

Sivan I

The Festival of Revelation and the Uniqueness of the Torah.

On the sixth and seventh of Sivan we celebrate the Festival of the Giving of the Law **זמן מתן תורתנו**. Where are the symbols of this festival? Where is the significance of Shavuoth as the Festival of Revelation mentioned in the Torah? Why is this festival of Shavuoth so short and so fleeting? Pessach has its Matzoth, the festival of Succoth its Tabernacle and its Lulab, Rosh Hashanah its Shofar, Yom Kippur its Fast. But where are the symbols of Shavuoth?

We know how clear and precise is Scripture with regard to the conception and significance of all the other festivals; but you will search the Torah in vain for a designation of Shavuoth as the festival of the Giving of the Law. To the redemption from Egypt we dedicate a festival which lasts a whole week; it takes a whole month for its preparation and completely transforms our domestic life. To the miracle of our preservation in the wilderness we dedicate another week, the whole of which we distinguish by our living in the Succah. But to the Giving of the Law, to the Revelation of the Torah, to this most holy transcendent event from which our whole existence derives its meaning and purpose, to this festival of all festivals, we devote only one brief and placid day! Why this brevity and quiet, why this lack of pomp, this paucity of symbols?

1. Uniqueness of the Torah

There is no symbol for the Torah for the same reason that there is no symbol for God: the Torah is One and Unique like God its Creator. It has nothing in common with other laws, teachings, systems and institutions. It is so unique that it can be compared only to itself, it is something *sui generis*; as soon as you describe it by names and terms taken from other spheres you falsify the essence of the Torah and bar the way to its real understanding.

It is most essential to utter this warning. We think of all other things as belonging to classes which contain many individuals resem-

bling one another. This rule of thought makes it difficult to admit the existence of an absolutely unique phenomenon which has no parallel whatever in any similar sphere. But "absolutely unique phenomenon" is the only description we can apply to the Torah.

2. Religion.

One is accustomed to call the Torah "Religion" or Jewish Religion, because the word religion describes everywhere outside Israel the relationship of man to his God or gods; this word, too, is invested everywhere else with dignity and holiness; could one then have found a holier and more impressive designation for the Torah than religion? And yet, it is exactly this term "religion" which has made it so difficult to understand the essence of the Torah. From the time when men first drew breath on earth they have had a kind of religion. The heathen who prays to his fetish, the Aborigine who moulds his god of honey-dough and paints it with human blood, the Greek who carved his god of gold and ivory and ascribed to him the invention of his arts and indulgence in his own gallantries, and finally the adherents of those two world-religions which have come into existence by combining a few ideas from the Torah with various conceptions taken from the nations of the world—all these had, and continue to have some kind of religion. Even the atheist who despises religion has, perhaps, himself retained some sort of religion; it may be that he denies only the conception which other men have of God, that he despises only the kind of religion which he finds among other people. For by religion we understand the conception which men have formed and are still forming of a Godhead and their relationship to this Godhead. The religions of mankind are, therefore, human products—creations of the mind and spirit of man; and there exists consequently a genesis, a history of the development of religion and religions, just as there exists a history of languages, arts and sciences. The religion of a people rises and falls together with the other manifestations of its culture. Religion is only part of the cultural life of a nation and is conditioned by it. The more rational and the more refined men are, the more rational and elevated will be their conception of the deity and their relationship to it.

No religion can, therefore, in its beginning, rise above the cultural level of the nation out of whose midst it arose. No religion, in its

inception, can possibly be in complete contrast to the conceptions, inclinations and outlook on life of that nation. No religion, in the ordinary meaning of this word, can easily undertake to raise and educate the nation from which it sprang, up to its own higher standards; for it (the religion) is but a plant sprung from the spiritual and intellectual soil of that nation, and must, therefore, keep pace with the nation's advancement or retrogression.

