a slave, even requiring slaves to be released if they

escaped, because it assumed mistreatment by the master. (*Exodus 21:6-7*) European and American slavery was basically Greco-Roman, cruelly non-Hebrew.

Today, we witness problems in the world which are the direct result of improperly teaching or flatly ignoring Hebrew knowledge. For instance, our ecological nightmares: While Roman law permitted one to own anything, without restriction, and had little respect for the sanctity of the earth and creatures upon it, this was not the case of Hebrew law, which respected the earth and all Life as a Creation of God. Sadly, Roman law was the foundation of our capitalist system. We are witnessing the devastating effect of this inadequate understanding of *Universal Judaism*. (60)

Today, we are recovering from grave philosophical problems due to Christian-conflicts that contributed to creating *modernism*. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, science came in conflict with religion. To avoid an excommunication like Galileo's, the French philosopher Rene Descartes developed an approach to mutual-coexistence between science and the church. Religion would rule in what he called the *res cogitans*, Latin for the *kingdom of thought*, i.e. the inner world of the so-called "soul" that religion explores. Science would rule in what he called the *res extensa*, Latin for the *kingdom of extension*, i.e. the outer world of so-called "nature" that science explores.

However, today, psychology, branching off of medical science, is dealing with the *res cogitans*. Also, today, healing techniques such as *Therapeutic Touch* (in almost every major hospital), branching off of spirituality, is dealing with the *res extensa*. Obviously, these two Cartesian camps are just what they've always been: *formal* divisions, not *real* divisions.

After all, these days, when science is unveiling the mysteries of *quantum mechanics*, when "objectivity" in the Cartesian sense, cannot be said to always exist, but, is more of a *probability-of-observable-certainty*, the previous era called "modern" must give way, or, at least be tempered.

**The Inherent Unity of the Hebrew World View must be re-ignited for today.**

This is why *Universal Judaism* is not modern. It is "modern" in the commonplace meaning of being *contemporary*, i.e. for today's time and place and knowledge. But it is not, formally-speaking, *modern*. It does not have a bifurcated model of Reality. After all, God– Reality, Unity, Existence, Nature, All– is One. So-called "modern thinking" is a betrayal of Hebrew thought. Jews, and everyone, must recover from it!

***Universal Judaism's* place in history is beyond the modern; it is post-modern, if not beyond that!**

For *Universal Judaism*, there is One Truth. This Truth expresses (creates) itself through many worlds, dimensions, creations, creatures, and all other “forms” *With-In* and *Of Itself*. And while we participate in and of this One Nature, we also have our own particular *human* nature.

We have a certain *freedom*– a creative *dominion* over nature on the earth or anywhere within the range of our consciousness, reflecting the *res extensa*. But, we also have the capacity to reflect within, within our “inner world”, the *res cogitans*.

*Universal Judaism* could never deny the value of the two kingdoms of Descartes, because they are common everyday human experience. They are aspects of the One Truth as seen through a human lens. However, we would never become so radically bifurcated so that Reality ceases to appear One. For *Universal Judaism*, there is “simply” One Good Living Creator creating More of Itself– including our creation, all actually-possible creations, as well as us!

***B'reishit, Elohim [Adonai] barah et ha shamayim v'et ha aretz.***

**In beginning, All the Divine Forces Together, created the heavens and the earth.(61)**

So, in a very real sense, *Universal Judaism's* “post-post-modern” perspective is simply a return to *Genesis*, now seen from a secular, scientific, spiritual, perspective, appropriate for today’s individualistic and more democratic era. Anciently-contemporary? Yes!

Now, it is very sad, that because of a severe history of persecution, with the pressing need to keep the *nation* of Israel, including its culture and government, alive, that Jews tended to emphasize *law* as the most important aspect of our spiritual legacy. So, the vast majority of denominations within the Hebrew-spectrum of beliefs, including Christianity, Islam and inspired Western secular thinking, tend to heavy up on law, thinking that legality and government is the truest measure of morality and spiritual life.

Because of this, there has been tremendous denominational friction, and, of course, lethal inter-religious contention, if not outright wars, as brittle frameworks of judgments, laws, codes, and institutionalized beliefs, became competing pseudo-absolute standards of Truth. One can see this horrible conflict today, still breathing. But, thankfully, it is more and more gasping for air.

That’s because the scientific perspective– (when not idolatrous, mistaking its theories of Truth as Truth itself, the same error as bad religion)– has opened the doorway to the *Universal Truth Perspective*. This Universal Truth Perspective is challenging so many religions and philosophies to re-think themselves in The Light of Truth. Correct, healthy science is just too powerful an intellectual light to hide from. Religion cannot run away from it.

Many are terrified of this challenge, because they derived much of their core teachings during darker, more dangerous, if not more superstitious times. For hundreds, if not thousands of years, they've invested a lot in these sacred cows. They've even come to worship them as their "identity". They fear losing their precious identity, because they do not know what they would actually *be* without it.

This is a very painful, very delicate, soulful matter, with which *Universal Judaism* empathizes. We are not radically seeking to overturn anyone's *applecart*, so to speak. We are not seeking to label anyone *false*, and us *right*, and then create the next wave of religious prejudice. These are human hearts we are dealing with. It is wrongful to take away people's delusions, unless you have something better to replace them with. It can cause severe psychological damage, and leave people fragmented, dissociated and unstable.

Besides, because *Universal Judaism* understands— *middah k'neged middah*—that what we sow will only be reaped back upon us, out of sheer self-respect and spiritual-survival, we would never approach the teaching of others carelessly and arrogantly. Indeed, we are well-aware of where excessive judgments by so-called "modern" Jewish approaches got them: they now apply skull caps and prayer shawls they once despised; they now imitate more so-called "Orthodox" groups they disdained, in order to *feel more Jewish*. What goes around, does come around! You condemn, so you are condemned.

One can also see similar convulsions within orthodox camps. Struggling with the truths of natural sciences, unable to avoid the insights of contemporary biblical criticism and archeology, fearful of the loss of their scriptural idolatry and overstated authority systems— they are resisting and resisting. Desperate extremism is beginning to surface. Contention over issues such as abortion, homosexuality, inter-religious marriage, and other traditional "red flags" are becoming more entrenched.

*Universal Judaism*, because we are Truth-based, embraces all these conflicts as valuable *perspectives*, worthy of examination, contemplation and synthetic analysis. But, as we've discussed, when these perspectives are considered *absolutes*, we know that they will become idolatrous; then, problems, conflicts, contradictions will surface because they are sowing and reaping *chet*, "sin", intellectual and emotional arrogance. For *Universal Judaism*, the mere presence of such challenges is an indication that these perspectives are not in spiritual *alignment* to How Life works for Good.

However, when these perspectives are not taken to extremes, and do not become absolutist and therefore, idolatrous, there is tremendous insight that can be learned from these powerful, often fierce, viewpoints. They contain precious, historical, cultural and spiritual components necessary for any Truth-based, Hebrew, *economy of Thought*.

So, it might actually be better to say that *Universal Judaism* is not a religion nor a denomination. We are not a cemented, doctrinal “belief system”. We are more of a *unifying perspective*: a secular, scientific, spiritual, individualistic perspective, which we consider to be a solid spiritual philosophy to help clarify and unite all the various Hebrew-based religions and denominations. We retain the word “Judaism”, somewhat uncomfortably; but, it marks our place in history as part of the solution for previous eras of confusing, controlling, condemnatory religion. We will discuss this more in the next chapter.

No matter who you are, and where you come from— whether you are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, secular, atheist, humanist, any and all denominations or variations—*Universal Judaism* can help you heal, discover and get the best out of Life. This is our purpose. This is our place in history:

- 1. To teach** the Universal Truth of Hebrew Thought to everyone, equally and without distinction, requiring no conversion or other ritual requirements, (though some may choose these) with critical respect for individuality and individual-self-expression. We will discuss this more later on.
- 2. To re-awaken** and promote Judaism’s Universalist perspective, which did not have an opportunity to fully blossom because of cultural domination and persecution.
- 3. To heal** the world from the dangerous mistakes caused by philosophical, theological or historical misinterpretations and/or ignorance of Hebrew spirituality both within traditional forms of Judaism, as well as other religions, such as Christianity and Islam, which were often based upon our previous mistakes.
- 4. To provide** a healthy and viable spiritual alternative for people, families and all the world’s communities, teaching pride but not prejudice, in a totally guilt-free, non-coercive, universality-minded, Truth-based, environment.
- 5. To resurrect** and revivify meaningful customs, still useful rituals, as well as spiritual gifts such as intuitive insight and healing, which is the great legacy of the Hebrew prophets, contemporizing these gifts, so they are accessible to all human beings, scientific and systematically-teachable, and never superstitious.
- 6. To serve** as an umbrella group for promoting the healing and unification of the many fractured Jewish denominations as well as other Hebrew-based religious denominations, which participate in the world community.
- 7. To correct** the confusion around the varying interpretations of Jewish thought, as well as the (sometimes resulting) confusion surrounding the figures of Jesus of Nazareth and Muhammad, both of whom taught the essence of *Universal Judaism*.
- 8. To promote** in the current State of Israel, a contemporary, spiritually-vigorous,

authentically-grounded universalist and spiritual viewpoint, in both secular and religious domains, in order to bring about a spiritually-authentic peace in that nation, region and the world.

**9. To share** our *Universal Judaism* teachings as an approach to an enlightened-secularism, which can heal the problems of global world culture.

**10. To remove** the scars of human civilization, such as a faltering and inadequate economy and a devastated ecology, which, we believe, are often the result of *Universal Judaism* teachings taught incorrectly by others, including previous conquerors.

Yes, we have come to a monumental moment in history. A leap must take place. *Universal Judaism*— if not the leap itself— believes our teachings are pivotal and necessary for this leap to take place.

It has been close to two thousand years since itinerant preachers entered into foreign territories drawn to the Light of the God of Israel. Then, we were threatened. We were victimized. We were dominated by an alien culture that did not understand us, and feared us, forcing us into the background.

They had much to fear.

Can you cruelly dominate whole groups of people, if you too must obey God's Laws as well your subjects? Can you declare yourself an *Absolute Monarch*, if there is a God That is greater than you, that your subjects may also petition (and be heard) directly? Can you rape and pillage the planet, slash and burn whole tracts of food crops, because you assert the earth to be yours? Can any mortal opinion— philosophical or political or religious— be considered absolute, authoritative, perfect and the authoritative "last word" for Truth?

Truth-based Hebrew thinking is very threatening to those who wish to dominate through threats. Truth-based Hebrew thinking is very threatening to those who assert themselves as the Source of their own power.

Yet— *middah k'neged middah*— the past passes, and evolution continues. Eventually, the tyrants of history pass. Holocausts come and go. We have been set free (though more must be accomplished). The world is not quite as afraid of us any more. More than ever, the world is ready to hear our voice, cleaner, fresher, for a new, more universal era.

Finally, in a kinder, more hospitable, more open world, there's an unprecedented opportunity to teach the Hebrew Spirit openly— to *everyone*— again. Two thousand years after the Emperor Hadrian forbid us to spread our wisdom, we actually have history's invitation to pick up where we left off.

**Life is Holy. Celebrate this Moment.**



This is our time!

## Chapter Twelve:

### Our Leap

Yes, this is our time! It is time for a spiritual leap that will help evolve the Hebrew World View, and help keep our covenant and identity alive and vibrant for this contemporary era, percolating with new demands, new challenges, and exciting, evolutionary possibilities.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate the Hebrew Spirit.**

This is a very different age, in part because “religion” has become so secondary. For the most part, religious or secular, we all live like little islands in a sea of *secular-ism*. Our economics, our government, our culture— they are all very much non-religious. Classic Hebrew ethics— with fair and proper treatment for all individuals, with a just and equitable legal system— even if not perfected, has nonetheless become the norm for our civilized world, and quite detached from religious modes of self-expression.

These days, we tend to take this for granted. But, it was an enormous achievement spanning millennia of human enterprise and vision. It was achieved thanks to the participation of all the Hebrew-inspired cultures who shared the prophetic vision of history, and spread knowledge of this through their religious ideals and fervor.

It is because of this great achievement that we can actually, for the very first time in history, be *less religious!* (62) We can actually return, in principle, to the essential “secular” framework of *Genesis*. After all, where are the religions in the beginning of Genesis? Where are the Temples? Where are the clergy? Where is there anything but One God, One Creation. One Humankind, and— after the human being gains a healthy material-ego— a thrust for a *Universal History*?

**The overwhelming vast majority of Jews, as well as all those who are inspired by the Hebrew World View, are now *secular*. They do not worship. They maintain emotional attachment to their so-called “faiths”, usually for certain sentimentalities, such as holidays. They are basically secular, scientifically-minded, spiritual individuals, living in a contemporary, democratic world of freedom.**

***Universal Judaism* believes it’s time to stop fighting this advance! This is the parade; we’re getting to the front of it.**

This is no longer a religious era. Many are afraid of this; they fear assimilation and can often be found applying religion with trowels as a seeming remedy, or badgering their adult-children, against their free will, to stay in the tribe. *Universal Judaism* is not afraid of this non-religious era. We applaud this! But, such an era

requires a dramatically different approach.

But, how do you reach people who have learned to think of themselves as a “religion”, when, in fact, they live non-religiously and only sprinkle in certain religious flavorings into their sporadic, ancestral devotionals?

How do you reach young secular kids who have completely forgotten the inspired Hebrew vision that made the secular life they take for granted possible in the first place?

What do you do with the State of Israel which is overwhelmingly secular, even atheist? Indeed, not a few “Israeli’s” would not even consider themselves “Jewish”, in a religious sense. They belong to a nation, a *People*, no longer needing the “religious” model that was emphasized due to foreign invasion and persecution.

What do you do with the many good secular people who come from Christian, Muslim, or other religions, who are Hebrew inspired in their perspective, but, cannot go back into the formalisms of their religion, or, for that matter, cannot partake of *any* religion? Do they too have an option?

Do we continue to shove religion? Pump religion? Sell religion? When religion is not the current historical mode-of-existence right now?

A leap must be made:

**The leap called *Universal Judaism*, seeks to re-root secular *Western Civilization*, on a correct Hebrew foundation, without the ancient errors which infect so many religions, and have distorted, dangerously, the dominant “non-religious faith” called *secularism*.**

**The leap called *Universal Judaism*, seeks to clarify, strengthen and promulgate anew, the core identity of the Hebrew World View, sharing it with all those— Jew and non-Jew— in an exciting, dynamic new form that is suitable for contemporary, non-religious, essentially secular peoples.**

**The leap called *Universal Judaism* restores the original vision of *Genesis*, One God, One Creation, One Humankind, and one Universal History. This is essential; religion is not, and in fact, never was!**

There are four components to the *Universal Judaism* leap. We have already touched upon them all extensively. However, at this point, it might be valuable to the reader to simply summarize where we’ve been, so we can stand upon *terra firma* moving forward.

***The leap called Universal Judaism is secular:***

*Universal Judaism* values secular life. We applaud it. We consider secular life to be an incredible advance over previous religious life. In fact, we consider secular life to be more authentically Hebrew, arising from a basic prophetic perspective— *God in everyday life*— not clogged up with all the priestly and Temple worship, elements which entered later and were not original.

The prophetic is the secular. True secular life, with a good, clean, ethical, system of justice, with values and relationships that are spiritually based on How Life Works for Good, is the ancient call-to-action of our ancient seers— *Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, Isaiah . . .* and many others.

### **True secular life s *holy*.**

A healthy relationship to the earth (obeying the “commandments”/operating according to God’s “Order in nature), access to food, shelter, security, education, and justice— these are all the ancient aspects of a prophetically-inspired life. This is fundamentally *secular*, not based upon any particular religious-mode of expression. This is enlightened-ethics!

**True secular life is not “secular-ism”, an excessive, idolatrous philosophy, a *non-religious religion*, every bit as enslaving as the excessive religions that urged the movement towards secular life in the first place.**

So, do not think that to live a secular life is a betrayal of one’s ancient Hebrew ancestry, it is not. It is an affirmation of it! Do not question whether one can have a relationship with God and be secular. Secular life is the foundational-relationship with *Life, The Living Good* that is the very Nature of Existence.

It is despicable that “secular” and “atheism” have been equated. This is a false identity. Even if one is an atheist, because one, rightly so, rejects stupid views of God which are poisonous and insane, one still has to live and be in Life. One still has to learn, from Life Itself, How Life Works for Good.

Whether one proclaims the belief “atheism” or the belief “theism” has nothing to do with living a good life. The identification of “being a believer” and a Good/God-based life, is a remnant of creedal religions which required you to ascribe to the “party line” or be punished or excommunicated.

Nor, does secular life require us to turn money into a god, and then distort the gift of secular life with a contemporary, capitalist idolatry. It is also despicable that “secular” and “materialistic” have been equated. This is a false identity. It too is a remnant of religions that made “material” the opposite of “spiritual”, a delusional shredding of the fabric of Unity.

Above all, *Universal Judaism* seeks to teach how to have an *experience* of this Unity; we seek to re-invigorate all secular culture with the Hebrew insights that

will turn the secular into a sacred, spiritual vehicle for realizing Unity for all peoples in the world, including those in the State of Israel.

**Spirituality is the foundation of all good religion. But, Unity is the foundation to all good life.**

Unity is also the foundation of good science.

***The leap called Universal Judaism is scientific:***

Science, if it is *good* science, is Truth-based. One seeks to *experience* or *experiment* (from the same Latin root), with Life, and come away with understandings of how the Order we are examining functions. One seeks to glean generalized principles or laws, which permit us to predict How Life Will Work, given certain presenting circumstances or controlled actions, *commandments* of God, so-to-speak.

Science, based upon *discovery*, is no different, in principle, from *revelation*. Knowledge of How Life Works is discerned, or, sometimes, knowledge of How Life Works may suddenly intrude into the conscious mind— creating a dramatic change of perspective, a “consciousness-shift”— with far reaching consequences for the perceiving individual, as well as for all human civilization who will share the benefits of such a leap.

Science, however, to be Hebrew-based, must be *applied* with sacred rigor: not merely for greater advancement in engineering and knowledge-for-its-own-sake, but, more critically, for the enhancement, the evolution, of All Life and Creation (*Relationship Priority #5*). When science does not serve the Goodness of Life it is not from God. But, when science serves the Goodness of Life it is truly sacred, serving the One.

Whether it is “The One”, or “All Nature”, Existence, Reality, Being . . . etc., for *Universal Judaism*, we are talking the exact same Unity-of-Life, described differently.

Science, no differently than any speculative religious theology, relies on the assumption that Truth exists, although Truth is something not provable: essential faith. Science, no differently than any religious speculative theology, relies on the observation of *causality*, that there can be a cause and an effect, a sowing and a reaping. Therefore, the discerning of moral law is a *science*, from the Latin, *sciens, knowledge*.

So, good science is inseparable from good spirituality, secular or religiously-flavored. The only difference between science and spirituality is, currently, the specialized field that they emphasize. This, as we discussed, is still a remnant of the crude modernism of the past. This needs to change and enlarge, and *Universal Judaism* is prepared to lead the way.

### ***The leap called Universal Judaism is spiritual:***

*Universal Judaism's* spirituality emphasizes the secular and scientific first, not the religious. We seek to create a clear-minded, rational Hebrew spiritual approach for this era, which is detached from many of the religious elements in the past, so we can approach Truth— both outward and inward— with an openness that's suited for today's inquisitive world.

By *spiritual*, is meant the observable fact that there is an Order to Life. Just as when one jumps up, gravity will pull you down, unless you neutralize it— built into Life are spiritual principles or laws which are discernable and generalizable and teachable. When one acts in a way that is aligned to the laws of this Order, then, generally-speaking, good is the result. When one acts in a way which is not aligned to the nature of this Order, then, less than good tends to be the result. This less-than-good, some suffering or pain, is itself a good-in-disguise; it is a sign that one is out-of-alignment with How Life Works, so that one can stop, self-reflect, change, and re-align oneself.

Therefore, the essential Hebrew spiritual experience of a Personal Good, or Personal God, which “guides one through the wilderness”, step by step in Life, is none other than our everyday life experience. We can experience a one-to-one relationship between ourselves as individuals and God. Again, the prophetic is secular, or rather, the *spiritual-secular!*

The Hebrew assertion of having a *covenant*— a cooperative relationship between Life and every individual, together also as a group individual— is not a religious claim to be debated incessantly; nor, is it an egotistical badge of honor that elevates the Jew and degrades the non-Jew. The core spiritual experience behind covenant is objectively discernable, provided one begins a spiritual ascent, a *derech Adonai*, a “Path to the Lord”. With the awakening of *covenantal awareness*, Providence, Grace or *hasgacha*, is natural. One will experience personally, the “protection” and “guidance” of a cooperative relationship with Life.

Is this truly a Deity, some “Intelligent Being”, a “Higher Person”? *Universal Judaism*, being secular and scientific, would say this is, at best, a *view*. “Deity” is one possible theory to explain the spiritual experience; certainly, the experience might lead one to this kind of anthropomorphic concept, as in ages past.

However, the spiritual experience of a Personal God, such as “protection” and “guidance”, really arises out of the real-life experience of working-together with the Force of Life, so that It operates within us, as we operate along with it, as well as— if it is *Hebrew* spirituality— our exemplifying its Unifying and Good Nature. This does not imply that some “Old Gray Man” is up in the heaven, looking down on us, knowing everything we're going to do in advance. Such is religious idolatry. Dangerous to an intelligent, contemporary spirituality!