The Torah, however, did not spring from the breast of mortal man; it is the message of the God of Heaven and Earth to Man; and it was from the very beginning so high above the cultural level of the people to which it was given, that during the three thousand years of its existence there was never a time yet during which Israel was quite abreast of the Torah, when the Torah could be said to have been completely translated into practice. The Torah is rather the highest aim, the ultimate goal towards which the Jewish nation was to be guided through all its fated wanderings among the nations of the world. This imperfection of the Jewish people and its need of education is presupposed and clearly expressed in the Torah from the very beginning. There is, therefore, no stronger evidence for the Divine origin and uniqueness of the Torah than the continuous backsliding, the continuous rebellion against it on the part of the Jewish people, whose first generation perished because of this very rebellion. But the Torah has outlived all the generations of Israel and is still awaiting that coming age which "at the end of days" will be fully ripe for it. Thus, the Torah manifests from the very beginning its superhuman origin. It has no development and no history; it is rather the people of the Torah which has a history. And this history is nothing else but its continuous training and striving to rise to the unchangeable, eternal height on which the Torah is set, this Torah that has nothing in common with what is commonly called "religion." How hopelessly false is it, therefore, to call this Torah "religion," and thus drag it by this name into the circle of other phenomena in the history of human civilisation, to which it does not belong. This is a fundamentally wrong starting point, and it is small wonder that it gives rise to questions such as the following, which have no meaning so far as the Torah is concerned: "You want Judaism to remain the same for ever?" "All religions rejuvenate themselves and advance with the progress of the nations, and only the Jewish 'Religion' wants to remain rigid, always the same, and refuses to yield to the views of an enlightened age?"

These questions would have sense and meaning if the Torah were

the "Religion of the Jews," i.e. the conception which the Jews of a certain epoch had of God and of the relationship of man to God. They are, however, meaningless and futile because the Torah is the unique eternal Message of the Unique and Eternal God of heaven and earth; it is not based on the ideas which the Jews once upon a time *had* of God and their relations to Him, but on those which they *should* have at all times according to the will of this One and Eternal God.

3. Symbols.

One is accustomed to call the Torah "Jewish Religion;" but what is usually called religion outside Judaism relates primarily, as we have seen, to something within man, to his conception of God. And any outward observance which is connected with this inward experience is, according to the general idea of religion, only its form, and, therefore, the unessential and indifferent part of it. Indeed, as long as the thought which inspires a religion is true, its sentiment pure and noble, any form which clearly expresses that inward character is acceptable; and this form must change with the inward religious sentiment. It is here that the danger of identifying the Torah with "religion" becomes manifest. Having once applied the term "religion" to Torah, one naturally concludes that in the sphere of the Torah too, man's inward frame of mind, his thoughts, conceptions and sentiments alone are the essential things; while the outward observances are merely unimportant forms which may and should change as we ourselves do according to times and circumstances. But, in fact, the whole unique character of the Torah and every word it contains are a living protest against this whole conception.

It is simply not true that our inward frame of mind and our sentiments are the essence of the institutions of the Torah, while everything is merely external framework or mantle. What the Torah wants to regulate is not only the thoughts and sentiments of man, but the whole of human existence—man's sensual impulses, his needs and desires, his individual life as well as that of his family, society and state. The Torah is the unique message of God addressed to Man in his totality. The few sayings of the Torah which refer to our thoughts and sentiments exclusively would cover only one small page. Are we then to regard ninety-nine hundredths of its 613 precepts as a mere wrapping which can at need be dispensed with? Only one who has never attentively

looked into the Torah could fail to realise how strictly it demands the observance of its laws relating to outward actions, and especially to the physical and sensual spheres of life which are quite outside the realm of what we usually call religion. Among the many laws belonging to this category we will mention only the dietary laws and the laws regulating sexual relationship. We may be sure, that unless our modern age makes the Torah a "sealed book" for the Jew, it will never succeed in robbing the people of God of its Torah and giving them an anaemic "religion" instead.

And finally, let us take those laws of the Torah which are expressly declared to be the embodiment of a thought, and consequently a symbol (אִוֶּת) or, to use the modern expression, a "form," e.g. Sabbath, festivals, sacrifices, etc. The character of all these laws makes it obvious that the name "religion" does not fit them at all; for in these laws what is called "form" stands forth as something essential, original and eternal.

Religion in general relates to the thoughts of man which find their expression in symbolic actions: in any system of religion, therefore, the thought is the original, important and essential element, whilst the external, symbolical expression of it is of secondary importance. But unlike "religion" the Torah is not the thought of man, but the thought of God, expressed in Divine Laws which are to be carried out by man as symbolic actions. It is by these symbolic actions ordained in the Torah that the Divine thought is first implanted in man. This symbolic action is, therefore, of primary importance; it is the most important element in the Pentateuch. The Torah is, therefore, a Divine document the authentic form of which must be kept and preserved with scrupulous accuracy, so that man should be able to study and assimilate the Divine thoughts contained in it.