**Because the core experience of covenant can be accessed by**

**all, *Universal Judaism* does not need to defend the so-called “chosen” status of the Hebrews, Israelites or Jews.**

**Our covenantal experience is a *human* experience that is open to all, provided, basic Hebrew “ground rules” for this kind of relationship are learned. *Universal Judaism* offers this kind of spiritual instruction.**

When one has direct spiritual experience, the scriptures begin to make sense. When one reads the scriptures, without spiritual experience, they may sometimes make sense, but often not, because they are shrouded in past cultures and different modes of religious-worship. This is a radical difference between how *Universal Judaism* – differently from other variants of Hebrew thought, Jewish or not– teaches. We teach from spiritual experience, first and foremost, and “footnote” these by recorded scriptural experiences in the past. After all, that’s all scripture is: recorded spiritual experience.

This is why *Universal Judaism* is not concerned with whether the Bible is fact or fiction. Spiritual experience, true to the scientific model, can be repeated, over and over again, by different individuals, at different times, and it will systematically produce the same results. Only by culturing this kind of spiritual experience can we determine, objectively, what true religion might ever be like. This is another reason why *Universal Judaism* puts spirituality first, not religion.

Once a solid spiritual spine is in place, *Universal Judaism* encourages the free, creative, instructive use of any and all past religious modes of expression, provided they retain both rational meaning and emotional import, as part of a healthy human learning experience. Indeed, no human teaching, “scientific” or “spiritual” should ever exclude beauty, texture, smell, and other marvels of human cognition and experience, inseparable from our personal experience as individuals.

***The leap called Universal Judaism is individualistic:***

Past modes of Hebrew thought tended to be more coercive of individuals, because, in an attempt to keep national coherence, in the midst of enormous challenges and tragedies, strictness of law became emphasized.

This coercion was also due to the fact that– prior to the great advances of contemporary life, from more universal acceptance of Hebrew ethics as the standard for civilized life– people were considerably more primitive, needing “basic training”, so-to-speak, where rules and regulations, even if enforced through draconian measures, had their play.

Such violation of individual conscience is at all acceptable these days, when we have a magnificent individual awakening, on a mass scale, reflecting the great force of democracy sweeping our entire world.

No longer can individual differences be swept under the rug, in favor of some mere group norm, and call this “moral” or “religious” or “God’s Will”.

However, *Universal Judaism* also maintains that individual differences, should they become decadent and libertine, in a way that undermines the cohesion and spiritual-power of the group, undermines the Hebrew covenantal-experience. We seek, in harmony with *Value Priority #4, Wisdom* in reconciling the often tricky boundary between individual freedom and responsibility to the group.

Such a Wisdom requires *Truth*, which we’ve already discussed. But, it also requires *care* and *balance*. Both the individual’s sense of self, and that individual’s offering to the whole-of-humankind, are involved in any spiritual self-expression that is *correct: governing together* with others, where the individual invigorates the group, and the group invigorates the individual.

\* \* \*

With this summary of everything we’ve discussed so far, in place, we are now prepared for a very long journey. From the present . . . all the way to the future . . . perhaps, a never-ending, infinite journey.

Ahead of us, is an entirely new generation of children who have been raised with spiritual freedom, with scientific inquiry, with all the greatest advances of secular life. And, who— unapologetically— claim their uniqueness and their individuality.

It is an unprecedented historical event!

Only by embracing these components of today’s “post-post-modern” world, can we keep the great Light of the Hebrew World View shining. It is a light that was kindled many millennia ago. But, change after change, renovation followed by innovation, generation after generation, age after age— Hebrew culture did not stay the same. It always altered. It always changed. It always positively-mutated (63) for dynamic evolutionary change! *Universal Judaism* is, in this sense, traditional.

The *Universal Judaism* perspective is taking this daring leap, because we don’t think one should always be looking backwards for inspiration. We believe in looking forward— ever evolving— heeding the Living Revelation which is Life Itself!

Like Abraham of scripture, we must *go forward* if we wish to find ourselves: *Lech Lecha!* (*Genesis 12:1*) We must go forward if we wish to build any kind of sanctuary suitable for *The Living God* That is Life!



## Chapter Thirteen: The Universal Judaism Synagogue

The *synagogue*— a Greek word that means *gathering place*— is an invention that has served the Hebrews in their current mode as “Jews”— for millennia. It was the model for the church and mosque as well. It was a far-sighted, visionary, Universalist institution that has served many Hebrew-inspired peoples in different forms.

***Universal Judaism is re-opening the synagogue to the world.***

**Life is Holy. Celebrate the synagogue.**

We have already spoken about the Rabbis’ innovation of a “portable tabernacle”, serving as a government-in-exile, a seed to be re-planted in native soil, when Jews could return to their sacred land. But, at this marvelous moment in time, Jews *have* returned to their sacred land. Certainly, this is not a perfected return and severe problems remain. Nonetheless, the need for a government-in-exile is not as pronounced. The emphasis on “religion” in the synagogue is not as necessary!

Moreover, with the modern era, and now beyond it— few contemporary Jews pray (creatively-desire!) fervently for the restoration of Temple animal-cults or revivification of dead bones. Nor, do they pray, expectantly, for an actual Messiah at some future time when “Perfection” (whatever that actually is!) is achieved. This traditional prayer is beautiful, still inspiring, and for those who adhere to it, *Universal Judaism* prays with them, “May it serve for Good”.

However, from our perspective, such traditional prayer is a “prayer-placeholder” for the resolution of a history when, in 72 C.E., the Temple was destroyed, marking the devastating conflict between Roman universalism and Jewish universalism, with the former the seeming conqueror, and the latter the seeming victim. Over the centuries, Imperial Roman became Christian (Hebrew-inspired) Roman, which eventually became Western (Western Church) civilization, which eventually became enlightened, democratic, secular and now essentially Hebrew!

The continuing of this healing is the very purpose of the *Universal Judaism* leap, which we spoke about in the last chapter. For this reason, we no longer feel the need to take this prayer-placeholder so literally, picking up *exactly* where we left off, with the rebuilding of the Temple. Much of the evil has been turned to good. Much repentance has taken place, and truly, many blessings to Jews have taken place through knowledge from the Greco-Roman world, however imperialist they had been in the past.

More needs to be done to continue the healing from the clash of Jewish and Roman civilizations. But, In order to accomplish this, we need to communicate the *Universal Judaism* leap to all. This requires us to have some kind of home

base. And here, the long-tested institution of the synagogue remains an inspired gift for us in the present.

***Universal Judaism seeks the reinvention of the synagogue for our place in history.***

A detailed outline of the *Universal Judaism* synagogue, and its unique structures and programs, is beyond the scope of this little primer, but, some of its major highlights are worth outlining:

1. ***Anyone who is interested or inspired by the Hebrew Spirit can belong to a Universal Jewish synagogue or congregation.***

It makes no difference whether you are “Jewish” or “Christian” or “atheist” or “humanist”. You are completely welcome as a full-participant in any *Universal Judaism* community.

2. ***There are no required birth-rituals, such as circumcision.***

*Universal Judaism* does not require circumcision or any other particular birth-ritual to identify oneself with the *Universal Judaism* community and synagogue. In keeping with the *individual* aspect of our four-point leap, these rituals are completely free-willed and voluntary. Completely!

This however, does not deny the *value* of such gifts from the past, which we shall discuss later. Circumcision remains important for all thoughtful people who are committed to living its meaning and purpose, and who consent to it with the full accord of their (parents’ or person’s) heart, mind and will.

Without this accord, circumcision is degraded from a sacred *ot*, Hebrew for *sign*, to a somewhat arbitrary sentimentality— especially in an era when circumcision has become routine in hospitals and many “naturalist” Jews, abhorrent of ritual scaring, have eschewed it.

3. ***Universal Judaism synagogues strive to become the evolutionary changes needed today for bringing about peace, justice, and the Hebrew ideals of Universal History.***

Our synagogue is a *gathering place*, a *con-gregation*, for the purpose of focusing and intensifying our leap, so we can: Re-ignite— (as fast as humanly possible) – the Hebrew Spirit for Everyone in the Today’s World.

For this reason, *Universal Judaism* takes a different, more universal approach to Hebrew education, with an eye for re-inventing the future, not just for remembering, revering or indoctrinating the past.

Whether a natural science or whether a spiritual science, all Good Knowledge

propels human history forward. *Universal Judaism* seeks a “single knowledge” approach to its education, built upon our Truth-based Hebrew Spirit. This one-knowledge approach allows people and children to live in One World not two, “Jewish” or “Diasporic”. This helps deepen the experience of Unity or the One God.

- 4. *Universal Judaism synagogues do not schedule regular worship services, unless there are those who may desire it. Instead of emphasizing worship, we emphasize exciting and dynamic education.***

The *Universal Judaism* synagogue is first and foremost a *beit midrash*, a house of study and learning. For those who desire regular worship service, including weekly Shabbat ritualized-prayer services, these will be arranged or not arranged, depending upon need. But, there is no standard ritual-prayer-schedule ever.

While *Universal Judaism* is totally open to any of the gifts of the past, traditional or contemporary, which may still release the sweet fragrance of their knowledge, these are often not required, nor, do they constitute the formal structure of synagogue activities.

- 5. *Universal Judaism synagogues seek to deliver, minimally, a bilingual education, English and Hebrew, in keeping with the increasingly dominant culture of today’s Jewish People, which is secular Israeli.***

For the average person, *Universal Judaism* will not emphasize biblical Hebrew, nor does it emphasize Hebrew for the sake of reading liturgy and traditional prayer. It emphasizes creating contemporary English-Hebrew Citizens of the World.

Without developing an intuitive sense of these languages, so that any meaning can be naturally-understood, but, more importantly, *felt deeply*– biblical sources cannot penetrate deeply into the psyche of the community, nor can group-prayer be fully shared.

Instinctual use of *both* universal languages– the *Universal* language of Hebrew (at the very root of Western, now World, spirituality and meaning, the indigenous vernacular of Israel)– and the *Universal language* of English (the foundation of the world global secular culture)– is essential for *Universal Judaism* to communicate our world purpose and accomplish our world task.(64)

All children, from the earliest of earliest ages, will receive, minimally, a dual-language education. However, there is no pressure. No matter what nation they come from, their dominant language will always be the dominant doorway to education.

**6. *Universal Judaism* synagogues have a more departmental or university structure.**

As with a secondary school, college or university, each synagogue is “discipline structured”, sometimes, depending on the size of the synagogue, with actual separate departments for teaching the Hebrew World View through various subjects or disciplines.

Synagogue education will routinely begin with a cogent Truth-based, Hebrew-based spiritual-philosophy which maintains, always, the secular, scientific, spiritual and individualistic core of *Universal Judaism*. Only with a solid spiritual philosophy, applied practically to Life– How Life Works for Good– can scripture, psychology, sociology, politics, make any coherent sense. Here, the great wealth of rabbinic literature, properly framed for the *Universal Judaism* perspective, is a fountain of value.

After studying spiritual philosophy, a core, prophetic outline of World History from a Hebrew Spirit perspective, will be emphasized. History will be studied not just to memorize dates and events, but to glean the spiritual sowing and reaping– the *God-meaning*– that was the cause of such these dates and events. Thus history becomes spiritually alive and personally easy to relate to.

*Universal Judaism* will teach the Hebrew Spirit through civics and economics– putting Life first, and money and power last. That other so-called “universal world views” did not maintain this *Value Priority* is a betrayal of the Hebrew covenant, and it has infected our people.

Life sciences are taught in relationship to the Unity-principle, which is foundational for an integrated understanding of any experience of Goodness or God. Similarly, archeology, music, art, psychology, health and recreation, are structured to reveal the Unity of Life, which is the foundation of the Hebrew Spirit.

*Universal Judaism* synagogues continue, for those interested, the great legacy of “pouring over the books” with the study of law. However, our perspective is not just the fathoming of Jewish law for our own communities. We seek to improve general secular law too, infusing it with valued Hebrew insights which had been hitherto ignored. The time has come for Jews live in One World.

*Universal Judaism* also seeks to encourage the development of a genuine Hebrew law, *mishpat ivri*, for use in Israel and for the inspiration of all nations. Unfortunately, secular government in Israel is derived more from British and Ottoman legal systems, and is often truncated from the orthodox religious law. *Universal Judaism* education seeks to heal this dangerous rift in Israel, and create a more coherent population, where legal perspectives exist, but do not divide.

However, *Universal Judaism* also sees the value of all cultures as teachers. Just

as traditional Judaism had borrowed Greek legal systems for certain “Jewish” legal devices, *Universal Judaism* is ever open, humbly, to receiving knowledge from all sources, provided it is consonant with our general principles. This is a valued way of improving the Hebrew Spirit, which has always— in service to The One— drawn upon the best and the brightest knowledge of the peoples around them. Truly, All Good Knowledge is of God!

**7. *The Universal Judaism synagogue is deliciously entertaining and creative.***

As long as the spine of intellectual integrity is in place, as long as core Life-Centered, Goodness-Centered, Truth-based, spiritual theology is in place, *Universal Judaism* believes in permitting unabashed creative self-expression, allowing it to form, organically, and find its correct and joyful place as part of the texture and fabric of community life.

It is astonishing the number of Jewish composers, Jewish artists, Jewish writers, Jewish poets, that are out there. Because *Universal Judaism* is not worship-based, our creativity transcends the usual “minor key” variety of creative forms. Entertainment is part of the great joy of a *Universal Judaism* synagogue, which sees itself as a hub to facilitate new, developing Jewish talent.

However, being *universal*, *Universal Judaism* welcomes all talent and creative contributions from all congregants, whether born Jewish or not, provided that all these creative expressions are consonant with the core Hebrew Spirit of *Universal Judaism*. Join us. Be joyful!

Particular religious expressions of *Universal Judaism*, such as the extreme-orthodox Jewish, Christian or Muslim, are also welcome in *Universal Judaism* synagogues. However, these are to be expressed and developed first within synagogue-based special-interest-groups. It is important that these creativities will not spark as yet unhealed fears of forced-conversion or excessive religious authority, a sad artifact of past history, which is not consonant with *Universal Judaism*. Moreover, the integration of these with *Universal Judaism*, requires time; it is not an easy leap for many.

**9. *Children, children, children. Universal Judaism is for children, too.***

*Universal Judaism* believes it is impossible to educate children without educating parents and families. So, *Universal Judaism synagogues* are family-education places. Indeed, what is a synagogue if not an extended family? *Universal Judaism* extends our family, openly, to the entire world, Jew or non-Jew, without apologies.

The great advantage of *Universal Judaism* education is that because it is secular and scientific, we can teach *rationally* through *principles*. This makes a Hebrew-based education much easier to learn than just accepting teachings based upon

“tradition” or “because that’s what the Rabbis said”. It allows children’s minds to grasp the concepts, and apply them to their own life in a contemporary way, similar to how they learn in secular schools.

*Principle-based* education is also very flexible, and can be made extremely interesting, creative and yes, fun! Fun! Fun is also Good! God!

Children will learn the principles of *Universal Judaism* in a way that will not give them *two* identities— one secular and one religious. They will be given a single spiritual-secular education consonant with the Living Values that are part of Hebrew life, past and present. The practical applicability of these great teachings will be emphasized.

As children grow, more “tissues and teguments” of knowledge will be added, and the education will be thickened-up. But, because the spine of *Universal Judaism* is principle based, Hebrew *self-education* becomes rapidly accelerated. Knowledge received from exposure to the general environment and media is easily structured through Truth-based *Universal Judaism* “categories of thought”. So, a personal body of knowledge— quite extensive— can accumulate rapidly.

Moreover, the principles of *Universal Judaism* are the same, whether for the child of 5 or the elder of 90. All that needs to be done is change the language, less or more sophisticated, but the essential knowledge is communicated identically. This is another great advantage of principle-based, *Universal Judaism* techniques. Everyone can learn it, his or her own way! Whole families too!

#### **10. *Universal Judaism* synagogue is a place for *real spiritual development* for everyone.**

The spiritual development of the human animal— both natural and Super-natural aspects— and the integration of these to create a living, good-filled, Person of God, who can reach out— not only to our congregants, but also outwardly to all Hebrew-inspired peoples in the entire world— is the overarching purpose to all the activities in a *Universal Judaism* synagogue.

All ancient and contemporary tools for healthy, psychological, spiritual and physical development are all readily adapted, according to *Universal Judaism* principles, serving as methodologies and programs in the synagogue. A *Universal Judaism* synagogue is a dynamic place for contemporary, conscious, spiritual growth, consonant with Hebrew-based principles. *Our goal is to create good, living souls!*

Thus, the *essence* of the Hebrew World View, taught as it has been for the past 4000 years, remains true-to-itself. The programmed, systematic, teaching of the Hebrew Spirit, so all may come to know Good, and the breeding this Good within our children and families, continues its unbroken lineage through *Universal Judaism*.

\* \* \*

There are many, many other aspects of synagogue life that are specific for *Universal Judaism*, far too many, obviously, to put in this demure primer.

What is critical to emphasize, however, is the spiritual *urgency* of a continually-flourishing synagogue life. Only within a *conscious community*, where people can practice, in peace and mutual-understanding, the spiritual insights and teachings of *Universal Judaism*, can these gifts be anchored, mentally, emotionally and physically. Only if given the full assent of heart, mind and will– in keeping with the “spiritual methodology” of the *V’ahavtah*– can these teachings become part of the living fabric of everyday life, and the organic fabric of our *bio-historical* civilization.

The *Universal Judaism* synagogue is a little island, truly, in a sea of unkempt *secular-ism* and excessive *religion-ism*. We are a welcomed respite from such tomfoolery. We are an open, creatively-awake and spiritually vibrant place.

It is our greatest hope that the *Universal Judaism* synagogue will– like a pebble hitting the water– radiate wave after wave after wave of positive benefit, not just for the synagogue but for the surrounding communities, nations, and world.

**Life is Holy. Celebrate *in* the synagogue.**

Yes, celebration! Above all, that’s what *Universal Judaism* synagogues are about.

Celebrating Life every day! Celebrating Learning! Celebrating Joyfully!

Do you want to live anyway else?

## Chapter Fourteen:

### Gifts of Our Past

#### “But what about . . . this?” “But what about . . . that?”

“But what about?”— is the single biggest question that *Universal Judaism* is asked by others from Jewish denominations. After all, the fabric of Jewish life has been so extensive, so elaborate, so detailed over the centuries, that it’s not easy to understand “what is eliminated” and “what is kept” and “Why”: “But what about *kosher*?” But what about *Shabbat*?” But what about \_\_\_\_\_? Fill in your blank.

So, let’s handle a few of these, remembering that *Universal Judaism* is 1) secular 2) scientific 3) spiritual and 4) individualistic; these are the four basic components to *Universal Judaism*’s Hebrew Spirit. Everything below reflects these:

#### But what about circumcision?

As we’ve already discussed, circumcision is not mandatory in order belong to a *Universal Judaism* congregation. It is a marvelous ancient custom, with deep significance, which we do not deny. However, in light of #4 above, we include individuality and individual choice, too. After all, even Abraham— fact or fiction— had to *choose* to *agree* to circumcision when God, in the Bible, commanded him. If such an voluntary assent is required for God, shouldn’t it be required by clergy?

Circumcision, when employed, remains valuable. From our #2, scientific perspective, circumcision reduces, every so slightly, the sensitivity of the penis. This, in ancient times, facilitated a healthy separation between the two aspects of the human being— *mind/male* and *body/female* or *super-natural* and *natural*, both gender and sexual “forces”.

In *Genesis*, the male tends to be identified with the power of “mind” acting upon nature, necessary for building civilization on earth. You could say the male tendency is to specify *shamayim*, or *sky/heavens*. The female tends, on the other hand, to specify *ahretz*, *land* or *earth*. Ever so delicately heightening the distinction between these different forces— focusing and concentrating them, in order to propel an evolving human history— is fundamentally what circumcision is all about. Abraham and Sarah, fact or fiction, were biblical paradigms for this.

Although, the linkage of *Universal Historical* to circumcision is unique to the Hebrew, nonetheless there are hundreds of tribal peoples in the world that circumcise, always in some kind of relationship to male-bonding and the role of men to frame society. Everywhere circumcision exists, we find this “technology”



used to heighten the male gift, permitting it to differentiate from the more primary female gift upon which it is founded— as sons must separate from mothers, yet care for them.

Indeed, biologically, the male of the species is a specification built up upon the female. The female tends to be the primary sex of the fetus, and testosterone “just” neutralizes the estrogen, facilitating maleness. Just as civilization is built upon the earth, male is built up upon the female. Hormonally, the male tends to be a neutralization of the more female, so that male Circadian rhythms are not as pronounced as female. This produces a gift of male freedom— favoring Supernatural over natural, mind over body, sky over earth. From the Hebrew Spirit perspective, this gift is there to serve women, children, society first and foremost. Extending this to the entire world, is what generates our uniquely-original *Universal Historical* vision.

When circumcision is not in proper *bio-spiritual alignment*— mind, heart, and will— it is no longer a spiritually-active *ot* or *sign*. It becomes a mere symbol, quite arbitrary, culturally. However it is, nonetheless, actual surgery, an actual alteration of the *psyche* and *soma*, and does, always, have some kind of unconscious spiritual effect, which *Universal Judaism*, because of #1 above, must honor. But, we maintain that this effect alone— especially in today’s overly tumultuous, consciously-cerebral world— is not significant enough to produce the *consciousness* that circumcision installs in the Hebrew people. Indeed, centuries ago, the prophets rail against what eventually degenerated into meaningless.(65)

This is why *Universal Judaism* chooses to emphasize building the *consciousness behind* circumcision, not just the act itself. This entails building the correct relationship patterns of male-bonding, female-bonding, and inter-sexual bonding between men and women in families and society. When this consciousness is taught, and becomes relationally-lived, then the *power* behind circumcision is “downloaded”. Then, truly, circumcision can become a meaningful contemporary choice or not.

Nonetheless, as in the biblical story, the knowledge behind circumcision must be perpetually taught, or it will get lost. Surgery or not, one can become *keret*, *cut off* from the Hebrew purpose-as-universal history, without some form of enduring circumcision-consciousness.(66)

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate the Consciousness of Circumcision**

Admittedly, this is a cursory look at the dynamics of circumcision, and there is more to discuss. Nonetheless, for all the above reasons, *Universal Judaism* does not consider *circumcision per se* to be the *sine qua non*— *the sign above all*— or *prime identifier* of a Hebrew person. Perhaps once it was adequate. Today it is not!

Besides, circumcision is significantly “sex-biased”, for obvious anatomical

reasons. These days, when women are a more active, super-natural force in history— actively advancing civilization— circumcision, while valuable, cannot be considered adequate as in ages past, when women, more Circadian-tied to earth and childbirth, lacked the freedom to be a positive historical force.

So, these days, circumcision-consciousness for women must be anchored too, and a leap must be made. For those who desire some kind of ritual, *Universal Judaism* has elaborated certain alternatives to surgical circumcision, not just for the female, but also for the male or parents, who choose not to circumcise, though this is beyond the scope here.

Some may consider this radical. Nonetheless, such an alternative had already been hinted at over a thousand years ago, though it is often not remembered.

### **But what about the Sabbath?**

There is a debate in the *Talmud* regarding whether or not circumcision is the *sine qua non* of Judaism. Some considered it such. Others considered the *sine qua non* of Judaism to be *Shabbat*, the *Sabbath*. After all, the Sabbath, not circumcision, is mentioned in the so-called *Ten Commandments*, the *Eser Dibrot*, *Ten Words*, the *Decalogue*!

*Universal Judaism* emphasizes not circumcision but the Sabbath, for today's historically-active women, and also for those historically-active men who do not wish the ancient surgery. We offer a *Sabbath consecration to history* as our comprehensive alternative to mere surgical-circumcision alone. This takes place on the first Sabbath of every month in the *Universal Judaism* synagogue, for all babies, male and female, who are not undergoing the traditional 8<sup>th</sup> day circumcision.

From a #2, scientific perspective, the Sabbath is essentially a quarter cycle the monthly (moon-thly) cycle; the Mesopotamian *shappatu* was originally a moon-goddess devotional.(67)

The Sabbath marks a critical *Circadian rhythm* that is essential to All Life and Creation (*Relationship Priority #5*). It is truly more “female” in its cultural-tendency, because, as is well known to all, the lunar cycle controls menstruation and is pronounced in the female of the species, whereas it only exists as a microscopically-small impulse in the male.

The Sabbath therefore anchors *Universal Judaism's* principle that nature on earth (female tendency) must be deeply respected, and that civilization, built upon that (male tendency) should align itself to nature and not destroy or violate it. The Sabbath anchors what we would call today a balance or “marriage” of male and female forces in nature, indeed, a critical *ecological issue*.(68)

Moreover, since our bodies arise from the planet, this is a critical *health issue* too. Can anyone go without regular periods of regular body rest? Can anyone function in any way that produces Good for themselves and the world, without resting their weary minds? It is the glory of the Hebrew civilization that even so-called “dumb animals” and slaves were *required* to rest on the Sabbath, along with the owners and masters. They were “commanded by God” i.e. that’s how the creatures were designed— to rest! No civilization’s laws, such as the ancient Egyptian, could be permitted to abrogate our God-given need for rest.(69)That’s because the Hebrew civilization put the Creator first— *The Living God*— and human ego-constructions second.

This is also a marked deviation between Jewish universalism and Roman universalism. In this time of ecological devastation, the Sabbath remains a Hebrew defiance of foreign conquest and alien, destructive, teachings. Disrespect for planetary rhythms has caused the evil decimation of our planet because of industrial excess. Romans were notorious for rape, pillage, and razing whole peoples and tracts of nature to the ground with flames. This is not Hebrew. This is not “Old Testament”.

The 7<sup>th</sup> day “Sabbath” existed, in some form, amongst many Mesopotamian tribes. These were *taboo days*, when, if one worked, nothing was expected to be produced from the activity. The traditional Jewish teaching turns this into a positive: a rest day for God, and therefore— (*Made in the Image and Likeness*)— us.(70)

The Sabbath marks a *lull* or *ebb* in the Circadian rhythms or Life-forces controlled by the moon. So, of course, if one were purposing this Life-Force for some activity or enterprise, and “the force was with you”, one would expect greater results. But, if “the force was not with you”, because it was not as naturally present, one would expect less or no results, hence, a *taboo* day.

However, true to the Hebrew monotheistic viewpoint, these Life-forces are not identified with the moon as a nature deity. The moon is actually “de-deified”, demoted to a mere “lesser light”. Instead, it, as well as the sun, are considered “just” creations of The One Singular *Life-Force*, God’s Spirit or Ruach, in Hebrew.(*Genesis 1:16*) So, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, this lull in nature became associated with God and considered *holy*. As God-in-nature lulled or rested, so should we.

Now, the Super-natural was emphasized beyond the mere natural. Civilization, history, which tended to be more male, was now to be built up upon nature, which tended to be more feminine.

Thus, the two meanings: a positive rest day, because it represented a lull in God/nature’s rhythm upon the earth, and the primitive “bad luck” day, are essentially the same phenomenon. It is to the great glory of Hebrew civilization that we could interpret this phenomena *positively!* As a positive, evolutionary, thrust of human civilization, more free from naturalist superstition!

So, you could say that the Sabbath marks the entire philosophy of Hebrew thought in a nutshell: *Sanctify Creation on earth. Celebrate creation by creating a Good Life, now and in the future, in the name of the Creator.*

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate the Sabbath.**

Because *Universal Judaism* does not emphasize traditional worship-cycles in the synagogue, we celebrate the Sabbath differently. How?

We go back to the basics, before excessive religion often turned the Sabbath into *extra* work for overly-domesticated women; it was hardly resting. We go back to the basics, before excessive religion required hard-working men— on their day off— to again, suit up, show up and perform. This kind of Sabbath was delightful for some, but became a burden for others, especially #1, secular people.

***Universal Judaism* goes back to Sabbath basics: rest, play, fun and joyful learning.**

***Universal Judaism* maintains the spirit of the traditional Sabbath: time with the family, spiritual self-reflection, joyful celebration of Life (i.e. Devotion to God) after a week of hard work.**

In order to achieve this, *Universal Judaism* is very creative. For example, many *Universal Judaism* participants go out to dinner on *Shabbat Friday* night, rather than cook at home. Some have instituted “Take out Shabbats”, and bring their favorite foods into the house. Instead of more kitchen work for working Moms and gender-role-sharing Dads, we recommend Sabbath dinners out, not in!

*Mikveh*— ritual baths— have always been traditionally preparatory for the Sabbath. *Universal Judaism* synagogues often have allied health-clubs, with sauna and steam, and their own ritual baths (which can be made religiously to spec, if desired), for the purpose of cleaning way the debris and the stress of the week.

Unlike traditional Sabbaths— which mandated heavier, celebratory meat meals, which “stick with you” during the upcoming week, especially joyful, since meat was not affordable everyday— *Universal Judaism* emphasizes eating *opulently healthy*. This is in greater keeping with the spirit of the Sabbath, restorative to the health of the person after a hard work week, indeed, much more of a taste of the *Garden of Eden*, which the Sabbath was supposed to traditionally reflect.

And needless to say, ideally, the Sabbath should be celebrated, communally, in the synagogue, too. If the *Universal Judaism* synagogue isn’t interesting, and isn’t fun, so it can actually compete with “*Let’s go to the movies*”, then it is a secular *Shabbat* failure! One should never need to pull teeth to fill pews.

*Shabbat Friday* is all about *oneg*, or pleasure, a great contemporary tradition that needs to continue and evolve. In *Universal Judaism*, it is an evening of shared

entertainment.

*Shabbat Friday* follows the *salon* model of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Poets, musicians, scientific discussions— delightful, soul-nourishing, entertainment and pleasure is the norm. It can take place within any established synagogue, or, as was the *salon* model, take place in any person's home, as a *chavurah*, or *fellowship*.

For those children who may not be able to partake of the salon, it is often “movie night”, with a *Universal Judaism* theme, including presentation and discussion.

*Shabbat Saturday*, for those who are interested, as we've already discussed, there is continuous opportunity to study many of the different disciplines that *Universal Judaism*, in its more departmental structure, teaches.

In addition, there are special counseling sessions that take place *Shabbat Saturday*, where the life lessons that were sown and reaped during the week of work— including those problems that arose— have an opportunity to be discussed. During these times, the individual has an opportunity to spiritually advance and improve how they approach life— sowing and reaping more success in the week to come— so, they can increase their experience of Good or God.

There is obviously much more that should be described, but, these are the essentials.

The Sabbath is not superstition or religious sentimentality. It is fundamentally a #1 secular, #2 scientific, #3 spiritual and #4 individual sanctification-of-Life. It is necessary, almost as necessary for a good life as good food. It is certainly, especially today, far more necessary than circumcision, but, it can never fully replace it.

### **But what about Kosher?**

Can I have a cheeseburger in *Universal Judaism*? Of course!

There is a tremendous confusion around kosher, because there are really “two koshers.” One kosher was simply *kasher* in the Bible. It was *what was fitting* for a human being— a *Hebrew* human being— to eat. The other was a rabbinic elaboration built upon the Bible, but differing considerably, and more complicated.

Biblical *kashrut* was basically very simple; just remember the letter “d”: All the animals that were to be avoided were those that, in some fashion, came in greater contact with *dirt*, *decay* or *dung*. Hence, no animals or insects that burrow, no carrion, no seafood (except certain fish with gut-able alimentary canals, or you'd eat feces, a shrimp's “vein”.) There should also be no *disease*

and no *destruction* of any animal: No animals with infections or even questionable blemishes. No ripping off the arm of a live animal– *terefah*, meaning *tearing*– for a snack. (*Leviticus 11*)

There should be no *desecration* of animals: If you are going to take an egg from a nest to eat, one should shoo away the mother bird first. Do you have a right to consume the entire species? Should you consume the potential for new Life, which you would be doing if you ate the mother bird and her potential babies too? This is a *desecration*, a *de-sacredness*, and *denial of the Divine-in-life*.

One should never– Goodness forbid– remove a newborn kid from its mother, and when she is in her greatest love, her greatest impulse to suckle her child, milk her artificially by hand, then, boil the milk in a cauldron to stew the kid for a meal, while the lactating mother is in psychic agony as her kid cries out in pain. This is the biblical *seething the kid* [often translated, *calf*] in *its mother's milk*. (*Deuteronomy 14:21*) There is no greater barbarism than destroying the mother-child relationship, upon which all natural morality (Hebrew morality) is based.

One should also not eat of the living blood of an animal, that corpuscular blood which stays alive even after the so-called animal is dead. *The Blood is the Life*, the Bible says. (*Leviticus 17*) Life is God; humans must acknowledge this, never encouraging blood-thirstiness, as the pre-Israelite savages demonstrated.

Upon this stunningly, simple biblical *kasher* the Rabbis created a more elaborate *system of kosher* or *kashrut*. It anchored as “eating prayers”, many, many meanings and moral principles, so many, it often became confusing. For example, in an attempt to give meaning to not *seething a kid in its mother's milk*, they created a custom of strict separation between milk and meat, hence, no cheeseburger. Any flesh which was “meat like”, like chicken, could not be mixed with milk. So, today, it is not unusual to find what as been laughingly called “Chicken Parmigiana Orthodox”, because they find mixing cheese and chicken to be silly and meaningless.

The rest is the complicated-creative history of *kasher*! Love it, because it has great knowledge imbedded into it. Or, leave it, because it is simply not meaningful to you. *Universal Judaism* gives you that choice. But, one cannot avoid, ever, some form of *kasher* and claim to be human, let alone Hebrew.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate Intelligent Kashrut.**

*Universal Judaism* holds that the “placeholder in consciousness” of not putting cheese on a hamburger, is certainly a beautiful, instructional custom; we would never deny it, nor disparage it, as some kind of ignorant traditionalism, as many liberal variants of Judaism did in their modern haughtiness.

But, the critical point is not the cheese on the hamburger:

**IF . . . IF . . .** a cow is raised kindly, lovingly, and slaughtered with awareness for it being a creature of God, a living being who experiences fear and pain– if the cow is milked, carefully and lovingly, and not forced against its nature to produce more than is necessary perhaps through injections– if the calf is not raised like veal-calves, penned up in darkness, roped in, so it becomes deliciously anemic, for a nice white meat– if the residual blood from the meat has been properly cooked, to avoid disease, and not encourage literal savage blood-thirstiness, a problem back in the ancient world which could still surface– **THEN . . . THEN . . . what’s so terrible about a cheeseburger?**

**Life is Holy. Celebrate (certain) cheeseburgers. With (certain) milk shakes.**

The principles of *kasher* are part of the fabric of *Universal Judaism*, no less than they are– and *should be, if they are not*– part of the fabric of all Hebrew-based religions and peoples in some form or another.(71)

*Kasher* is inseparable from what we would call today *cruelty-free*. *Kasher* is inseparable from what we would today call *ecological*. *Kasher* is not a religious institution; it is knowledge extracted from observations about How Life Works for Good. It is therefore, essentially *secular*. It became seen as “religious”, because it was proclaimed in the Name of The Creator, Whose Order (or commandments) are “design-specifications” of life on earth. Obeying these boundaries is essential, If we wish to keep our health and preserve our world. But, this is not fundamentally religious, though it is essential for any health (and sane) religion.

*Kasher* is contemporary knowledge that has taken the rest of the non-Hebrew world 2000 years to catch up to. Roman universalism allowed one to eat anything one wanted in the world. Jewish universalism did not: Cesar was not our king. The Lord was!

However, here’s where authentic *kasher* did get a bit messed up:

The problem with *kasher* came when the Rabbis, inventing “Judaism”, began to see the obeying of their *kashrut* system as a covenantal requirement for *salvation* in the *olam ha ba*, *the world to come*, “heaven” so-to-speak.

Once salvation was seen as “other worldly”, *kashrut* became a heavenly virtue. It became then, truly, “religious” in an excessive and problematic sense. In addition, *kashrut* was actively built up and made artificially more stringent, as a way of building a fence, if not a wall, that kept Jews safer from unkempt assimilation.

Soon, contrary religious views which criticized these rabbinic excesses arose. However, these views were often excessive in the opposite direction, permitting the eating of anything at all in existence, declaring these kosher laws not at all

valid anymore.(72) How can they not be valid, at least somewhat, when they have their foundation in God's Design for nature on earth?

These days, those born-Jews who eat shrimp and lobster have not discovered any great detriment or punishment to their life and livelihood by breaking these rabbinic ordinances. God blesses them still. God doesn't seem to curse them. So kosher doesn't *seem* to be very spiritually valid or meaningful to their lives. It does not *seem* to sow and reap any problems.

However, let us think a little deeper here, if not somewhat ironically:

One walks into a doctor's office. The doctor examines you, and it turns out you have hyperlipidemia, hypercholesterolemia, high blood pressure. The first thing the doctor tells you is to avoid meat with red blood, avoid pork, and shellfish.

Why is the up-to-date prescription ancient *kashut*? Why? Because it is clearly *salvific* – healing and healthy– for a good earthly life. It is spirito-natural. It is How Life Works for Good.

Physical health *is* salvation on earth! (Not in heaven!) Thus, there is no conflict between the so-called “rational” viewpoint, as espoused by Maimonides, that *kashrut* was mostly about health, and the traditional “Jewish” viewpoint that it's simply a mysterious “commandment” *mitzvoth*, ordered by God to religiously-distinguish us. These views are one and the same according to *Universal Judaism's* perspective. *Kashut* is, and was always, *for Good!* It facilitates an experience of God or Good on earth. It certainly distinguished us from savages who would eat dirt, decay, dung, disease . . .

Now today, we are not living in Bible nor rabbinic times. There are many different kinds of hygienic tools which allow a far greater plasticity to the human appetite than in the mere naturalist setting of the ancient world. So, for *Universal Judaism* “kosher” is not a rigid, cemented, law imprisoning us, nor God-forbid, an obsessive-compulsive disorder that prevents us from having healthy minds and bodies.

Not a few traditionalists who eat “strictly kosher”, have 60 extra pounds hanging around their waists, seborrheic dermatitis and esophageal reflux disease, all quite common, especially in Ashkenazy stock. Not a few secularists, who eat garbage fast foods and ill-raised animals, are getting, increasingly, auto-immune diseases which are causing their bodies to break down, including increases in cancer, along with diabetes and plunging testosterone levels– “patriarchy in reverse”.

Both need to know about living *kasher!*

Yes, there is *kasher* in *Universal Judaism*. It is not just about eating. It is about human beings living in harmony with nature, while, at the same time, expressing



their Super-natural appetites, with respect, for *All Life and Creation (Relationship Priority #5)*.

*Kasher* in *Universal Judaism* is about the entire transformation of the world of the food industry, still contaminated with Romanism and its vile desecration of Life, however contemporary or “Western”.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate Intelligent *kasher*.**

Fortunately, in today’s era, many non-Jews have come to see this, and are intuitively discovering the laws of *kashrut* that are built-into Life, which the *Torah* chronicled centuries ago. Many people, Jews and non-Jews, have joined the fight to eat healthier, more organic, less chemically-contaminated foods.

The principle of *Kashut* need not separate Hebrews from the world, but unite us, together, with the entire world. We all have matured!

### **But, what about the *Bar Mitzvah*?**

First, let me say that *Universal Judaism* does not have “bar” mitzvahs or “bat” mitzvahs. We have the *Bar Mitzvah*, a lovely Aramaic term, we apply equally to both.

The *Bar Mitzvah* in *Universal Judaism* is, again, not a religious event. It is a secular, scientific, spiritual and individual-exalting event, and, for these reasons, it remains critically important.

From *Universal Judaism*’s spiritual perspective, an “adult” is an *individual*, i.e. having a direct relationship with Life– “The Creator”, “God”, “Existence”, “Reality”, “The All”. Obviously, a fetus does not have such a direct relationship, because it is mediated through the mother. Obviously also, an eight year old does not, because the child is cared for, virtually completely, by the parents, “under their thumb”, so-to-speak.

There is both a spiritual and a physical change that takes place in adulthood; it is called *adolescence* or *puberty*. It coincides with the ability to actually *become* a father and mother, whereas before, one was cared for by them.

Adulthood requires 1) learning about one’s “new” sexually-maturing body 2) learning about the laws of society, and taking responsibility for one’s actions as an individual. In a *Universal Judaism* synagogue, the *Bar Mitzvah* concentrates on these.

First, within the synagogue, there is intelligent, professional, sexual education for boys and girls. These are done in separate classes, boys with boys, and girls

with girls, and then, after proper preparation, the classes are merged. Such a sexual education emphasizes reproductive marriage and family— without apologies to “political correctness”— because the purpose of a Hebrew life is to raise up a People of God, and this requires family and reproduction, especially healthy heterosexual union.

However, for this era, and in harmony with our respect for individual differences and choices, sex education also includes *Universal Judaism’s* teachings on gender variations, including LGBTQ people, who, aside from their less traditional gender, are excellent, moral, community-minded, caring people. One need not reproduce to be congregants in a *Universal Judaism* synagogue. For sexual minorities— even early self-identified youth— specialized sexual education, from a *Universal Judaism* perspective, is a *Bar Mitzvah* requirement.

Straight, bi or gay, one is free to choose to reproduce or not, provided being a living part of a growing, reproducing, expanding, and evolving community is an active, living, presence in one’s life(73) Indeed, there are tasks that non-parents can help with that can be of tremendous help to a *Universal Judaism* community. Non-reproductive people in *Universal Judaism* are considered a blessing!

Second, within the synagogue, there is also intelligent, professional, family education. It is absolutely critical that parents and children renegotiate their roles when a child— male or female— reaches the “age of majority”. A child should not have to rebel to assert his/her adult freedom, tearing away from parents to “be themselves”. Nor should parents consider such a rebellion a “psychological problem”, when it is often normal individuation, but in excess— balancing excessive control on the part of overly-fearful parents.

*Universal Judaism* helps families, in advance of the *Bar Mitzvah*, reconstruct their relationships so the usual “teenage problems” are prevented before they arise.

Now, unfortunately, because Jews are still living in the *Diaspora*, we are somewhat infected with alien laws, which are not fully Hebrew as yet. The “age of majority” is defined not by the Creator’s criterion— reproductive activity— but by driving licenses, drinking ages, voting ages, and other such societal (not Creational) criteria.

*Universal Judaism* works with families to make sure, there is no confusion between the two systems of thought, until, ultimately an evolved Hebrew Way-of-Life becomes normative within all good and civilized countries.

Lastly, of course, *Universal Judaism* requires the *Bar Mitzvah* to know the laws of the land, not just mindlessly *perform* their ancient Hebrew law by chanting the *Torah!* Any new adult must be able to stand strong as an actual citizen, on his/her own, with minimal support from the parents. They must be knowledgeable about civics and the laws of their society, But, they must never ignorantly succumb to these laws in a way that violates core Life-Centered *Universal*

*Judaism* principles, or, they are not Hebrew adults, but *de facto*, idolators. They must bear witness to the Truth of *Universal Judaism*, within the secular society, continuing the ancient mission of being a *Light unto the Nations*.

In this sense, *Universal Judaism* retains the traditional meaning of the *Bar Mitzvah*; we simply transform the mere sentimental, ceremonial into a true, real, valuable and powerful *ritual of passage*– the emergence of true covenant, for a new emerging adult.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate the Bar Mitzvah.**

Indeed, the former child is now *Bar Onshin*, a *child of punishment*, as the predecessor of the *Bar Mitzvah* was called. The child is now responsible for his/her own actions, and “legally culpable”, without hiding behind his parents. This state may not be *de jure* within any alien Diasporic community, but, within the *Universal Judaism* community such new adulthood is *de facto* law– according to *Universal Judaism* teachings– even at the so-called early age of thirteen.