This idea has important legal consequences. Any Jew who by word of mouth expresses the opinion that the world was not created by God is not liable to punishment according to the penal code of the Torah; and, conversely, if he had merely expressed his conviction of the Divine origin of the universe by words, sermons or lyrical poems, he would not have fulfilled his duty as a Jew. Both acts as the mere utterance of views would remain in the sphere of "religion," of what the world calls "faith," as the expression of an opinion held at a particular time. But opinions change and creeds alter. The atheist of to-day may become a devout hymn-singer to-morrow. And what he imagines to

be an advanced study of natural science may create in the religious poet of yesterday the conviction that his religious hymns were nothing but childish fancy. The penal code of the Torah does not punish, therefore, the expression of opinions about religious matters. It is quite different with the symbolic language of God as expressed by the commandments of the Torah. He who celebrates Sabbath in the Divine symbolical language of abstention from work (איסור מלאכה)¹ has proclaimed the truth that God created the world; and he has thereby expressed this truth not as a human belief, but as a revelation of the Creator to man; he has preserved a monument for himself and mankind which may help his children and grandchildren to rise to the profoundest conception of God at a time when a misguided science has blocked the way to a true knowledge of God the Creator. And again, anyone who desecrates this symbolism of the celebration of the Sabbath has thereby overthrown for himself and others the Divine monument, he has torn to pieces the Divine document which is intended to immortalise the conception of God not as "religion," not as a human credo, but as Torah, i.e., as actual revelation of God to man.

It is just these "forms" therefore which preserve the truths of the Torah as Divine revelations, as Torah, and save them from being transformed into their opposites, from being evaporated into a religion; they are not the signs by which man expresses his changing thoughts and feelings but the script in which God has set forth the truths by which the world is redeemed and established. Hence, there is nothing more right and proper than the most loyal and scrupulous preservation of these "forms" in actual practice, so that generation after generation may find in them ever fresh and deeper meaning. Nowhere, therefore, can individual caprice do more harm than in that sphere; for a neglect of the prohibition not to add to the constituents of

¹ See Hirsch's explanation of the term מלאכה in his חורב and his Commentary on the Pentateuch. There he rightly points out that the conception of מלאכה, usually and wrongly translated as "work," forbidden on the Sabbath, has nothing to do with physical exertion. See also Grunfeld, "The Sabbath," pages 12–16. The meaning of the fundamental rule מלאכה מחשבת אסרה חורה (Sanh. 62) is rather this: By complete abstention from such activity on the Sabbath as the term מלאכה implies the Jew testifies that it is only by the will of God that he can be active at all, and have dominion over all the earth, and that human creativeness is derived from God, the supreme Creator of heaven and earth. Anyone who does a מלאכה on the Sabbath thereby implicitly denies by his action that God created the universe.

these "forms" (בל תוסיף) or to subtract from them (בל תגרע) would mean a mishandling of the holiest gift of God to man.²

4. Theology

We have seen how the name "religion" became fatal to the true understanding of the Torah because this name was given to it in defiance of the fact that the essence of the Torah is in complete contrast to what is usually known as religion and its manifestations. Having thus wrongly applied the term "religion" to the Torah, people subsequently drew conclusions from the application as if it were correct. A similar danger to the understanding of the true essence of the Torah arises from the application of other alien conceptions to the Torah and its institutions.

Thus one calls the Torah "Theology," "Jewish Theology." By "theology" we generally understand a system of human ideas and conceptions of the Godhead. God is the highest notion which the human intellect can conceive; and the knowledge or assumed knowledge of things Divine is so remote from the average man, and the systems of theology so complicated, that a whole class of professional theologians came into existence. Compared to these "theologians" ordinary people were and are considered as "laymen" who do not know and are not supposed to know the intricacies of theological speculations.

Nothing could be more senseless than to apply the name Theology to the Torah, than to call the Torah "Theology" or even "Jewish Theology." For, whilst "theology" contains the thoughts of man on God and things Divine, the Torah contains the thoughts of God on man and things human. There is little said in the Torah which refers directly to God and things Divine; and of the inner essence of the Godhead and the supernatural we find in the Torah nothing at all. The Torah rather tells us what God is to us, to the Universe as a whole and to every part of it; above all, what the universe, the earth, mankind, Israel and every individual Israelite mean to God the Ruler of them all.

² See Deut. 4, 2 and 13, 1 (cf. Sifri) and Talmud Sanhedrin 88, 2. "If a man said, 'there is no obligation to wear Tefillin' (phylacteries), he is not culpable; but if he said, 'there should be in them five partitions instead of four,' he is culpable."

The Torah tells us how we should regulate, develop and perfect our intellectual, spiritual, physical, domestic and social relationships on earth; how to sanctify our existence as well as all our endeavours on earth, so that the Divine Glory may abide in our midst during existence here, and our happiness need not be deferred to the life beyond.