In this sense the *Universal Judaism Bar Mitzvah* is very traditional: *May God take the responsibility for this child from me*, as the traditional parental prayer goes. The child, at the biological (Creator-endowed age) is now an adult, and the parents can lighten their load.

This is not religion. This is secular, scientific, spiritual, and individual-exalting. The *Bar Mitzvah* is as *Universal Judaism* as it gets. It is also *common sense*, built into the very design of nature, like puberty itself.

### **But, what about all the other holidays?**

Again, as was discussed in the chapter on the synagogue, *Universal Judaism* does not maintain a ritual-prayer-cycle as its organizational structure. As you’ve seen, we consider even the Sabbath to be essentially a non-religious custom, built into the very design and fabric of Life-on-earth, transcending mere religion.

This is certainly not the case with all so-called “Jewish holidays”. Many of these are rabbinic elaborations which, for the *Universal Judaism* perspective, have lost their spiritual meaning. For example, we do not mourn the destruction of the First and Second Temple, and afflict ourselves with fasting. *Universal Judaism* does not, at all, look forward to re-instituting animal sacrifice, and we consider that an unnecessary barbarism at this point in our and human evolution.

This, however, does not disparage those who wish to commemorate such historical events, and there is room within the *Universal Judaism* synagogue for specialty groups along these lines. However, such holidays, which are not consonant with the “post-post modernism” of *Universal Judaism*, are simply not

emphasized. Besides, there are many other marvelous synagogues where this is part and parcel of their more traditional congregational life. Thank God for Jewish diversity!

In general, at this moment in history, *Universal Judaism* will celebrate those holidays which are part of the general fabric of Israeli secular life. We delight in *Chanukah*. We delight in *Purim*. We delight in *Tu B'shevat*, *Jewish Arbor Day*, though our approach will always reflect and highlight *Universal Judaism* principles.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate meaningful holidays.**

We will not celebrate, without serious qualification, those holidays which are based upon *Torah-idolatry*, though specialty groups are free to continue this great legacy. For example, *Simchat Torah*, which commemorates the “giving of the Torah *qua* Pentateuch” on Mt. Sinai, we do not celebrate. However, *Universal Judaism* would instead— for those who desire to sanctify the *essential meaning* of this holiday— celebrate a *Yom Kabbalat*, *The Day of Revelation*. This includes deep, prayerful, meditation, philosophical discourse on the nature of spiritual revelation (including the traditional viewpoint), and a whole day and night of spiritual renewal and unabashed fun.

Just as the Rabbis of Blessed Memory invented the dynamics of many holidays and festivals, *Universal Judaism* does not shrink from its own inventiveness. There is always room for new holidays and new celebrations, hitherto uncelebrated. These will naturally arise, congregationally, organically, as the spiritual impulse within the congregation surfaces and needs to be captured, focused and concentrated for *good*— in new, exciting creative ways.

### ***But what about yarmulkahs, tallisim, mezuzoth, etc. etc. ?***

If you like these wonderful Jewish customs, and they are meaningful to you, please feel free to express yourself. If you don't, please feel free to express yourself.

However, if one *is* going to partake in these customs, *Universal Judaism* requires that these customs be studied, and that congregants take on the responsibility of becoming living representatives of the knowledge these customs represent, so they can teach them to interest others.

Mere tradition for tradition's sake is simply not our way! Mindless devotion is not fitting to Hebrew spirituality, and is not *Universal Judaism*.

Do not partake in these customs, without taking responsibility for them!

***But what about . . . this, that and the other . . .***

*Universal Judaism is a living, secular, scientific, spiritual individualist force of Hebrew-based creativity. So, feel free to bring along whatever you find meaningful, something you may have learned, or something you may have inherited.*

More importantly, bring along your heart. Bring along your intelligence. Bring along your force-of-will, your fire to transform yourself, and from there, our entire world.

There is no gift of the past which does not have, imbedded within it, knowledge that can be turned outward, released like a seeding from its seed coat, breaking forth to form new stems, leaves, and glorious flowers.

*Universal Judaism* is not a denomination! Denominations are a violation of Hebrew thought. They are somewhat necessary, for the moment, as the repair of our terribly pillaged cultural history takes place, and for that reason, we are using the term “Judaism” defining our role in this healing.

Again, *Universal Judaism*, is a perspective, an *umbrella* perspective, *inclusive and comprehensive*, which we feel is an historical necessity for bringing about a correct integration between past religious thought, and scientific secular life: for *everyone* in today’s world. There is plenty of space under our umbrella! There is plenty of freedom under our umbrella to relish all the still-meaningful gifts from our past.

**Life is Holy. Celebrate the Gifts of our Past.**

## Chapter Fifteen:

### **Maimonides, Spinoza. And beyond.**

A cornerstone of traditional Judaism past, like a hub from which the spokes of a wheel project, has been the *Thirteen Principles of Maimonides*, by which this greatest of Jewish “rationalists”, as people consider him, summed up the essential *doctrine* or *teaching* of the religion called “Judaism”. It has been repeated, taught, chanted, sung for a millennia.

*The Thirteen Principles* has served mightily. It has served those who believe that the *Torah— The Five Books of Moses, The Pentateuch—* is an actual revelation by God, more than a heavily-edited canon, as discussed. It has served those who are devoted to the rabbinic innovators and their Oral Law, which served, and still somewhat serves, as the interpretative legal and governing guide for our wandering community.

For his time, Rabbi Moses *ben Maimon, Maimonides* (*son of Maimon* in Greek) was considered both radical and conservative. He sought to reconcile both the rational-scientific and religious perspective. This was his great gift. He was a living bridge between the emergent scientific perspective, largely Greek Aristotelian, and traditional *Torah*-based “rabbinism” which was the authoritative-fabric of Jewish Life. He was both a medical doctor and a profound Jewish legal scholar, seemingly bred for the task.

Today, traditionalists still call upon Maimonides to defend their positions as being rational. Today, modernists still call upon Maimonides to defend their position as authentically Jewish. But, sadly, the insane division between “rational” and “religious”, between “scientific” and “spiritual”, persists, and still shreds the fabric of Hebrew thought, hurting all Jewish denominations, and other Hebrew-based cultures too, more than 1000 years after Maimonides attempted to heal it. We still need to be healed, unified.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate our Healing.**

Our healing begins when we put Truth first!

*Universal Judaism* puts Truth first. Truth goes before religion, which is a *viewpoint of Truth*. Truth goes before science, which is also a *viewpoint of Truth*. When any viewpoint has a reasonable *correspondence with reality*, and it also produces *Good for people* i.e. an increased experience of God, *Universal Judaism* will *tend to trust* it and *use* it, as an intellectual tool, for the good it can create.

But, we trust all such viewpoints— including our own— carefully, cautiously, and only provisionally, until something better, and more complete comes along. Thus

*Universal Judaism's* understanding is solid, but always evolving, like “our” *Living, Evolving, God*.

For the past 1000 years, Maimonides’ *Thirteen Principles* have somewhat defined Judaism. It has many still-valuable insights. But, it needs to evolve.

In the spirit of this new era, requiring a new leap, I offer you *Universal Judaism's* qualification, and sometimes amendment, to Maimonides’ illustrious *Thirteen Principles*.

Please be aware, that this is offered by someone who cannot, ever, pretend to come close to the genius of Maimonides— though, the future does sometime call upon the least of us to serve. May God— Goodness itself— guide me in so doing.

Also— I apologize in advance. This is the most complicated, theological section of this book. I’m aiming to be as clear and precise as possible. But because this is a primer, and I’m “summing things up” rather tersely, it does feel a little “in the head” or “wooden”. Feel free to call upon me, at [universaljudaism.org](http://universaljudaism.org), if you need a little help.

This “Lucky 13” is not just spiritually-important for the future of Jews, not just spiritually-important for the future of all Hebrew-inspired religions, but also for the future of any prophetically-inspired secular world:

***Maimonides’ Principle 1: God exists; God is perfect in every way, eternal and the cause of all that exists. All other beings depend upon God for their existence.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

Existence exists. This Existence is *perfect*— from the Latin, *per facere*— i.e. *fashioning* or creating any and all actually-possible existences, *with-in* and *of* Itself.

These existences are fashioned from Its *Eternal* Nature. By “Eternal” is meant *Always-Existing, Causative* and therefore *Living— The Living God*. *Eternal* does not mean “never changing”, “always the same”, “never growing and evolving”.

Existence depends upon the existences which comprise it; and all existences depend upon Existence, including what this Existence may become *next*.

All Existence exists as a Dynamic, Living, Creating Existence, “The Creator”.

However, no new particular creation *with-in* and *of* Creation is the Totality of Creation. The Totality of Creation is “independent” of any *new particular* creation. But, here, “Independence” here does not mean “disconnection”, “totally self-contained”, “all alone” a common error of thought. Independence means “primary” and “necessary”, like a parent is to a child.

Existence, in all its existing dynamics may be experienced personally by the human being as *Good*. So, we can legitimately call this Creative Creation, “God”.

***Maimonides’ Principle 2: God has absolute and unparalleled unity.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

God is *Unity*, a quality which human being may, observing this, attribute to God as *having*.

God is a *Unity*, not a “whole”. It is an unparalleled Unity, *Comprehending* any and All existences *with-in* Itself, *of* Itself, *as* Itself.

One cannot divide such a Unity into “parts”, as if it were a “whole”. Any new creation upon Creation is a *living, creative, expansion* of this Unity, not a numerical “addition” to It.

God’s Unity is *absolute*, from the root meaning *loosed from*. God’s Unity is *loosed from* any human concept or theory, no matter how seemingly complete, because this Unity is Living, and always becomes More than It Is. So, no theory can ever comprehend it completely.

God’s Unity is also *loosed from* any particular new creation, as discussed above.

No other “unity”— no “thing”, “thought”, “feeling” or other— is the same Unity as God. To think otherwise is idolatry. God is Unique, Uniqueness itself!

There are always real similarities between anything living and *The Living God*, because of this shared Nature. But nothing known to be living is totally-comparable to the *Living Totality* which is God, Existence Itself, The Creating Creation, “The Creator”, All Nature, Nature Itself.

***Maimonides’ Principle # 3: God is incorporeal— without a body.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*



Existence, which is God, may also be said, “Metaphysically”, to be *God’s Body*.

Because God is Living, God’s Body, while always *identical*– i.e. may be always *identified with Itself*– is never the *exact same* body, i.e. unchanged.

Thus, we might distinguish between God’s “current” body, and God’s “next” body, as God changes and grows.

Some might call the *livingness* that empowers any “next”, God’s *Spirit–Ruach Adonai*– a *Creative Force* of God. It remains a valuable descriptor of the Impulse that Propels God from “before” into God “after”.

In this sense, God is *incorporeal*, meaning, never restricted to any particular *state* of its evolving Self-body. But, there is no “body” without “Spirit”, and no Spirit disembodied; the two are distinct, but separate entities.

***Maimonides’ Principle # 4:      God existed prior to all else.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

Existence always exists prior to any additional existences that may be brought into existence. God is eternal, but always changing, growing, evolving.

***Maimonides’ Principle \$5:      God should be the only object of worship and praise. One should not appeal to intermediaries, but should pray directly to God.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

If one is Hebrew, and monotheistic, it is our inherited task to continue the perspective of only *seeking* a relationship with the Nature of Existence. It is quite beautiful, quite authentically scientific in its perspective. It is gloriously traditional.

However, all cognition, and indeed, all science, is an exploration of “intermediaries” of God, so to speak. It is absolutely ridiculous, if not totally impossible, to learn about the Nature of God by not looking at the many natures which share, and illuminate God’s Nature, and are always mediatory on some scale..

Moreover, it is well known that even in traditional Judaism, prayers have been made to angelic beings, who are also mentioned in scripture as mediators. (*Exodus 23:20*) So, this praying directly is hardly a hard-fast rule.

But, obviously, no intermediary of God can be said to be God *in toto*; to believe otherwise is *idolatry*. This is simply another way of re-stating Principle #1: God creates More of God's Self. So, one can only know God as That is *revealed to or discovered by us*. God will always grow and change, and we will grow and change too upon That.(74)

***Maimonides' Principle #6: Prophets and prophecy exist.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

Prophecy is fundamentally a Super-natural human gift. The degree to which the individual may express the prophetic, historical impulse, not merely for Hebrews, but for all humanity, determines the *degree* of prophecy, which may vary from one person to another.

Therefore, no one may declare prophecy the exclusive ownership of any one particular person, people or religion.

***Maimonides' Principle #7: Moses was the greatest prophet who ever lived. No prophet who lived or will live could comprehend God more than Moses.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

Since no one has ever met Moses, this is impossible to say. The figure of Moses, perhaps the prophet of the *Exodus*, has been used as a literary figure to bolster teachings and authority systems in his name. The real Moses is rather muddled.

*Universal Judaism*, not being centered upon a formal rabbinic "cult of Moses", does not need to elevate Moses so.

Nonetheless, there is great beauty and meaning to this reverence for Moses, and much to learn from him, fact or fiction.

***Maimonides' Principle #8: The Torah is from heaven. The Torah we have today is the Torah that God gave to Moses at Sinai.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

This is beautiful, poetic, and served a purpose for unifying Jews after the Roman Diaspora. But, it is nonsense. The *Torah* is a human-constructed, edited document, a *canon*, not a revelation.

The *Torah* does contain astonishingly, advanced, spiritual thinking. Poetically, this could be described as “from heaven”.

***Maimonides’ Principle #9: The Torah will never be abrogated, nothing will be added to it or subtracted from it; God will never give another Law.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

The *Torah* is an official *canon* that is still in use, so it will only be abrogated, added to or subtracted from, if there is some kind of officially-sanctioned revamping of it in the future.

The *Torah* was not given by God, like an author might give a reader his manuscript. Nor, in the future, could this ever take place so simplistically. It is impossible because God is not a human.

***Maimonides’ Principle #10: God knows the actions of humans and is not neglectful of them.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

God doesn’t know a human being in the same way as another human being can, inter-personally, know another human. God “knows” us more in the biblical sense of “sexual intercourse”, insofar as anything *with being is*, on some scale, *Being*; we *share* God’s Own Body-Self so-to-speak.

In this sense, God *knows* the actions of a human being, which affect God’s Being. And God cannot be neglectful of human beings, or God would ignore an aspect of God’s Own Self.

We affect God and God affects us. We are living and God is Living. This is the “metaphysical” foundational for covenant.

That which exists is in Existence, and Existence includes that which exists. Both know each other, and cannot be neglectful of each other, but exist on different scales-of-being, and can never know each other fully, because each is always growing, and evolving.

***Maimonides' Principle #11: God rewards those who obey the commands of the Torah and punishes those who violate its prohibitions.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

God may be said to spiritually “reward” those who obey God’s “command” or “order”, i.e. How Life is “Designed” to Operate for Good. God does not punish or reward people for mere violation of scriptural laws. God is not a religious autocrat.

However, if human beings *believe* absolutely in a scriptural law, and then violate their vow to uphold them, then, they may sow and reap their own self-induced punishment. This is the power of belief. This is how we “program” our creativity.

Scriptural laws which are actually *real boundaries* within Life, will usually produce the experience of good or less-good, blessings or curse, if they are trespassed. It doesn’t make a difference whether these are *believed* to be a true or not. It’s How Life Works for Good, and our beliefs have little to do with it. (76)

***Maimonides Principle #12: The days of the Messiah will come.***

*Universal Judaism would say:*

It is quite possible that one day, a world leader will arise, with the most complete prophetic gifts imaginable, so that politics will be spiritualized and human civilization will be governing more in accordance to How Life Works for Good. This leader could be a “king”, a “corporate CEO”, a “rabbi”, or any such leader.

But, since God is Living, and Always-Changing, there is no “moment of perfection” which descends and makes “all things perfectly right”. Life is always changing and evolving, and there will always be new challenges as human beings change and evolve, experiencing new “news”.

Therefore, any such prophetic leader will not be “perfect” or “divine”. *Universal Judaism* considers this, at best, an overstatement, and at worst, a delusion.

Nonetheless, there is always *real living hope* built into the design of Life. Because God grows, and any creation also grows on its own scale, we too can continue to grow and progress towards our ideal. However, our ideal never becomes so perfect that it cannot evolve more.

Hope, mercy, forgiveness— all these are personal experiences of God’s Evolving Nature, where “nothing, including evil, stays the same”, and Goodness is the “default setting” of Creation’s programming.

**Maimonides Principle #13: The dead will be resurrected.**

*Universal Judaism would say:*

The bones of a human being are part of the earth, and will be recycled as part of the living continuity of the planet and All Existence.

The re-creation of the previous individual from its residual, buried bones– which is classic “Judaism”– implies that evolution repeats itself in the exact same way. This is a contradiction.

There is great mystery regarding life after death; we will discuss this, as is fitting, in our last chapter.

\* \* \*

Maimonides began the great healing between the religion “Judaism”, and science, two components necessary for contemporary Hebrew-based *spirituality*. However, the healing of these seemingly disjunctive disciplines must now evolve.

Fortunately, a few centuries after the great *Rambam*, there arose another great mind, *Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza*. His seemingly radical views got him excommunicated from the Jewish community in Amsterdam. So, he left behind his Hebrew name, meaning *blessing*, and translated this through the Latin, *Benedict*. It was a great loss to the Jewish community.

But, today, in addition to Maimonides, his voice must be reclaimed and heard too. After all, he shared Einstein’s God: “My God is the God of Spinoza”, Einstein said. There can be no God of science without reclaiming the God of Spinoza.

Spinoza was, in a sense, the inversion of Maimonides. He did not affirm that the *Torah* came from the heavens or God. In fact, he denied it flatly, and, heralding modern biblical criticism, demonstrated what he considered internal contradictions within the *Torah* that rendered its touted perfection impossible.

Maimonides held, with a more medieval perspective, the perspective that God was Totally Other, and Creation was “separate”. But, Spinoza held that *Deus sive Nature*: that God was actually Nature. We can say “God”. Or, we can say “Nature”. They are synonyms.

**Maimonides was *theistic* and scientific. But, Spinoza was scientific and *pantheistic* i.e. *God is All*.**

***Universal Judaism embraces both, together, and beyond-either!***

The problem with Spinoza's pantheism, was that it could not account for any kind of moral order, nor the entire foundation of Hebrew life, based upon a progressive, evolving human history, including human *dominion* upon the earth. His theory had weaknesses, no less than Maimonides'. Indeed, all mortal theories have weaknesses.

Yet, there was a logical coherency and even a striking simplicity to declaring God to be Nature. While it caused great friction within Jewish communities, there were some who came to Spinoza's defense, and also to the defense of rabbis who were attacked due to a Spinoza-supporting sermon.(75)

***Universal Judaism's perspective combines the insights of both Maimonides and Spinoza, but moves beyond their complementary, inverse blindnesses.***

*The Totality of Nature*— what we might call “Divine” Nature— is God. Nature or God is Living and creates “worlds” *with-in* and *of* Its Own Nature. These worlds we might call new “forms” or “limits” within God— dimensions, “internal scales”, “textures”, “aspects”, so-to-speak. They are all, from the *Universal Judaism* perspective, more *living beings* from Being. Nature is a Nature of natures. God is a God of gods. The God of Creation is *Elohim*, a plurality of beings, acting as One.(*Genesis 1:1*).

Thus, the *Universal Judaism* perspective is also deeply, reverentially, *scriptural*. It is, quite ironically, more scripturally-coherent, more consistent with contemporary scientific insight, than traditional, theistic interpretations, infected by the dualities of medievalism or modernism.

Within Nature, new natures will continuously arise, bound by certain natural design limits intrinsic to their natures. These design limits produce boundaries or laws that shape— for any aware creatures arising from them— not just what they are, but also their particular *experience* of Nature or God. Earthy nature will be experienced differently for human nature than for gopher nature or for Martian nature. It will be experienced differently for the nature of some world in another universe entirely. And yet, there will always be a commonality to all of them, because they arise from the Living Unity of All, The One, *Nature Itself*.

The human *experience* of Nature— through the faculty of our individuality, with its free will— in correct or incorrect alignment to How Life Works for Good— particularly on the earth— is the foundation of all moral law and human history. Scripture generalizes these experiences and codifies them. They are not an absolute revelation that is fixed and cemented.

Adherence to scripture– the religious “method”– is not the necessary “cause” of moral behavior, though scripture can become valuable for learning about morality. After all, it is a recording of past experiences of God.

Neither is scripture causative in Nature. It is not some kind of *logos*, or *Blueprint of Creation*, or Word– some kind of “intermediary” by which God created the world. Such hyper-idealization is a beautiful form of reverence, but is Truth-distorting and psychologically-damaging. Scripture is simply the *bookkeeping* of human spiritual experience within Life.(77)

The *Universal Judaism* perspective has the benefits of Spinoza, yet includes the moral boundaries of Maimonides, without the excessive religionism, revelationism, with its counter-balancing excessive philosophizing, and pantheism. |

The *Universal Judaism* perspective is unifying. It creates a coherent model for religions and science to converse with each other, intelligently. It permits religion and science to both expand towards a true, healthy, secular, scientific, spiritual experience of *Life* (or God). It also permits, lest we forget, an actual place in the Vastness of the Universe, for that most remarkable of creations: an *individual*– someone who can look up to the heavens and ask, “Why?”

This perspective, this “theory”, is our *Universal Judaism umbrella*. This is a theoretical umbrella based upon real spiritual experience that can be taught and shared, validated, and improved upon. It is not to be worshipped. It is to be explored as part of a Living Exploration called “Life”. It is an intellectual tool.

This perspective, to which both Maimonides and Spinoza contributed mightily, can help heal the troubled minds of scientists and religionists, atheists and theists, alike. But, it can also help bring the remnant of all Hebrew-inspired Peoples back to their Promised Land.

This Promised Land is more than the dust-bound Promised Land of our ancestors, though it includes it.

This Promised Land is the one that Abraham truly discovered, as he journeyed from *Ur of Chaldees* to a place unknown.

This Promised Land is the one that lies continuously in front of all of us, as we all– Jew and non-Jew– journey through the wilderness of our lives.

This Promised Land is the one which, according to *Universal Judaism’s* view, we never fully reach . . . because we *can never . . . fully . . . reach . . .* it . . . although we are never without it . . .

This Promised Land is called the *future* . . .

The future is calling us . . . Can you hear it?



**Life is Holy. Celebrate our Future.**

## Chapter Sixteen

### A Hebrew Future for Everyone

*Universal Judaism* believes that our perspective— based upon the *Hebrew Spirit*— is a necessity for *everyone*, if we're going to have a world which does not, once again, repeat past sadomasochism, both in thought, and in action, in the name of another fictional "god".

Everyone? Yes, everyone!

Some might quickly label this "conversionary", "missionary", "proselytizing". Why should Hebrew Spirit be offered to *everyone*?

From the *Universal Judaism* perspective, this has already been answered: The Hebrew Spirit is not merely "Jewish". Nor, is it "Christian". Nor, is it "Muslim". Nor, is it some generalized, positive-material, democratic secularism.

The foundational structure to Hebrew thought and the Hebrew World View is not about religion or non-religion. It is— and over and over again, we repeat this— How Life Works for Good. It is built into Life. It is *bio-ontological!* It *already* belongs to everyone!

When we put forth the Hebrew view for everyone, we are putting forth that legacy which is *already* everyone's simply by virtue of being human. Such ancient knowledge may have been bequeathed *through* the Hebrew people, but, it did not originate *from* the Hebrew people.

***Universal Judaism* does not maintain that the covenant was "given" to the Hebrews or the People of Israel.**

***Universal Judaism* maintains that *covenant* is a real-experience of human life; its potential is a "given" for all humankind.**

**The Hebrews seem to have been the first to express this potential in historical form. It was a gift from Life to all humankind for Good!**

*Universal Judaism* does not maintain that this sharing requires the adherence or promotion of any particular religion or nation. We do maintain, that the fundamental knowledge behind *Universal Judaism* is essential for *any and all religions, peoples, philosophical or political systems* that share the vision of Universal World History. It is essential knowledge for families, communities, nations and, indeed, our entire world. The absence of authentic Hebrew knowledge has crippled this world.

This is either the most supreme arrogance, or, it is, in fact, fact. Our assertion here is never to be taken on face value. It is not to be taken as some propagandistic proselytizing. It is to be tested, experimented, and experienced. Does it produce More Good? Does it produce an *experience of God*? Does it lead to a real-life improvement in the quality of Life, both personally, interpersonally, and transpersonally, for individuals and all groups of individuals, faiths and nations, embracing All Life and Creation? Do Value and Relationship Priorities really exist as living boundaries within Life? Does Life begin to unfold *correctly*– “governing together”– when you sow and reap in accordance with its Order?

The proof of Truth here is not blind faith. It is sighted faith. It is Life experience– shared, and validated, objectively– which is the only measure of any kind of Truth that anyone– religionist or atheist-secularist– may proclaim; opinions are not necessary right knowledge, as Plato reminds us in his *Republic*.

Below is *Universal Judaism’s* opinion, which we believe is a good representation of *real* knowledge: knowledge that when progressively lived and implemented in one’s life, will produce more “God”, more Good, more “blessings” in one’s life.

*Universal Judaism’s* principles only become activated when lived through feeling, thought, and deed. They must leave the narrow framework of human thought and intellectual formulation, and open up to the Greater Framework of Creation, our *Living God*.

“18” is the numerical equivalent for the Hebrew word *chai* or *Life*. *These Eighteen Principles* of *Universal Judaism* will bring more life to your share of Life:

1. God is not fully comprehensible by us Life is Holy. ***Celebrate the Adventure.***
2. Learning about Life is learning about God; God “reveals” Itself through as our discoveries in Life. Life is Holy. ***Celebrate Learning.***
3. Our experience of Life is our only and ultimate teacher, the teacher of all our teachers. So, everyone can always learn from everyone, including clergy. Life is Holy. ***Celebrate Experience.***
4. No mere person, including oneself, no group, institution, authority or government, is flawless. So, worship no one and no thing. Life is Holy. ***Celebrate no power-idolatry!***
5. No creed, belief, opinion, theory, formulation of knowledge is absolute; worship no mere mortal knowledge as perfect. Life is Holy. ***Celebrate no thought-idolatry!***
6. The experience of Good is the result of living *correctly, governing together*

- in *alignment* to How Life Works. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Harmoniously.**
7. The experience of “non-good” teaches us about what’s incorrect about our alignment, so we can have more good. Life is Holy. **Celebrate intelligently.**
  8. Living in correct alignment with all peoples and nations, as well as with All Life and Creation, through all future generations, is the historical force of *covenant*. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Covenant.**
  9. No one has exclusive ownership of Truth and Covenantal Purpose. Life is Holy. **Celebrate with Humility.**
  10. Each person has a direct, creative relationship with Life’s Mystery, no matter how mediated. Life is Holy. **Celebrate your Human Rights.**
  11. No government, agency, institution, earthly or otherwise, is the exclusive mediator of Power, and all Power originates from God. Life is Holy. **Celebrate in Freedom.**
  12. There is an Order, an organizational nature to Creation on all scales, which must always be respected. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Respectfully.**
  13. Scripture and all sacred writings, including secular constitutions, are a recording of human knowledge, requiring correct inspiration to interpret them for new circumstances. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Evolution in Knowledge.**
  14. There is no absolute evil, no evil competitor that is an inverse-equal to God. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Good.**
  15. All ritual, whether religious or secular, is a language of devotion which should never be compulsory. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Conscience.**
  16. Expressing one’s full potential with continuous improvement is the rule of human life, or it will devolve. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Advancement.**
  17. There is no limit to human potential that anyone can identify. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Infinitely.**
  18. Life is organized according to *Value* and *Relationship Priorities* which must be embodied in all behaviors and all good laws. Life is Holy. **Celebrate Lawfully.**

These *Eighteen Principles of Universal Judaism*, when implemented, help us consciously guide ourselves to approach Life in a way that is in correct alignment with How Life Works for Good. They open us up, both as individuals, and as

groups-of-individuals– (these are inseparable)– to a concrete, observable, living spiritual experience of *The Living God: covenant!*

Only upon this shared experience of a Good Life, can we have any sense of correct authority to re-engineer our society, and redact our laws, so they are consonant with the Goodness of Life. Only upon this shared experience of a Good Life, can we have any sense of our Conceptual, Super-natural, Cosmic Individuality, which distills Itself into our earthly human nature: *Made in the Image and Likeness of God.*

These principles are not rigid rules, to pound yourself with. They are to be taken delicately, joyful. Just introduce them gently into your thinking and living. Try to just be aware of them in your dealings with others; they are so built-into Life, that you will find they facilitate relationships of all kinds, *for good!*

Hopefully, you will be drawn to others, more experienced, who can help guide you, and delighted to share their experience with you. The more one shares one's spiritual advancement with another, the more one advances. This is how spiritual evolution works, *middah kenegged middah.* The result of this principle? Healthy, spiritual hierarchies and political structures in families, governments, corporations and *All Others (Relationship Priority #3).*

But remember: No one is an absolute guide for Life. Life is the only “absolute” guide. Yet, because Life always grow and changes, Life will never be some fixed, rigid “law”, some cemented autocrat called “God”. Life is a flexible guide!

Now there are many who wish to declare all-knowing, totally-comprehensible “laws of God”, that they can mete out to others, thereby anchoring their authority over you. Principle #1 is primary: Life is Holy. *Celebrate Human Limitations.* Everyone has limitations. Do not give your power away to a false god.

These *Eighteen Principles of Universal Judaism* are a correction for what has, unfortunately, taken place in the past, and what is, unfortunately, still taking place. But they are not limited to mere *correction*, i.e. re-learning how to govern together.

Living these Eighteen is way beyond correcting mistakes or sins. Living these Eighteen at home, community, industry, government, in the world-of-nations, can prepare a platform upon which humankind can elevate itself to a whole new level.

Live these Eighteen, and whether you are “Jewish”, “Christian”, “Muslim”, any other religion, or just good secular atheists or humanists– you, and everyone in today's world can begin the stunning, amazing, and awe-inspiring spiritual adventure of *becoming Israel.*

Becoming Israel? All of us? Yes!

Re-ignite the Hebrew Spirit, and the *Living Ideal* called *Israel* is achievable by *everyone* in today's world. Yes, *everyone* . . . but always . . .

. . . in their own, unique, way.

## Chapter Seventeen:

### Israels of Many Kinds

**Then, Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth said, “Moses, my Lord restrain them.” But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29)**

When the world came in contact with the People of Israel, there was a great *consciousness shift* that took place. Human civilization, everywhere, will never be the same again. It has truly been transfigured by the Hebrew World View. If all the Lord’s people should aspire to be prophets, the same can be said for all the Lord’s *nations*. (78)

The noble, Hebrew spiritual paradigm of “Israel” became the inspired model for all good and righteous individuals, religions and nations. To be the “covenant nation” *par excellence*, to be the prophetic nation-leader for *Universal History*, became the core identity of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, past and present.

In modern times, the paradigm of Israel dominated the consciousness of Great Britain, France, and others, who had received this teaching, in a variant form, through Christendom. In a curiously inverted way, the prophetic virtues of sharing, equality, universal love and care for the poor, created a Soviet form of “Israel” whose Communism would be *Light unto the Nations*. Indeed, the structure of Marx’s philosophy of history was fundamentally Hebrew prophetic, *universally salvific* in scope, perhaps an inspiration from his Jewish birth, though definitely from the Hebrew Spirit which had inspired Western political philosophy.

After World War II, when the United States inherited the leadership of Western civilization, with Europe in cinders, we too took on Elijah’s mantle, as an “Israel”, perceiving ourselves to be a covenanted nation, implicit in the Enlightenment philosophy behind our inspired Constitution. America was like a “new Israel” to many, another “one nation under God”. Therefore, it is not at all surprising, that so many millions of Jews found their Hebrew spirituality reborn there; the Liberty Bell was inscribed with our scripture. (*Leviticus 25:10*)

With the American form of “Israel”, the historical covenant now took a more universal secular, scientific, spiritual, individualistic (democratic) form, which of course inspired *Universal Judaism*, as it has all of today’s nations.

**The many forms of “Israel” are variant, but the underpinning Truth, which first expressed itself through one peculiar Mesopotamian**

**tribe, still percolates in and through every form.**

Today, the Hebrew Spirit, with its vision of *Universal History*, popularized mostly through Christianity and the West, has transfigured countries from Asia to the Arctic. There is no religion, Hindu, Buddhist, or other that has not learned, deeply, from Hebrew prophetic insights. Jesus, a Jew, is now a respected *bodhisatva* in Tibet! Every corner of the world has been touched by the Hebrew World View. There is no one believer or unbeliever, religionist or secularist, nation East or West that does not share, in some great measure, this Hebrew treasure.

**“Thou shalt not murder”, and others, is now a universal legal norm.**

**Do you realize this great Hebrew achievement?**

It is a sadness that the world takes the achievement of The People of Israel so for granted. Just imagine what was required for this rag tag group of nomads, a former nation of slaves, to actually discover the Law of Good. Just imagine what it must have been like to have to fight through the decay, the destruction, the degeneracy of truly primitive and savage enemies, until Hebrew Truth began to take hold of human conscience— no, actually *form* human— *i.e. humane* conscience.

It was not easy. *Universal Judaism* can be very threatening! When one does not worship thought or power, when one does not exalt earthly powers, natural or fabricated, over Divine Nature, when one declares a direct relationship of each individual with *The Living God* (what today is called “democracy”)— you become the natural enemy of the greatest empires of the world. You become an Abraham needed to defy the Tower of Babel. We were not persecuted because we were not threatening to the imperial sickness of many Western religions and nations.

However, there is no need to wallow in victimization. After all, this victimization did, somewhat, come along with our purpose: to sanctify God-in-Creation. It is Israel’s *creative desire*— our covenantal prayer, our “calling”— to base our identity upon *That*. It is our covenantal calling to make That which is Invisible to the narrow spectrum of mortal sight, visible to everyone through our example. Sometimes Life was Good through good experience. But, sometimes, as we’ve discussed, Life was Good through bad experience. Regardless, in this sacred task, the Hebrew Spirit bore continual witness to The One God.

Today, the Hebrew World View has spread so far, that the goal of virtually all civilized nations is, essentially, *to become Israel*. – whether they’d use this expression or not.

**“Israel” is any nation** that seeks to be a Sacred People, living in alignment to the Order of Life— God’s “commandments” in nature—



as an example to all.

**“Israel” is any nation** that is an *am*– putting that *Unity* which is God, before its own self-interest. Not a mere *goy*, or, *country*, from the early English root, for *conflict*.

**“Israel” is any nation** that seeks *covenant* and implements it, for all future generations, in accordance with correct *Value* and *Relationship Priorities*.

**“Israel” is any nation** that correctly seeks to be a World Teacher, instructing all How Life Works for Good, i.e. how to *experience God*, historically, generation after generation.

*Universal Judaism’s* goal is that every nation and every person shall *be Israel* in the noblest, most inspired, meaning of that word. *Universal Judaism* seeks the inspiration and illumination of all!

Admittedly, “all” is a daunting task. But, it is our great fortune to be merely human, with a clear, specified range of relationships that is wisely ordered by *The Living God*. So, *Universal Judaism* begins our task, as is our birth nature, with the most direct remnant of the Hebrew people: living Jews.

This is not narrow, tribal, or self-interested, as other “universalists” may accuse us of being. This is simply How Life Works for Good: One should always take care of one’s family first (*Relationship Priority #1*)– the ones that are closest to you, your immediate family. Only then, strong and vibrant, can one expand one’s attention to one’s neighbors, then foreigners, and all humankind who are one *Adam*, individual and species, simultaneously.

However, after taking care of our own, *Universal Judaism*– like spiral galaxies glimpsed through our telescopes or DNA spiraling in every cell– will then spiral outward, embracing all Hebrew-inspired peoples and beyond . . . all who desire to be, or are touched by, Israel: Not just the nation of Israel, but also the *living concept* of Israel. The real *human potential* of Israel!

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate Israel for All.**

So, let’s start with the “Israel” that is the most direct recipient of the gift of “Israel”: The ancient but new State of Israel.

Needless to say, a complete discussion of the Modern State of Israel, with all its many inner dynamics, let alone the serious politics in which it is embroiled, is beyond the scope of this primer. However, below are some of the key points to *Universal Judaism’s* view of the nation and purpose of Israel.

True to our prophetic call-to-action, these points are also spiritual challenges to

every nation, Jewish or not, inspired by the biblical paradigm of “Israel”:

1.

Israel is fundamentally a very curious nation, if not somewhat “odd”, and it is misunderstood because of it. We are, and will always be, at our core, both *universal* and *indigenous*.

The world has seen many universal nations, which sought to unify the world, usually by force. The world has seen many indigenous peoples living with respect for the earth, such as the Iroquois. However, the first nation that is both indigenous *and* universal, connected, like other such tribal peoples, to their sacred land, and yet, spiraling outward to embrace, historically, the entirety of all humankind, is The People of Israel.

Others see us through only one lens– universal, or indigenous– but not both; they miss the complete picture of what Israel is.

**Any nation devoted to the Universal Purpose of Israel must live in harmony on their share of the Good Earth, yet, deeply identifying their purpose with the healing and unification of the entire world, seeking peace, justice and righteousness for themselves, and all.**

**To be Israel, human salvation (evolution) can never result from the perfection of human systems alone, governments or economies or institutional-creeds and structures.**

**To be Israel, salvation is a real physical creational phenomenon. It is– like the paradigm of Israel– indigenous and universal, natural and Super-natural, body and mind, earth and sky.**

2.

Israel’s attachment to their sacred land, despite thousands of years of previous exile, remains a *continuous living sign* of their righteous-seeking relationship with the God of Creation. Indeed, biblically, a righteous relationship is required for the continued gift of sovereignty on the land. Without *correct alignment* to How Life Works for Good, Israel is doomed. This is something often forgotten in today’s mechanized, politicized “world views”.

**Any nation devoted to the Universal Purpose of Israel must live in correct alignment to God’s Order or they will spiritually experience a weakening of Providence and a destabilization of their sovereignty, their economies, and their success as a World Nation.**

**This is a spiritual fact. It is How Life Works for Good. It is unavoidable. No nation, religious or atheist-secular, can operate**

**immune from the natural spiritual design of this world.**

**Morality is built into Reality. It is not a “faith” or “law”. It is living, breathing, prophetic spirituality!**

3.

The political difficulties in Israel are the result of a complex sowing and reaping, where nation after nation had seeded its own self-interested visions, and its fair share of sins. These, *middah knegged middah*, are what has created the snarl of consequences that has embroiled the State of Israel and the entire world which contributed to the mess.

**Any nation which wishes to join with the Spiritual Purpose of Israel, can solve the problem in the Middle East, simply by *changing their mind*.**

**The problems in the Middle East can be improved simply by beginning to sow and reap correctly. The solution is created as easily as the problem, because simple, human creativity is what caused it– our gift of *free will* from God.**

**The solution to the Middle East is simply correct, human behavior. It requires correct human behavior from all the nations of the world.**

4.

The politics around land-ownership is not a solid solution to the difficulties in the Middle East. Certainly, Israel has an ancient indigenous connection to their sacred land. But, after three to four generations has passed, (*Exodus 34:7*) others become “new indigenous” so-to-speak.

Spiritually, a “nation” or “people” is not a mere “state”, which is somewhat an artificial political invention. True *peoples* are not defined by political labels or world consensus; true peoples are, as already discussed, *bio-historical*. So, the solution to any Israeli or Palestinian people is not solved simply by “dividing territory”.

Traditional *scriptural idolatry*, which sees the past borders described in our canon as dictating, absolutely, the territorial terms for the future, is highly problematic and dangerous. Unlike *Universal Judaism*, they do not put universal, prophetic virtues of Truth, Peace, and Justice over excessive religious viewpoints. Pragmatically, such a scripturally-dominated view would require Israel to seize parts of Lebanon, Egypt and of course, Jordan, hardly conducive to peaceful co-existence.

**Any nation which is devoted to the Spiritual Purpose of Israel must**

**seek *Wisdom*– Truth, care and balance– minimizing excessive self-interest or excessive religious requirements.**

**God is greater than any one nation or religion devoted to God. *Universal History* cannot be identified, exclusively, with any one particular form or expression of it.**

**Yet, each form and expression of *Universal History* is a gift, in its *correct* place, i.e. for the purpose of *governing together*.**

5.

The best, most viable, approach to the Middle East is to not concentrate on land, but *law*. If there should be a Palestinian State, what is the *nature* of this State? If its legal system is good and righteous, and mutually-compatible with a good and righteous legal system in the State of Israel, then, there need not be a desperate problem in the Middle East in terms of land. *Universal Judaism* calls this approach: *Law for Peace*.

With a correct *Law for Peace*, one could theoretically assign *any* border one wished for any state, but these would never become fixed boundaries that would impede the free flow of human beings in commerce or the mutual visiting of sacred sites. One could readily cross *any* border– as one does from New York to New Jersey, or now, from France to Germany (former lethal enemies). Since the legal systems are compatible, and mutually-respected, the two states would be able to govern together, i.e. live *correctly*. But, each would have its sacred identities and local sovereignties!

Those people living in one state would have voting rights in that state alone. Those people living in the other state would have voting rights in that other state alone. But, there could easily be residents from one state living in the other state, though there might be differences in certain local laws and taxation. Democracy need not “vote out” a Jewish state, or any other national state.

However, the model for the “Modern” State of Israel was the *nation-state* model as it existed from World War I through World War II. These, we must admit, did become excessively nationalistic, contributing to the cause of these lethal wars. This *model* of nation needs to evolve, as it has in Europe, and be studied for its applicability to Israel and the surrounding peoples. *Universal Judaism* recommends a “test case”, with two willing, nearby, Israeli and Palestinian communities, to verify whether *The Law for Peace* might be a good approach towards an authentic “Two State Solution”.

*Universal Judaism’s Law for Peace* approach is consonant with the spiritual vision of *Genesis*: One God, One Creation, One Humankind, One Universal History. By extension, the *Law for Peace* approach, if implemented worldwide, would return us to a unified world, before the “Tower of Babel”. Israel should

always strive to be paradigmatic for this universal vision, in keeping with its deepest, most ancient, Abrahamic spiritual identity.

**Any nation which is devoted to the Spiritual Purpose of Israel should respect the Sovereignty of the Creator over their own, and view most borders as a matter of mutual compatibility more than fixed territorial entities that can be actually “owned”.**

**We are all, essentially, “renters” on God’s Good Earth, and there are spiritual terms to any lease, i.e. real consequences to our sowing and reaping.**

**This prophetic view is no less applicable to today’s politics.**

6.

All the above requires the nations of the world to work together to prevent the violation of sovereignty by those countries which choose to de-stabilize the world for their own selfish interests, including extremists and terrorists of all kinds.

How to approach this, is beyond the scope of this book. However, a good lesson in *Relationship Priorities* is called for:

**Any nation which is devoted to the Spiritual Purpose of Israel should do its share to prevent any selfishness from de-stabilizing the good and noble self-interests of others.**

**They might begin with *Relationship Priority #1*, looking at their own excesses, healing those first, before they judge and condemn others.**

**History can be healed with humility.**

\* \* \*

Having addressed our own family first, in accordance with *Relationship Priority #1*, *Universal Judaism* now spirals outward.

Many have claimed the mantle “Israel” besides those most directly related to the early Hebrews. First, and foremost, has been Christianity.

“Christianity” as an entity, is far too extensive to discuss here, and there is a shocking *diaspora* of Christian thought, when one considers all the hundreds upon hundreds of denominations and their variants of belief.

However, central to all Christian denominations is that they are *New Israel*, a new evolution of “old” Israel. They possess a “New Covenant” which is an evolution of the so-called “Old Covenant”, as well as the “New Testament”, an evolution

upon the so-called “Old Testament”. This is all based upon the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was the re-emergence and *evolution* of the authentic lineage of Hebrew prophets.

Beyond this, Christianity is based upon the asserted faith-fact, that Jesus died, was resurrected from death, and ascended, so as to be inseparably, *consubstantially*, one with God. For most Christian denominations, this is encapsulated through the teaching of the *Trinity*, which proclaims Jesus to be Divine, though there are many Christian denominations which qualify the meaning of any divinity, and some that flatly deny it.

*Universal Judaism* has a deep relationship with Christianity because it shares a common Universalist perspective, originating with the *proto-rabbis* or *Pharisees* (*Perushim* In Hebrew), who entered the surrounding Greek-Roman territories to teach Knowledge of the One God of Israel. We also, as Jews, shared the European Enlightenment and the intellectual evolution of the West, contributing mightily to this.

From a *Universal Judaism* perspective, the doctrine of Jesus’ death and resurrection is profound. In a way, it describes a single, magnificent thrust of “super-natural historical consciousness” in, over, and through nature. It metaphysically “defines” history in the form of one, ideal individual, an essential recapitulation of *Genesis II*. . An intensely packed “spiritual-formula”, it contains great Knowledge.

Because this individual has surpassed the biological cycling of life and death, he does not live, in isolation, on his small earthly world. He has come to personally realize that his being and Being Itself, his earthly nature and Divine Nature, are, essentially, One and the Same “Substance”.

This transfigured individual “functions” as an *enfleshed-idea*, a *reified-concept*, a human-divine goal, a *real-idea*, the *messianic human ideal*, the *goal of all life and human history*.

The essential perspective that human beings share the “Being of God” is something to which *Universal Judaism* does ascribe, provided certain non-idolatrous qualifications are put in place. However, just as in regard to the claims of Moses’ authority, *Universal Judaism*, being Truth-based, has no reason to accept the *fact* of Jesus actually *being* “God”. Not a few, questioning contemporary Christians have come to the *Universal Judaism* perspective on their own.

*Universal Judaism* believes that one of the great values of our perspective is that we, unabashedly, are not afraid to open up these complex theological issues, and, “holding no punches”, are willing to discuss them, contemplate them and learn from them openly, *even though* we do not agree with them. We are not afraid of other viewpoints; we do not consider them the threat of assimilation or

identity loss.

**Whatever Truth is in the Christian viewpoint (or any viewpoint) must be accepted, because it *is* Truth. That which isn't true, we can still learn from, but hardly *believe*.**

**This is our viewpoint about all viewpoints, including our own.  
Anything else is cultic!**

We believe the *Universal Judaism* perspective can actually help bring Christians closer to their own faith— more authentically taught— and help repair the many discords within church teachings, some of which were inherited from false or excessive faith-claims by Jews past. Indeed, we believe our essential perspective is necessary to heal Christianity, no less than it is for our own people.

Daringly, we are even open to exploring authentic *Universal Judaism* inspired Christian groups within designated “specialty groups” in our synagogues, provided these do not become overly zealous or conversionary.

And needless to say, for those Christians who find it impossible to reclaim their faith, the door is always open to them as “Universal Jews”, in any *Universal Judaism* synagogue.

Regardless whether one holds to the traditional Christian perspective, or a more contemporary perspective *Universal Judaism* welcomes all Christians as essential *Hebrews*.

May all good Christians, whatever their particular beliefs or no-beliefs, aspire to the ideal of Israel.

May they be re-invigorated with the Hebrew Spirit.

Life is Holy. Celebrate Israel, if you choose, in a Christian form.

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Islam also shares a common spiritual heritage with the *Universal Judaism* perspective, because it draws not only upon the heritage of Israel, but also the heritage of Christianity. In many respects it is fundamentally “Jewish”, having its own form of *kashrut*, and a pure doctrine of non-idolatry: *Nothing but God is God*.

But, Islam also shares Christian belief in Jesus as a prophet, and a messiah, and, together with Christians, fervently awaits his return. Islam also reveres the

Virgin Mary.

Muslims differ in their messianic expectations from traditional Jews and Christians. Their envisioned structure of the “Kingdom of God” which will be ushered in, is distinctively “Caliphate” rather than “Roman Imperial”. It is not “priestly-monarchic” like the traditional Jewish envisioned structure. Nonetheless, in most essential universal aspects of Islamic teaching, the three of us are remarkably alike. We both are rooted in the *meaning* of Abraham: *Universal History*.

*Universal Judaism* is deeply indebted to the Muslim people for their astonishing philosophical heritage. Without this, the insights of Maimonides— who began the reconciliation of science and religion upon which *Universal Judaism* is partly based— would be unthinkable.

Moreover, we too are unabashed in our declaration that nothing— no thing— other than the Totality of All Being, Life Itself, Existence, Reality, The Being of All Beings, Living Nature— can make claim to “divinity”, including any mortal being, ascended or not.

Historically, Jews and Muslims have been very close. We, by and large, lived peacefully and harmoniously with each other, until our relationship became overly politicized and assaulted by the self-interests of world powers.

Deeply, at the core depths of our inner conscience, *Universal Judaism* cannot fail to acknowledge that, scripturally, Abraham was sacrificed on the self-same day as *Ishmael*, the progenitor of the Muslim people. (*Genesis 17:26*) We see our shared presence on the Land of Israel— scriptural “half brothers” that we are— to be part of humanity’s healing. (We’ve already talked about how *Universal Judaism’s Law for Peace* could further this.)

Because of the many religious and philosophical conflicts of the past, Islam shares much of the confusion of traditionalist Jews and traditionalist Christians. In this sense, *Universal Judaism*, which provides a comfortable forum where all may come and discuss these shared issues, believes it can prove helpful to the healing of Muslim communities and the entirety of the World Nation that Islam is.

But, just as *Universal Judaism* does not accept the unqualified authority of the Law of Moses, nor the unqualified Divinity of Jesus, nor the absolute authority of any scripture whatsoever, including our own— *Universal Judaism* does not accept the absolute claims of the Q’uran or Muhammad, as “the seal of the prophets”.

***Universal Judaism* considers prophecy to be continuous, a never-ending human exploration of discovery, both moral and scientific.**

**No one can sum it up, complete it, or own it, including**



**ourselves.**

Not a few questioning, contemporary Muslims have come to this conclusion on their own. For those who find it impossible to re-claim their faith, *Universal Judaism* synagogues are always open places of exploration; we would even consider facilitating contemporary Islamic healing within designated “specialty groups”, provided these are good and noble explorations of human potential.

Regardless whether one holds to the traditional Muslim perspective, or a more contemporary perspective, *Universal Judaism* welcomes all Muslims as essential *Hebrews*.

May all good Muslims, whatever their particular beliefs or no-beliefs, aspire to the ideal of Israel.

May they be re-invigorated with the Hebrew Spirit.

Life is Holy. Celebrate Israel, if you choose, in Islamic form.

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The extraordinarily inspired vision of *Universal History*, where all the peoples of the world will come to know the One God, and each would come to see this *Unity of All* as their own, was a Hebrew movement that could hardly, by its nature, be contained within the mere indigenous borders of Israel.

Today, there is an enormous spiral of Hebrew-inspired knowledge into the world. So, whether someone is Thai or Lapp, whether one’s religion is Hindu or Buddhist, Zoroastrian or Bahai, or whether one follows innovative, ethical, neo-pagan resurgences such as *Wikka*, there is barely any place on this planet that has not been touched by the Hebrew vision of *Universal History*.

For this reason, *Universal Judaism*, which seeks a more pure, contemporary, secular, scientific, spiritual and individualist *form* of Hebrew thought– yet also honoring both its indigenous and universal heritage– has much to offer.

It is a fact of history that the greatest promoter of Hebrew thought has not been Hebrew by heritage, but Greco-Roman Christianity. Because of this, while they did retain much of the sacred history and fundamental ethics of *Universal Judaism*, they did miss many of the nuances that were deeply imbedded into the indigenous aspect of Hebrew Life. We’ve already spoken about the devastating consequences of imperial Roman culture in creating today’s global warming, let alone, the displacement of virtually all indigenous peoples in the world who did not have the historical fierceness of the Jew to resist.

For this reason, *Universal Judaism* has a particular resonance with more naturalist cultures, such as those in the *East*; like the Hindu or Buddhist, we share possess a more earth-based theology.

*Universal Judaism* therefore, is a vehicle by which these peoples can learn some of the missing Hebrew pieces of their newly-gained Westernized thinking. *Universal Judaism* can help them heal and preserve their own nation's culture, which was often damaged by imperialism and colonialism. So, *Universal Judaism* can help them more fully participate— as *themselves*— in today's world global culture.

Indeed, it is not a mistake that the Hebrews were *Near* or *Middle* Eastern, straddling both “west” and “east”, arising from the *omphalos* of the world, where more continents connect than any other place on the planet. It is not a mistake that the cultural and geographic center of the earth brought forth a root and singular stem from which a *Universal History* could emerge for all humankind.

### **Life is Holy. Celebrate Israel, in all forms.**

Every nation can be an “Israel”, becoming a spiritual nation that nurtures each and every individual to the fullest expression of their potential, and brings about a world with Peace, Justice, Righteousness, and all the envisioned prophetic virtues.

Every nation can be “Israel”, because the Hebrew Spirit is not fundamentally Hebrew. It is human!

However, as we spoke about earlier, there is no group which is not composed of individuals, and no individuals that exist without groups. Evolutionarily, we now know, because of *macro-evolutionary* theory, that both the group and the individual, separately and together, are powerful players in the evolution of the human species.

So, there can be no “Israel”, the people, unless there is also “Israel”, the person: all six billion of us.

Life is Holy. But, we will never realize this Holiness, until the mantle of “Israel” is not just taken up by all the peoples in the world, but also by all the individual persons, as well.

The transformation of our world takes place one person at a time!

## Chapter Eighteen:

## Israel the Person

Countless billions of human beings in our world are not *Israel*, in the spiritual meaning of this name. They are lost in their own minds, unable to find their way out, unable to see the Light of Life. They live in pain and suffering, so much so, they have actually come to believe that Life is *not* Good.

Ensnared in the consequences of their own self-deceptions, many of which they share with all humankind, they act out their lethal confusions on others. They cannot be said to *be Israel*, which may be translated: *He who sees God, Prince of God, and Upright before God*. Sadly, they are more like Israel's former name: *Jacob*, a deceiver, a *supplanter*, someone who pulled the rug right out from under his own brother.

Imagine being divided against your own family. Against your very own flesh! It could only mean that spiritually you are divided against your very own kind, divided against your very own self.

Can nations truly become Israel, if the family members which compose them, supplant each other? There can be no future for *Israel*, no future for the world, unless, there is a spiritual transformation, so that each human being, transforming themselves from Jacob, will *become* Israel.

**Israel is not just the name of a person.**

**Israel is a *state of being*.**

Abraham, fact or fiction, is the spiritual paradigm which begins to outline some of the core qualities that go into *being Israel*. He, and his wife Sarah, desperate to have the wealth of a family, are blocked by an evolutionary dead-in, preventing them from having the simple, fulfillment of their creative-desires or prayers. The "Age of *Terah*", so-to-speak, Abraham's father, had topped out; productivity and reproductively had plateaued and was now waning. Abraham and Sarah were *barren*, Super-naturally and naturally. They were lacking vision, on how to proceed.

In this utter hopelessness, Abraham experiences a sudden intrusion of new insight, new inspiration, an illumination which opens his vision. Following his Inner Voice, he and Sarah are lead to the *Promised Land*, both literally and metaphorically: Step by step, they learn How Life Works for Good. Step by step, they gain the spiritual knowledge necessary to fulfill their deepest desires. Even their reproductive activity is revived, despite their old age. The materiality of their body hears the Voice of its Creator, and responds:

**Israel is a person who is a conduit for the Power of Life, which neither heredity, adverse circumstances, geographic or physical limitations can obstruct.**

But, Abraham's success was achieved through a sacred exchange: In order to achieve his personal desires, he is sent on a task, not just for himself alone, but also for a new world he shall sire. Abraham must become more than a mere individual. He must also become an *historical* individual, deeply conjoined, person to person, individual to species, in a new evolutionary thrust: the Hebrews.

Abraham must actually love this historical task more deeply than his own miraculously-engendered son, as demonstrated by his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. He must give the Goodness of Life first priority, and render his own personal good, second. *Life first, us second*, is such a counter-intuitive lesson to the raw, survivalist animal in us, that it had to be marked, as a reminder, in the flesh, the essence of the *ot*, or *sign*, of circumcision.

**Israel is a person who is devoted to God. Israel is a person devoted to augmenting the universal experience of Good. Israel is a person whose activities, all their work, is truly *avodah* in Hebrew— a sacrifice, a sacred action— devoted to Good.**

**For Israel, all personal desires are achieved as a consequence of their sacred work.**

With fascinating genetic irony, Isaac, Abraham's son, receives Abraham's pre-illuminated lack-of-vision; he, in his old age is blind. Isaac is loyal to the past he had inherited, obedient to *primogeniture*, the passing of his estate and its blessings to the firstborn. But, his rigid loyalty prevents him from seeing the Wider Evolution that is supposed to work through him. Only his wife Rebecca is gifted with the vision of God's purpose. She begins to, surreptitiously, work around her husband's blindness, ensuring that Abraham's legacy is not undermined by too much obedience to tradition, without living, spiritual insight:

**Israel is a person who draws upon tradition for guidance, but is never blindly enslaved to it. To be Israel is to always seek the *Living Guidance* that Life offers all.**

**Israel is a person who opens their eyes to the Reality of Life, who realizes that God's Ways are fundamentally spiritual, not religious.**

Both Abraham and Isaac breed these qualities into their legacy, one consciously, the other unconsciously. However, the person who embodies them both, and evolves them further than either, so that he will actually bear the name-concept of his future people, is Jacob. It is he who will, upon spiritual transformation, unveil the hidden gift in his ancestral lack-of-vision. He will dissolve this blindness of his competitive animal nature; he will no longer deceive and supplant his own kind and himself, undermining his familial fertility. His vision will now become universal and historical. He will become *Israel*.

## **Israel is all of us, at least, in potential!**

### **The rest is work!**

Follow Israel's story, from the beginning to the end, and you will receive all the spiritual lessons necessary for becoming *Israel*. In addition to the ones above, you will learn that:

1. **Israel is a person who** realizes that they are born, physically, into the exact situation that represents spiritually who and what they need to learn; there is no body/mind disassociation or dualism; no "modern" thinking.
2. **Israel is a person who** emphasizes the Super-natural aspect of humanity more than its natural aspect. But, emphasis aside, these aspects are never at war with each other as they are in others. These aspects function together, covenantally-empowering each other, like twin loving brothers.
3. **Israel is a person who**, although terrified, faces, head-on, the challenge they are given, without turning back in defeat.
4. **Israel is a person who** is generously willing to share the gifts they receive from Life with others, tithing back into Life what Life brings them, acknowledging the Source of All Blessings.
5. **Israel is a person who** does complain when they receive back, *middah knegged middah*, the consequences of their previously-sowed self-deceit. Israel *endures*; a living sign of the *Eternal*.
6. **Israel is a person who** refuses to allow anyone to abuse them, and will use their intelligence and will to thwart those who wish to take advantage of them. They have a strong ego.
7. **Israel is a person who** wrestles in their conscience; they do not permit their fractured cognitive mirror from dictating divided actions, which divide themselves, others, and the world. They act in Unity-of-self.
8. **Israel is a person who** humbles themselves when they realize they've wronged another person. There is no pretense to dominance, no false, absolutist, and assertions of empty egotism.
9. **Israel is a person who** is willing to reconcile with another. But, going beyond mere reconciliation, Israel always seeks mutually-respectful accord. Israel pursues peace, that long-lasting peace without which one cannot see Life's Goodness.
10. **Israel is a person who**, while receiving all the gifts of their legacy, loses them through sin and self-deception. Yet, Israel is blessed with the will

and relentlessness to regain the gifts *consciously*, Israel gains the conscious ability to teach Laws of Life to future generations. Thus, Israel is a person capable of founding a nation. (Moses is an Israel.)

This is who “Israel” is. Are you Israel? Male or female, are you Israel? Do you realize the gift of your birth? Do you live for the purpose of sanctifying peace and unity? Do you relentlessly approach Life with prayerful clarity, and determined purpose, yet, are not locked in your head, blind to the world around you?

**To take the gifts of your birth**, develop them to their fullest, and consciously dedicate them to the healing of your family . . . To take your sins and errors, and pursue, relentlessly, their rectification, until your miscreations become new creations, and the power of error becomes fuel for a better Life . . .

**To be Israel** requires us to be a different kind of human being. Actually, it requires us to *be* a human being— completely— fully, drawing upon *all* our faculties, all the different aspects of what a human being is. *Made in the Image and Likeness of God*, those who are Israel devote themselves in service to all humankind.

Israel is human: Israel is a person who is fundamentally more secular than religious, more spiritual than religious, more scientific in his discernment of Life’s lessons. Israel is a person fully individualized, approaching Life on a different standpoint than the average “biped”. This is not an easy achievement, indeed, at first, you might, like Israel, limp a bit, until you are walking and then running at top speed.

**Israel is the biblical paradigm of *Universal Judaism*, for males and female alike.**

**Once again, Israel is not just a person. It is a *state of being!***

Israel is an *enfleshed soul*, a *nephesh chayah*. Israel is a person who does not live for some imaginary disembodied state, some fantasy-soul. Israel is a person who fully embraces earthly life and its meaning: Good and Purposeful. Israel is a person who does not believe— *refuses* to believe— that Life, even though it may culminate in personal death, is personally pointless.

This is what it means to *be Israel*— not just the nation, but the person who *is* the nation. To accomplish this spiritual enormity, through the “smallness” of one’s individual life, requires diligence and hard work.

***Universal Judaism* seeks serious seekers who wish to develop their full potential. For this, we have developed certain methodologies, if not technologies, that can help open up every individual to their fullest spiritual potentials.**

We all have different faculties within us. We have a mind. We have a heart. We have a will. We have bodies. We have connections to each other. We have intimate, inseparable relations with All Life and Creation. We are, as cosmic beings, hardly earthbound. We can assert our concepts, individually, upon Creation, altering it by our wills, demonstrating our Super-natural affinity with the Creator. And yet, we are also, deeply, inseparably, connected to the Life forces of this planet; truly, every person is, in a sense, indigenous upon the earth.

**To be a person is embrace both the universal and indigenous. Israel in principle, everyone!**

Each of these faculties represents a different *dimension* of human life and cosmic life, inseparably bound. In fact, we could say that the human being is a *multi-dimensional being*.(79) We, the only virtually-upright creature in the animal kingdom, straddle, perpendicularly (*Upright*, like *Israel* means) the heavens and the earth, a transversal through many parallel dimensions, seen and unseen.

The secret to human advancement, is to develop each of these faculties, in the correct order, so spiritual advancement takes place on the solid ground of stability, certainty and reliable human relationships. Only from there, can it progress, so we can, as individuals, spiral outwardly in embrace with the entire World Life of which we are a part.

**It is the great virtue of Hebrew thought, that the mundane was never considered an impediment to spiritual evolution, but was considered the impetus. It is the amazing insight of the Hebrews, that this Life was actually *meaningful*.**

Now, one must stop and consider how astonishingly counter-intuitive such an insight is. After all, there is not one of us who will not witness our physical death, where the most deeply-identified aspect of ourselves, our physical bodies, will be left to compost. So, it is not surprising how other viewpoints, more *Gnostic* in their denial of the value of material life, might have grabbed hold of broken human hearts, all too stuck in “Jacob”, unable to evolve to the “Israel State of Being”.

Israel is not an ordinary human. Israel is a *conscious-force of humanity's future*, expressed through the actions of a single individual. For the person who is Israel, the positiveness of Life can never be thwarted by personal death.

**Life is Holy. Celebrate the Positive.**

Who are we as persons? Do we as individual people actually die? What happens to our spiritual advancement once achieved on earth? Where does it go? Are our achievements as Israel truly meaningful? Does the meaning live on beyond us? If not, *history*, the great Hebrew contribution to the world, is an empty promise, an empty cultic swindle.

Despite all our pronounced human weakness and defects, individuals who have live the *Israel State of Being* have personally demonstrated that covenant is rich, fulfilling, powerful, engaging, and never-ending. It is not a death-sidetracked cultic swindle. We need only look Hebrew achievements in the sciences, in the arts, in government, in education, in economics– in all areas of human endeavors, to see, on the simplest human level, that Israel’s meaning endures and endures . . .

**Each Israel, offering themselves to Life, receives Life’s offering back. And although the numbering of Israel has been relatively small, if not pitiful, compared to the other nations, we have truly been a David amongst Goliaths.**

**How tall do you stand, spiritually?**

It is time for a leap. Every person, who chooses to become Israel, *is* the leap!

The world has been adequately seeded with the basic ethics and healthful ways that the Hebrews framed thousands of years before Western civilization had its dawn.

But, Western civilization, is at a plateau. A serious plateau. It will either evolve, or it will de-volve, and the gift of the Hebrew World View, will be hidden from sight, blind like an Isaac without Rebecca, like an Abraham before God spoke to him.

Today, there is a hunger. There is a hunger for a way of Life that is more rooted, more authentic, more free, more meaningful. There is a demand for spiritual meaning which is not enslaved to the sentimentalities, superstition and often silliness of religion-for-it-own-sake. There is a desperate need for values that can truly balance the plethora of junk-messages that condition us daily.

Western Civilization, originally the Western part of the Catholic Church, has been successful at being the thrust of political redemption in the world, a powerful force of world unification. Generally-speaking, we all share in the huge, ethical, relatively-humane, world-system that seeks to evolve and produce more good for all nations. We are all now part of a universal, globally-empowered, singular human intelligence. We now all connect, soul to soul, at the speed of light: the Internet. Truly, a “communion body”, wired and real, touches every person and nation in the world.

Western civilization has achieved much of its Christian vision in a curious technological way. But, frankly, it has lost something. It has lost its Christian essence, which is *Hebrew!*

The increasing emptiness of this global *juggernaut* haunts us: What is its purpose? Where are we going?



For *Universal Judaism* this purpose is simple. Where we are going is definitive:

**Goodness.**

**Goodness is our purpose.**

**Goodness is our destination.**

To achieve this personally, one must be more than a person, one must be *all people*, too. One must be a human who chooses to represent humanity; humanity as a human being, like *Adam*, in *Genesis*.

No one can escape *becoming Israel*. Use whatever word you prefer to describe this state of being. Draw upon your own tradition and culture. Invent your own neologisms. Find the descriptor that speaks to your heart, if the word “Israel” is too culturally “loaded” for your tastes, perhaps, “too Jewish”.

Like Jacob, fleeing in terror from *Life-on-overload*, can you find a Rock—something solid— to place your head upon?

Are you brave enough to climb Jacob’s ladder? And bring down Knowledge to earth?

Are you Israel, too?

## Epilogue:

### A Continuous Blue Thread

Like the richly-dyed blue thread in the *tzitzit*, the ancient fringes that the Bible exhorts Hebrews to wear (*Numbers 15:38*), the People of Israel have been, for over 4,000, a distinguished thread amongst others.

Whether due to breeding, self-identification, defiance-of-will, Divine Revelation, or simple serendipity— perhaps, a combination of all of these— Life has engendered a group of people to be a single, continuous, evolutionary thread of human consciousness, a *consciousness-force*, a vector of Goodness, that began the transformation of our raw, competitive, animal nature into a moral, civilized, and kinder nature, called “human”.

How this happened, no one really knows. Legend becomes history, and history becomes legend. The details are blurred.

However it did! There is no evidence, at all, at least at the current time, that the force of human history— a nation intended to lead all nations towards Knowledge of the One God—existed before the Hebrews. There is no evidence before the Hebrews, of any nation that considered their destiny inextricably bound to the destiny of the entire world.

The Hebrew contribution to humanity was never just the so-called “One God” though. The insight of there being “One God” preceded the Hebrews. The Hindus possessed this insight; they too had their version of *Elohim*, a God of many gods, functioning as One. Our uniqueness was the God of *History*. Our uniqueness was the purpose of bringing knowledge of the One God to all the nations of the world, and through that, we would merit our anointed color: *blue*, the color associated with wisdom, with conscious-force: a color which embodies light, internalizes it, and draws it, centrifugally, deep within itself.(90)

Today, the Hebrew World View is the root of everything we hold wholesome and real in our Western world, still inspired, as it is, by the progressive, evolutionary perspective which originated in the Hebrew prophets. Everyone is now fundamentally Hebrew in their perspective, whether we realize it or not.

The question is “*Can we realize it?*” Not just be *aware* of it— but fulfill it— the double-meaning of the word “realize”.

Looking backwards, as I am wont to do occasionally, I am, frankly, appalled at the number of wars, collapsed empires, and brutal deaths that tangle the continuous blue thread of Israel. It is impossible for me, emotionally, as a person, to take in all the human suffering and death out which Israel emerged in order to simply be itself.

Need this pain and suffering continue? Not if we sow and reap *correctly*.

From a spiritual point a view, this is very much a *mirror world*. We see in others that which we see in ourselves; we love in others, that which we love or would love for ourselves. We hate in others, that which we hate in ourselves, or fear within ourselves.

What does all this appalling hatred of the Hebrew *mean*? What is the world afraid of? What are *we* afraid of, that we might attract all these assaults? To a clear-sighted mind, no one, no matter how *chosen*, no matter how precious their *covenantal responsibility*, can afford to lapse into spiritual blindness, pretending that they are mere victims of history. Nor, of course, can anyone pretend that being victimizers in history is justifiable, when we share, as we know all too well these days, the identical *genome*: i.e. we're family.

A spiritual leap must take place, because our entire world is shrinking quickly, becoming essentially one *world-nation*, however culturally diverse. This is why, more than ever, the profound lessons of the Hebrews— *the world's first world-nation*— will become increasingly relevant to everyone in the decades ahead.

Our continuous, blue thread will need to continue more powerfully than ever before, conjoined with other God-blessed threads who share the Ideal of Israel. Our continuous blue thread must continue— from Hebrew, Israelite, Israel, Judean, Jew, Israeli— amplified by Christianity and Islam— until we have re-rooted the entire Western-schooled world.

A piece of the Western puzzle remains missing however. I believe this piece is *Universal Judaism*. I believe *Universal Judaism* is necessary to re-invigorate the Hebrew Spirit for *everyone* in the World.

I predict— prophet that perhaps we all are— that the age of the despised Jew will soon come to an end. I predict that the age of the honored Jew, as the spiritual root of Christianity, Islam, and our entire historically-based world global culture— is coming upon us— fast!

There is no doubt in my mind that our blue thread will continue, and flourish, because the task of this thread, to weave the fabric of *Universal History*, is not completed. That is why, as a temporary expedient, for the purpose of speeding this task, *Universal Judaism* has been imagined, as a tool.

The point about continuity is not to simply be continuous. That is simply survivalist, shabby ego, well beneath the spiritual dignity of the Hebrew. Mere survival is not the point of our continuous blue thread.

The point about continuity is *Providence*: Drawing upon the Power of the Eternal, we *endure for Good*— i.e. for Goodness sake, and for Its Enduring Goodness. The point about continuity is to make the Invisible visible through us,

*covenant.*

**No nation can continue and evolve, unless the Hand of God, Evolution, supports it.**

**National forms come. National forms go. What endures bears witness to the *Formless!***

The covenant of Israel is not some mere religious artifact, but it expresses the most profound of human possibilities: a *living relationship*— between the entirety of All Existence, God, the Creator, Reality, the All, Life, Life-*in-toto*, Nature— and the most astonishing of creational phenomena: the *individual*.

**All of Hebrew thinking is a commentary on the nature of individuality: An individual people amongst all peoples, or, an individual person amongst all persons, both are a blue fringe together with others.**

Individuality? What is this rare, rare phenomenon? We don't know if it exists anywhere except upon this earth.

In times past, individuality was ruthlessly squelched for the sake of order. In times present, it is sometimes exalted to the point of becoming libertine and decadent, for the sake of expressing one's "personal freedom"? Does individuality have a right to exist? If so, how should it exist?

Today, such questions are more extreme than ever:

Should we subjugate ourselves to some global capitalist empire that may be forming? Should we forfeit our individualities, to be part of one world corporation so our bellies can be filled, and we can have our desires provided for? The ancient slave rebellion of Israel, fact or fiction, calls to each of us, in this potential age of *The Global Pharaoh*.

Or, should we *get off the grid*, as they say? Defy the universal-machine that is being created for our so-called safety and security? Is this return to so-called *Eden*, the solution to human freedom? Many believe so. And yet, Hebrews have witnessed such "nature cults" turning sour, indeed savage.

Caught between these two polarities, we must ask: *What actually is an individual?* Does anyone fully know? No! But, one thing is certain, at least from the *Universal Judaism* perspective, an individual includes both *universal* and *indigenous* components. An individual is Super-natural and natural, born of sky and of earth, of mind and its inventions, of body and its living creations. The solution to our world is the embrace of *both* these aspects, not to retreat into either. Upon this, the meaning of our individuality, for the present and for the future, will be expressed.

We've already spoken about the meaning of individuality beyond death, in terms of our ability to transmit our extraordinary achievements to others, generation after generation. We've also spoken earlier about that endless horizon of history, the continuous hope embodied in the *idea* of some Messianic Age, whether one believes in a concrete mortal messiah, perfect or not.

The meaning of individuality in these terms, is somewhat easy to understand. We all understand that transmitting our individuality to other individualities, such as our children, gives Life continuity and meaning. Nonetheless, this remains somewhat unsatisfying. It doesn't actually *deal* with "my" individuality. The individual's purpose is submerged in the group-achievement. But, what about the single, individual human, him or herself? What about "me"?

No epilogue on Hebrew thought would be complete unless we address the blessing of the human ego, our self-aware individual selves. No epilogue on human life can avoid the Mystery of our *Personal Life* after Death.

*Universal Judaism* makes no absolute claims about the destiny of each human individual— you, me, or anyone else— when we forfeit our bodies. Our perspective is secular, scientific, spiritual and yes, individual. Concrete proof that is totally satisfactory is currently lacking. This is not a denial of the possibility of so-called "Life after Death"; it is just cautionary, lest we mistake any kind of other-world fantasy as reality, re-creating the irrational nightmare of excessive religions past.

The history of Jewish thinking has dealt with the question of Life after Death in many ways throughout the centuries. Like an archeological dig which, layer by layer, peels away new glimpses of the multi-dimensional "civilization" that is a human life, virtually every possible viewpoint has had its day and its say. Here's a brief distillation:

1. The human individual ceases to exist upon death. Our individuality, being a force-of-earthly-creation, like all creatures, recycles back into the earth, from which new life emerges.
2. Human individuality continues beyond death. Apart from our "earth parts", we possess some kind of "spirit" or "immortal soul", some kind of more subtle or thought-body.
  - 2a. Because of #2, we can die and "sleep with our fathers" becoming part of some kind of "collective consciousness". (*I Kings 2:10, for example*)
  - 2b. Because of #2, we can die, possibly join some kind of collective, but, then, re-emerge as an individual through reincarnation; our "spirit" and our "immortal soul" receives a "new body". Through reincarnation, we perfect ourselves, and we are part of the perfection of Creation on earth, too. (81)

3. We as earthly individuals, can actually physically *ascend* to God, and cease to be truncated, fleshly individuals; we conjoin with God, somehow. This implies many things. (82)
4. We die to the earth, but one day, when the entire world is historically perfected, we will be resurrected as our individual selves, into a new phase of perfected spiritual development.

Everyone has a viewpoint, an opinion. Whether any opinion is true knowledge or not, *Universal Judaism* will explore, but will not definitely proclaim. More importantly, such ruminations should never side-track us from our major task: The Achievement of Goodness, for ourselves, and all humankind.

Our blue thread, like a string of blue pearls, is composed of individuals, linked one to one to one, in continuity, but securely separated by a tiny, almost invisible knot. There is, within each of us, a deep longing to know our personal individuality continues, outliving the fodder that our bodies obviously become.

Who can know? I have my opinion, and I'm quite definite in it. But, frankly, it's just a *theory*. I'm certain you have yours. But the main point of any true knowledge of the destiny of our individual selves after death is this: *To deepen the blueness of our continuity, so it includes and values every single one of us personally.*

What's so important about continuity?

Only by having (at least) one continuous blue thread, from the dawn of history, to the so-called "destiny" of humanity— do we have a living, continuity of *memory*. Only with a continuous blue thread— spanning from that moment when somebody refused to tear off the limb of a living animal to satisfy their hunger, to new industrial requirements for loving, caring and nurturing of animals— can we appreciate our spiritual growth. Only with a living, continuity of memory, are we able to chronicle the lessons we've discovered along the way. Only with a living, continuity of memory can we create a *Torah* or *Teaching* for the future, yet, with a continuous living people, be able to correctly update and interpret it for new circumstances and times.

Without a continuous memory, knowledge cannot continue. Without a continuous memory, knowledge cannot be shared, knowledge cannot evolve, and all human progress, evolution and historical possibilities would cease.

A continuous blue thread is a necessity, like children are to parents.

**Life is Holy. Celebrate Memory.**

However, it is not an absolute necessity for such a continuous blue thread to be Hebrew, or Jewish, or any other particular covenantal variation. It is not an absolute necessity that any one sacred people or sacred person be preserved. God being Creativity Itself, Nature, there are always many ways to skin cats, should our best laid plans dissolve due to sin and forgetfulness of lessons once learned. Life demands a safety net:

**The more many kinds of Israels we have, the safer humanity is.**

**We are all dispensable.**

**The *Holocaust* has taught us *all* this lesson.**

Nonetheless, imagine, some time in the future . . . all humankind is truly sitting in their vineyard, living peace. The art of war is not taught any more. Yet, humanity still has the continuous blue thread running through it. Like praying with a prayer shawl, one can touch the fringe, roll one's finger's over it, entwine it, and extract knowledge from it.

Imagine being able to trace the lineage of all human history, by tracing this one blue thread, this one lineage.

What then is the gift? No mere individuality. For there can be many individualities, many Israels, and none is absolutely essential for Existence to continue Its Existence.

The gift? A hidden aspect of individuality, far, far more precious, indeed, exquisite: UNIQUENESS.

Galaxies may be created, and dissolve, universes may be born, but there will— NEVER AGAIN— be another group of travelers that are exactly like the Hebrews.

NEVER AGAIN will the unique evolutionary components that wove our blue thread appear in the same exact combination, in the same exact way. It cannot. God is *creative* and is never, ever duplicative or repetitive. "Same" does not exist. It is a human delusion, like a flat earth.

Anyone can sanctify Goodness through their life and death. That is a human gift. Not everyone can sanctify Goodness as a Hebrew human. It is a human gift, in a unique, precious, never-again form.

We are all born. We all die. But each of us has a unique path, all our own, until we pass on to wherever or nowhere. So, the ultimate Epilogue is a good epitaph:

**May each of us have a Good life.**

**And each of us have a Good death.**

**Blessed be the Life of All.  
Holy Nature!**



## Footnotes

### Preface

1. The original biblical verse, *Deuteronomy 6:4* declares “Hear O *Israel*”. This was not tribal exclusivism. Back when this was written, *Israel* was the only historical nation of its kind, a nation dedicated to the unification and healing of the entire world. Thus, it was inherently universal and factually correct.
2. In this age of gender sensitivity, I shall mostly refer to God throughout this book as “It”, which, coincidentally, is one of the translations of the Hebrew word “hu”, which can also mean “He”. It may take your ear some getting used to, because the word “it” usually refers to a mere “thing”, despite my capitalization. Sometimes though, I may also refer to God as “That”. Either one will help me avoid a lot of problems down the road, so thank your for stretching your ear to embrace it.

### Introduction

3. In this era, especially with *String Theory*, we must clearly distinguish between “Universe”--- *The All-Together, All Existence/Life in toto*, which is Holy/Set Apart--- and “our particular” universe, in which resides “our” particular galaxies and solar systems. With thanks to Dr. Paul Steinhardt at Princeton University for this insight.
4. The word *awe* in the Hebrew, *yirah*, is also the same word for *fear*. The Holy One is so Awesome, that by comparison, we are small, and feel such vulnerability, at least initially, as fear, until we learn How Life Works for Good.
5. Christians express the *Golden Rule* in the positive. But, *Universal Judaism* expresses it in the negative, *That which is hateful to you, do not do unto another*. This formulation tends to be a bit more precise: If I enjoy acts of sadism, do I really want that done unto me? But if I hate sadism, I would not do it to another.
6. The original Hebrew that Jeremiah uses, *Elohim-Chayyim*, translated *Living God*, does not have the built-in the sense of “Good” from the English “God”. Nonetheless, since we consider “God” to be “The Creator” That declares “Creation” “good” in *Genesis*, (6 times in fact, and the 7<sup>th</sup> time, “very good”) it is commonsense to translate *Elohim*, the term used in *Genesis*, *God*.

7. With thanks to my rabbi, Jack Bemporad, who gave me this “definition” of “rational” as “teachable”. May this book do you– as well as my other Rabbis. Bob Widom, Barry Friedman (May he rest in peace) – honor. Also, with eternal debt to the late Professor Ellis Rivkin (May he rest in peace), Alfred S. Ochs Professor Emeritus of History, at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Thanks also to Rabbis Bob Seltzer, Sim Prystowsky, Lance Sussman, and my other colleagues in *The Association for Progressive Judaism* (APJ).
8. And we continue from the end of the *Preface* here with more of *Deuteronomy 6:4: Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad*. Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God, The **Lord is One**. A Singular Experience open to *everyone!* The ultimate declaration of *Universal Judaism*.

## Chapter One

9. The equating of “eternal” with “un-changing” is a serious mess going back to Aristotle, if not before. It has a certain logic since, if God is God, and God is perfect, God would have no need to grow, change and evolve. It tends to treat God as the “Ultimate Abstraction”.  
  
Some have maintained that the “eternal” is prior to ANY creation, and sits there “all alone”, until deciding to create. *Universal Judaism* considers this a confusion between “abstraction” and “God”. How can there be a Creation that doesn’t create? Nonetheless, there is always Living Creation *before* new creations or “in between” new creations. No creation is the Totality of God, and here we believe the same.
10. *Kabbala*, Jewish mysticism, also had a Trinity, as does Hinduism. It is a way that many religions have been able to explain God as being “Other” and yet totally involved in Creation, too. Provided this Intellectual device is properly qualified, *Universal Judaism* appreciates its value. It need not be troublesome, nor, need it deny an authentic *Universal Judaism* Christian tradition, either.
11. In rabbinic literature, it was sometimes taught that the *Torah* was one of the six or seven things created prior to the Creation of the world. For example, according to Rabbi Eliezer ben Yose, the Galilean, for 974 generations before the Creation, the *Torah* lay in God’s bosom and joined the ministering angels in song.
12. If our actions affect Creation, which clearly they do, then, our actions cannot be purposeless. Fatalism is very dangerous to the health and well-being of human beings. It destroys the value and dignity of the human being.

13. Because Judaism was influenced by some Greek philosophy, there is some contamination in our way of thinking. This is but one example. Such contamination has been so commonplace for centuries, we do not notice it; it has become standard theo-logy.
14. *Universal Judaism* does not accept the existence of the devil as a “inverse-equal” competitor of God or Creation could not be good. Nonetheless, there can be evil actions, and even those whose “sport” is intensifying evil and enjoying it.
15. When praying, traditional Jews, say the word *Adonai*, meaning “Master”, instead of the word *Elohim*.

While most translations say “In *the* beginning”, which is the most familiar, so I used it in the title of the chapter, the Hebrew does not say this; it says, “in beginning”, meaning God’s “start” of something new.

The Hebrew term *shamayim*, translated “heaven”, is a plural word, so some like to render it as “heavens”, to speak to the expansiveness of a heaven beyond our heaven. It is also, colloquially, the word for *sky*. The Hebrew term *ahretz*, has been translated “earth” or “land”. What this opening biblical declaration is communicating is that God created out of Itself, “everything”. Although the sentence is framed from an earth-based perspective, it is cosmic in its scope.

16. Currently, at the time of this writing, there are two possible mathematical explanations of the *Big Bang*. One, called the *ekpyrotic* or *cyclical* model accounts for all the observed facts that the classic *Big Bang* theory does, but it has a different mechanism. Both remain unproven at this point. I personally believe the *ekpyrotic* is more correct, and more in harmony with *Hebrew* thought.

## Chapter Two

17. There had been many different competing theories of evolution before Darwin. In fact, evolutionary thinking precedes Darwin by over a millennium, and it has been part of Jewish thinking.

Today, there is more proof than ever of evolution, because *speciation*, the making of new species, has actually been witnessed in *real time* studies.

Even the most doctrinaire biblical fundamentalists have been forced to accept the fact of micro-evolution, such as that of the influenza virus. They still maintain that this does not happen on the macro-level, of species.

18. Scriptural stories tell of Moses receiving a *Torah* from God on Mt. Sinai. *Torah*, is a Hebrew word which comes from the root for “teaching”. Moses’ teaching was not what we commonly call the *Torah*– the so-called *Five Books of Moses*. We do not know what it might have actually been.

The *Torah* is a canon, a heavily edited and constructed scripture. Today though, in religious piousness and preservation of Jewish culture, *canon* is often confused with *revelation*. it causes serious confusion.

19. With thanks to Dr. Aaron Beck, the creator of *Cognitive Therapy* for his elaboration of *Cognitive Distortions*, those patterns of thinking which render us irrational and cause us great suffering.

### Chapter Three

20. The spiritual is seen in the physical, the physical expresses the spiritual. Yet we tend, because of a lot of foreign thought-contamination, to consider spiritual “opposite” to the physical. This is *not* Hebrew thought. This tends to be *Gnostic* thinking which infiltrated Hebrew thought, probably from Babylonia and definitely from Greek thinking.
21. There is so much confusion out there about what is a “soul” or what is a “spirit”. It is compounded by the fact that we translate a lot of ancient religious texts into foreign languages. So, we might translate the Hindu *atman* as *soul*, and *prana* as *breath* or *spirit*. But, it doesn’t necessarily mean that we *mean* the words “soul” and “spirit” the same way.
22. As with footnote 20 above, who is to say whether so-called *spiritual laws* of Creation are not *physical laws*, and *physical laws* are not *spiritual laws*. This is more Gnostic contamination.
23. In Darwin’s theory, natural selection depends upon the individual organism. It is the individual organism that is the unit by which the environment stimulates the transmission of “positive” traits, those that facilitate survival. In the Bible, it seems as if there is no individuality in any animal other than the human being– a case which is tremendously overstated. There *is* individuality in the animal kingdom. The difference is *conscious* individuality, in which the human being is particularly gifted.
24. In the Bible, God parades all the animals in front of Adam, and Adam promptly demonstrates his ability to name the animals, i.e. conceptualize

them, marking them through the use of a symbol-word. Thus, the human being demonstrates conceptual power— *comprehensive power*— over them, which is necessary for domestication. All power over the any force of nature is achieved the same way.

## Chapter Four

25. I teach a more living, spiritual perspective. So, I see *chet*, as an active response from Life resulting from a mis-directed action not in alignment to How Life works for Good. However, *chet*, in religious teachings is considered some kind of violation of a “rule” that is recorded in scripture. The rule is derived from the experience of *The Living God*. It remains very valuable, but it is a “recording” not a “live performance” so-to-speak. This is the fundamental difference between the “religious” and the “spiritual” perspectives. It needs to heal.
26. This is a Socratic teaching. No one does anything unless they are seeking some kind of good, minimally, to preserve themselves. I would tend to agree, but, not all goods are as worthy as other goods, another Socratic doctrine. See Plato’s *Gorgias*.
27. “Sowing and reaping” is Jesus’ wonderfully, creative re-phrasing of the Rabbinic principle: *Midah k’neged midah*, translated “measure for measure” It was gleaned from their reading from scripture as well as their Life experience. See The Babylonian *Talmud*, *Sotah 1:7* Jesus was very much a teacher of *Universal Judaism* for his era. See [universaljudaism.org](http://universaljudaism.org), *our history*.
28. This is hardly a complete explanation for “Why do Bad Things Happen to Good People?” But, it is a good basic start. See Harold Kushner’s, inspiring book *When Bad things Happen to Good People*, Anchor, 1974.

## Chapter Five

29. *Radah*, comes from the Hebrew root, *yrđ*, for “to come down”, or “descend”. *Dominion*, *radah*, means therefore to “sub-ordinate”. This is not subordination, as we commonly consider the word to mean, ruthless control, subjugation and domination. It means to “place under”, “take responsible over”, or “order under”. Hence *radah* might be better translated *stewardship*. It is instructive that the word *dominion*, comes from the Latin for *master of the house*. Hence, again, *stewardship*, is a much more masterful translation than *dominion*.

30. *Babel* in Hebrew means “Babylonia”. In ancient Babylonia they constructed towers or *ziggurat*. How could such a story be written before ancient Babylonia existed? Obviously, the Bible is a canon, constructed after the fact. Nonetheless, the lesson of excessive ego very much came from the Babylonian Captivity, after which the *Torah* was canonized. So, the story makes spiritual and historical sense.
31. The Biblical stories of the Patriarchs are decidedly male driven. This is not an error, since the impulse of building a material civilization does skew decidedly male; females tend to be busy with far more important things, like birthing new children.

However, it would be mistake to disregard the wives of the Patriarch. Indeed, Sarah is the birth mother of Israel, as distinct from Hagar, the birth mother of Ishmael. Obviously, Abraham alone cannot determine the character of a Chosen People. Moreover, Bible is very clear, that Ishmael, the progenitor of Muslims, has a place In history, very respected. Indeed, he and Abraham were circumcised on the self-same day. See *Genesis 16ff; 17:26.*) This has broad ramifications for peace in the Middle East, as shall be discussed.

32. The Bible describes Noah as “*walking with God*” (*Genesis 6:9*). The Rabbis contrast this with the Biblical description of Abraham “*walking before God*” (*Genesis 17:1*) and they describe the difference as that of a toddler vs. an adult. (*Genesis Rabbah 30:10*) It might be said to also be that of an unconscious follower of goodness, rather than a more conscious leader of goodness. The Rabbis tend to view Noah as representing “natural law”, and Moses representing “civilizational law”. I believe that this is somewhat true, but needs much qualification for today.
33. This, of course, is very controversial given that there now exists a Modern “State” of Israel. This is why many orthodox Jews do not accept the organizational structure of Israel as being legitimate. On the other hand, voting rights in a “State” which is democratic, makes it far too easy to breed out any “Jewish” identity in an election. This will take a lot of time to heal these different conceptual-governmental forms, and unify them into a single People of Israel again.
34. Although Abraham is said to come from *Ur of Chaldees*, (*Genesis 11:31*), which is Mesopotamia, curiously, he is also called a *Hebrew Prophet* (*Genesis 14:13*). How could a Babylonian be a Hebrew before the Hebrews existed? Once again, the Bible is a canon.

35. It is quite possible that Abraham is a literary figure and not real. The Bible may have been edited, and the differences between *Exodus* and *Genesis* was harmonized, somewhat artificially, by the seeming *ad lib* that Abraham was Hebrew. See for example, F.F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations*, Michigan, 1981. There are many others who see the Abraham story as a retrospective construction.

Nonetheless, this legend does seem to indicate some kind of “fusion” of Mesopotamian culture and Hebrew or Israelite culture. There is much evidence that this took place.

36. For extraordinary insights into macroevolutionary theory that can help reconcile the Hebrew view with science, see: Stephen J. Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Thought*, Harvard University Press, 2002. All evolutionary discussions in this book were largely based upon this.

With much thanks to my cousin Prof. Daniel McShea, an evolutionary biologist at Duke, and student of the late and extraordinary Stephen J. Gould, may he rest in peace.

The late Stephen J. Gould believed that Darwin actually got the idea of natural selection occurring through the individual organism from Adam Smith, who considered individual entrepreneurship to be the most important thing in *capitalism*. Such extreme individuality, a reaction after so many centuries of medieval and feudal group-control, would account for why individuality was so heightened by Darwin. Indeed, early capitalism was so devoid of altruism, and group responsibility, that it eventually became corrupt. The world needs the knowledge of *Universal Judaism*, to overhaul our economic systems.

37. For insights into *epigenetics*, see: Richard C. Francis, *How Environment Shapes our Genes*, Norton 2012.
38. Hitler very much mimicked traditionally Jewish structures of thought. There would be a Messiah to unite the world (him). There was a sacred land (Germany). There was a sacred bloodline (Aryan). There were “uncovenanted”, sub-humans, *unttermenschen*. Of course, this was not a Holy Nation devoted to The Creator’s Good. It was devoted to Hitler’s view of good. This, yet again, is another example of Tower of Babel-like egotism.

## Chapter Six

39. See, *Daniel* 5:27; Babylonian Talmud, *Taanit*, 8a.

That there is action and re-action, a living justice built into How Life Works for Good is the foundation of all moral law. Sadly, this has been forgotten. Instead, people have emphasized “rules” and “regulations” of laws, forgetting their spiritual and natural foundation.

*Universal Judaism* seeks to restore this, through its Life-Centered teachings.

40. Many may find it difficult to believe that our actions affect the weather, such as a flood. Do remember, that your body is a piece of the planet, and when you act in a way that is morally-offensive, you are destroying nature. Explore the number of lethal floods and storms that have taken place in America recently, and compare this to the dates of certain wars. Is this happenstance.

41. All past actions are, somehow, “recorded” in the fabric of existence. So, the good the Hebrews did with Abraham, prior to their enslavement, was still active: a “new” cause, waiting to surface and create a “new” effect.

The *Torah* describes this as “God remembered Abraham”, *Exodus 2:24*. Even without the poetry, there is a real, cognitive experience standing behind it. Carl G. Jung, the founder of *Analytical Psychology*, called this kind of phenomenon, *The Collective Unconscious*.

42. The figure of Moses, because he was the prophet of the wilderness, became a “device” by which priests, kings, and others sought to justify their power, i.e. that they are the continuity of God’s original guidance. This is why the *Torah* is so complex, with so many seams. It is composed of so many documents from many different times. This does not however, change the spiritual knowledge that Moses represents.

43. *The Ten Words– Eser Dibrot* in Hebrew– is the original phrase. Ten *Commandments* comes from Christian teachings. The Hebrew word, *dbar*, for *word* is the same as for *thing*. A *word*, in a spiritual sense, is a *real-thing*, something created by God, and therefore essential. Many rabbis imagined these Ten Commandments being promulgated *before* the earth was created. That’s how essential they are to a healthy, good Life.

This concept of a word-thing, *before* the Creation, is virtually identical to the Christian idea of *logos*. Here “Christ” existed before Creation, instead of the *Torah*. It’s the same kind of conceptual thinking.

## Chapter Seven

44. In general, this phenomenon is a product of all *deductive reasoning*, from a larger principle to a smaller one. If, all Americans have citizenship in



America, then, if I find any American, you can be sure they have citizenship in America.

45. While the *Torah* law maintains capital punishment for many crimes, capital punishment was— in essence— outlawed by The Rabbis. Considering it a cruelty, they built so many legal conditions around capital punishment, that they made it all but impossible to convict someone to death.
46. This problem still exists, for example, in New York State, where excessively punitive laws against marijuana have imprisoned otherwise respectable citizens, mothers, for example, who sold a little marijuana to pay for their rent.
47. After the Babylonian Exile, Cyrus King of Persia, permitted the Israelites to return to their land, and rebuild the Temple provided the government would be a *hierocracy*, rule by priesthood, as was Persia. There have been many modes of authority in the history of the Hebrew people. With each mode of authority, law had to be revisited and reinterpreted.

It is important to note, that at the time of the Roman destruction of the great Temple, the priesthood lineage had been corrupted, and the chief priest was a Roman appointee. This is part of what contributed to the controversy around Jesus' crucifixion.

48. The scholar class which became *The Rabbis*, were called *Perushim*, which means “separatists” in Hebrew; they saw themselves as an alternative authority from the priests. Christians know them through the Greek term *Pharisees*. Amongst them, was the great Hillel!

The priests here, were called *Tzadikiim*, In Hebrew, which means “righteous ones”.

They had different philosophies. The *Perushim* believed, for instance, in resurrection of the dead, and an afterlife. The *Tzaddikim* did not.

Sadly, Christian scripture has tended to paint the “Pharisees” as hard-hearted, unfeeling, legalists. They misunderstand them. Nor, do they realize that *The Spirit of the Law* was, in fact, a Pharisaic invention, which Jesus, schooled in Pharisaism, well understood. Hopefully, over time, these nuances of history will help repair the damage between these two great peoples.

## Chapter Eight

49. There is a debate in Jewish teachings on whether man is higher than the angels or lower than the angels. If by “angels” we mean the primordial-forces that are involved in Creation, then certainly human beings, being able to shape the forces of creation with free will could be considered greater.
50. It is a wonderful and truly fascinating part of the *experience of God*, that waves of harmony and spiritual-integration emanate after an action, wisely-considered, takes place. One can learn to see this taking place. It is experiential “proof” of the model of *Adam*– a single, group humankind as one individual– in 2<sup>nd</sup> Genesis. For Christians, it is experiential “proof” of the “body of Christ”, which is a variation on the model of Adam.

This is NOT proof, that either Adam or Christ are fact, only that the spiritual experience can be abstracted into these theories or models. This point is critical for practitioners of *Universal Judaism*, otherwise spirituality loses its scientific credibility.

51. What is usually translated *leprosy* in the Bible is a disease called *tzaarat* (See, for example, *Leviticus 13*). It is more of a kind of pustulent psoriatic disease. When the Bible was translated into Greek, they correctly translated this *lepra*, which corresponds to this disease. Sadly, *lepra* then became translated into Latin and from there to *leprosy* in English, which is another disease entirely.

Nonetheless, in the Bible– and in Life– there is a link between psychogenic phenomenon and disease, or the Mind-Body connection. When a person is not spiritually in the correct place, the body often follows, and the disease is often symbolic of the spiritual-problem. For example, a person who is taking on too many burdens of others, and has back trouble. A person who is taxing themselves emotionally, may have heart trouble. This is really a very ancient viewpoint in contemporary form.

52. The formal religious “requirement” called “kosher” although based upon a very natural experience in Life, which the Bible describes, was changed by The Rabbis. In nature, it is obvious one should not destroy a calf in the very milk that nurtured it. The Rabbis made this “symbolic” too, a “teaching tool”. So, dairy and meat (including, chicken because it has a red blood), should not be eaten together. A cheeseburger, where the calf and the cow have been properly cared for? *Universal Judaism* will speak about our view of *kashrut* later on.

A *Universal Judaism* discussion of the beauty and meaning of the Sabbath we shall day also until later.

## Chapter Nine

53. *Babylonian Talmud, Pirke Avot, 1:14*
54. The Rabbis cite a few examples where martyrdom, the sacrifice, to the point of death, of oneself is valuable. 1) If God, Goodness, is being wiped off the face of the earth, one should fight with one's very life. 2) If you are forced into wanton sexuality, i.e. it might destroy creation 3) If you are forced to murder someone, you should choose to be killed rather than do so. These criteria are called *pekuach nephesh*, "the saving of a soul", in Hebrew. See *Leviticus 18:5*; *Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 85b*.
55. *Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 3:2* *The Shechinah* is commonly considered the "female" aspect of God, because it can descend and dwell upon the earth. The "male" aspect is considered "higher" and transcendent. Needless to say this romance needs to be reconfigured for today's more gender-neutral descriptions. Nonetheless, its beauty need never be reconfigured! Indeed, only when men seek spiritual advancement, can their Ideal Woman, so-to-speak, meet them. As a guide to men, at least heterosexual ones, this traditional interpretation remains instructive.
56. Google, *Genogram*, for a few good articles on *Wikipedia*.
57. The *Mogen David*, Star or Shield of David, became the symbol of world Judaism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the creation of the Modern State of Israel. However, as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was part of mystical or Kabbalistic teachings. It became identified with the Jewish communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well. It is a marvelous symbol, indicating a powerful integration between the heavens (upward triangle) and the earth (downward triangle), in keeping with the teachings of *Universal Judaism*.

## Chapter Ten

58. The great Chasidic mystic and rabbi, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov specialized in this kind of meditation, which, with a few adjustments for the unique approach of *Universal Judaism*, remain valuable and instructive.

## Chapter Eleven

59. See for example the ancient Jewish-Roman historian Josephus, *Against Apion*.

60. The imperial Roman tendency to disrespect the earth which, by and large, with the exception of St. Francis of Assis, infected Roman Catholicism, is now formally disavowed. See Pope Francis' (Notice the name.) extraordinarily encyclical, *Laudato Si*.
61. This would be my personal translation of the first sentence of *Genesis*. The word *elohim*, a plural word, which could be translated "gods", nonetheless takes a singular verb, i.e. working together. Since Jews tend to substitute the the word *Adonai*, when they read this, meaning "Lord", and since *elohim* is plural, I would call them Forces of God. Others have translated *elohim* "divine beings", "angels", etc. Again, *Universal Judaism* considers God to have dimensions, aspects, sub-realities, creations; God is not a "simple, abstraction", as philosophical speculation has tended to portray It. So having such forces would not be a contradiction.

### **Chapter Twelve**

62. While assimilation is feared in many Jewish denominations, *Universal Judaism* considers correct assimilation, one which is consonant with core Hebrew principles, to be a sign of the success of the Hebrew Spirit. See for instance, *Babylonian Talmud, Niddah 66b*. The logic is simple: If the world is perfected, then the particularities of Hebrew law is not necessary any more; the entire world is "naturally human", so-to-speak. Thus, healthy Hebrew-based "secular" life, is not a threat. However, since unkempt secular-ism still is not "kosher", the continued existence of the Hebrew People has not yet been achieved, and the need for our knowledge continues . . . and continues . . .
63. With great thanks to the late Professor Ellis Rivkin, Alfred S. Ochs Professor Emeritus of History, at Hebrew Union Cincinnati. Ellis was the first person who attempted to relate positive mutation (that aided survival) in evolution, to Hebrew cultural change. He was genius! He was a friend!

### **Chapter Thirteen**

64. From a Jewish mystical perspective, it is fascinating that the word *brit, covenant* in Hebrew, also indicates a person who is "British". British universalism, colonialism, imperialism and class-elitism aside, has been largely consonant with the *Universal Judaism* principles. For this reason, it has become the dominant culture of the secular world. A discussion of this spiritual-historical-phenomenon is beyond the scope here. Nonetheless, the convergence of these two languages is not mere happenstance.

### **Chapter Fourteen**

65. See, for instance, the Prophet *Jeremiah*, 4:4, 9:25; also *Deuteronomy* 30:6. The “circumcision of the heart” was what is required, since many circumcised had become morally corrupt. See also *Romans* 2:29, for those Christians interested in *Universal Judaism*.
66. See *Genesis* 17:1-4; Lack -of-circumcision meant you were cut off from your people. At one time, this was truly a distinguishing feature of the Hebrew. But, now that “Jewish” is more religiously-conceptual or cultural, it is not.
67. See, *Umberto Cassuto, Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part one*, Magnus Press, *Hebrew University*, 1989-- regarding the Mesopotamian *shappatu*.
68. *Shabbat* sanctifies the balanced marriage of man and woman. It sanctifies the balancing of the Super-natural upon the natural. It sanctifies even more than male, the female, the *Sabbath Queen*, as Jewish mystics discuss Her, representing the *Shechinah*, or the indwelling “female” aspect of God. *Shabbat* is a kind of ancient “feminist” celebration. It is ecological sanctification.
69. For this reason, in the so-called *Ten Commandments*, the Sabbath is critical (*Exodus* 20:8). Remember, the entire Ten Commandments begins first, with a reminder that the Hebrews were freed from enslavement– i.e. lack of rest– in Egypt.
70. See, Cassuto, *Commentary*, footnote 67.
71. Hebrew knowledge is based on respect for the planet and proper eating, so as to maintain the health of the individual as well as respect for All Life and Creation. There can be no Hebrew-based culture that does not do this, and truly claim to be Hebrew.
72. In rebelling from the extreme cultism, of requiring “kosher” for salvation, Christians, went overboard, and ignored the value of *kasher* completely. See for instance *Acts* 10:16. These days though, through scientific secular life, many born-Christians are discovering authentic biblical *kasher*, because it is built-into Life. They are How Life Works for Good.
73. These days, there is much reproductive freedom, including the freedom to not choose to have children. There is also the possibility of artificial insemination for both heterosexuals and homosexuals who have physical impediments to reproduction. This is a dramatic technology,

with broad, sweeping implications— not all positive— for the earth and evolution. It is not quite so simple as “I would like to have a baby anyway”. While *Universal Judaism* does not deny the gift of such technology, it must be used with Wisdom— in Truth, care and balance, *Value Priority #4*.

## Chapter Fifteen

74. As in the story taught in *Exodus 33:22*, Moses, hiding in the cleft of the rock, can only see the last phase of God’s passing or evolution, God’s “backside” so-to-speak. For *Universal Judaism*, revelation is the Self-Revelation of God, as our human experience!
75. See the defense by Zvi Hirsch Ashkenazi of David Nieto, regarding Spinozist pantheism. Freehof, Solomon B. *A Treasury of Responsa*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963, p. 176.
76. See footnote 36. Here I borrow upon Gould’s criticism of the “Selfish Gene” theory of Dawkins. Gould denied that genes were the causative agent in evolution. He asserted they were simply “bookkeeping”. I feel the same way about scripture.
77. This is a general statement. However, the fact is we actually learn to believe the solidity and appearance of what we call *real*. Such beliefs, if altered, can actually affect our experience of How God Works for Good. This is very delicate, moving into extremely mystical, if not shamanic, areas of human experience, and are well-beyond the scope here. Nonetheless, even such core “real beliefs” cannot be negated, only neutralized.

## Chapter Seventeen

78. How wonderful if all God’s children could be prophets! But, how even more wonderful, if all the nations of the world would be prophets! This is the dream of *Universal Judaism*.

## Chapter Eighteen

79. With thanks to my friend and colleague, Dr. Rabbi Gabriel Cousens, M.D., for this phrase, “multi-dimensional being”. It really is quite succinct. I recommend his book, *Torah As a Guide to Enlightenment*. North Atlantic books, 2011.

## Epilogue

80. *Goethe's Theory of Color* remains marvelously insightful on this subject. Blue, corresponding to the *throat chakra*, or *daat, knowledge* in the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, has been said to represent "externalized mind", or the "word". After all, just as our "lower genital" is straddled by our lower limbs— for *conception*— our "upper genital" is straddled by our upper limbs— for *concept*. Both are creative, one faculty more physical the other faculty more mental.
81. Reincarnation is part and parcel of much of Jewish mystical teachings. It is something shared in common with Greek philosophy, and with other peoples, such as the Buddhists and Hindus. Reincarnation was an active doctrine in the *Lurianic Kabbalah*, and remains a component in modern Kabbalah as well. I personally do not believe it is as simple as "hopping out of one's body, and getting a new one", but this is beyond the scope here.
82. In the Hebrew Bible, *Elijah* is the prime example of someone who physically ascends to God, in his case, in a whirlwind. (*2 Kings 2*). In Christian Scripture, of course, *Jesus* demonstrates this prophetic ability. The ascension story of *Enoch* is also mentioned in Christian Scripture (*Hebrews 11:5*), an expansion upon *Genesis 5:21-24*. The *Book of Enoch*, an inter-testamental book, expands this story even further, and is very mystically-inclined.

For *Universal Judaism* any human ascension— because God is the Nature of natures— would be the same phenemomon as being a "de-physicalized" human— becoming an individual-force *with-in* and *of* Nature. This is logical, since, it is *that* from which the physical dimension of our individuality emerges.

This model pre-supposes that some ego-individuality is retained after death, implying some variation of #2. It implies that our physical life is not the definition of individuality. It permits the possibility of reincarnation. It also permits the possibility of reconstitution of individuality on a different scale of creation than the mere earth.

It also implies that human cognition, based upon the senses, which seems to narrow what a human is to the mere physical, is somehow neutralized by a Higher Cognition; when this takes place, the physical body is revealed to *already be* Something Larger than a mere "corpse". This view is compatible with Genesis II, prior to the so-called "fall". It has the advantage of sanctifying some kind of earthly-ego as permanent. Whether this is fact or not, is complicated.

All in all, the *Universal Judaism* God-View makes quite logical a lot of Life after Death possibilities, but this is beyond the scope here, obviously.