It is this conception of man and human affairs which the Torah reveals to us; it addresses itself to everyone; it speaks of one's most intimate affairs. The Torah does not want to tell us how things look in Heaven, but how they should look in our hearts and homes. And, therefore, it counts on everyone and expects everyone to come to the Torah, and draw wisdom from it by day and by night. Thus the Torah does not know of theologians and laymen; it rather knows a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. It says to everyone, "This commandment which I command thee this day is not too hard for thee, neither far off . . . but in thy mouth and thy heart that thou mayest do it." (Deuteronomy 30, 11-14.)

This conception prevailed in Israel as long as the Torah was not called "theology." But since the Torah has become theology for us, we, too, speak of theologians and laymen, and the Torah—once the common property of every cottage and every palace in Israel, and therefore the very soul of our nation—has fled from the cottages and palaces into the study of the gowned theologian and thus lost its significance for the everyday life and existence of our nation.

"Why does the child not study the Torah?" "Well, he doesn't intend to become a theologian." It is here that we have the key to the whole tragedy of our days.

5. Divine Worship

"Divine Worship," one is accustomed to call the institutions of the Torah—"Jewish Divine Worship."³ By worship we usually understand certain actions by which men show their devotion to the Godhead in certain places and at certain times. In other circles outside Judaism, these devotional actions, times and places are the only or at least the most important means by which men come into touch with their God. These actions are naturally the holiest, and this relationship to the

³ It is difficult to render the word "Kultus" used by the author in the German original by an adequate English expression.

Godhead has impressed the character of sanctity upon certain times and places. Thus Houses of God and Divine Service are the outward signs and expressions of piety, i.e. of the devotional sentiments of men. The splendour of the Houses of God, the magnificence of the Divine Service became the measure of devoutness. For they are visible signs of the sacrifices by which men show their devotion to God.

In the Jewish sphere, however, which is ruled by the institution of the Torah, Houses of God, Divine Services, are of secondary importance; for what is generally known as Divine Worship has in the sphere of the Torah neither the same meaning nor the same aim. The Divine Service of the Torah is life itself, and to worship God means to obey the laws of God. Not by the manner in which you build His House, decorate His Temple, chant hymns and pray unto Him will God recognise you as belonging to Him, but by the manner in which you build and sanctify your own homes, serve Him in your everyday life, in your marriage, in the education of your children, in your family, your whole social relationship; whether and how you serve Him with your thoughts and feelings, your speech and your actions, your business life and your enjoyment; whether you fulfill in all these spheres the revealed Will of God—that is how God will judge you to see whether or not you are His servant. The kind of worship which He expects of you is obedience, even as the master expects of the servant, the teacher of the pupil and the father of the son. Temples, Houses of God, Divine Service do not testify anything to God, they exist in order to act as witnesses for *you*, to remind you of your God, to declare to you your task, to save you from the vicissitudes of life, to collect your thoughts as you appear before your God—להתפלל—to make you reflect upon your own self, to re-create for you again and again a true conception of your own self, your destiny and your whole relationship to God. The Jewish houses of worship exist in order that the Jew should prepare himself within them for the service of God in life. They are thus not for God but for man. For God is only there—and He is always there—where you allow him to be Master and Father; where you submit yourself with a joyful heart to His rule, leadership, and teaching; where you are His servant, His disciple and His child. And so, if your house of worship is there for you it is also there for God. If you do not enter the House of God merely to sing hymns and pious chants or to burn the incense of your devotion, but to re-dedicate yourself to God in your everyday life, משעבוד לבך לאביך שבשמים; if you find your own

self again in the house of worship and allow God to find you there, then you will always find God there as well. This is the real meaning of Hillel's utterance, related in the Talmud (Sukkah 53a): "If I am there, then everything is there; but if I am not there, who and what could then be there?"

Let us not forget that Jewish houses of God—"synagogues"—are a comparatively late phenomenon in Jewish history. It was not the Torah which instituted our houses of God and our Divine Service: the Torah asks for only one National Sanctuary and for our attendance there only three times a year. This Sanctuary and all that happened in it was entirely עֲדוּת, God's testimony to us; it was a symbolical communication from God to the Nation as a whole and to every member of it. Temple and Temple Services were an eternal, public manifestation of what we have to do, so that our whole life should become לֶחֶם אֱשֶׁה, the food of the Divine on earth, and our whole existence consummate itself לְרִיחַ נִיחוּחַ, to the supreme satisfaction of God. The details of the Sanctuary were so minutely prescribed that there was little room left for devotional exercises in the narrower sense of the word; obedience rather than devotion was its general motto.

The "Synagogue," i.e. "House of Assembly," arose from the need of individual groups of our nation to gather before God and around the Torah, to remind themselves by reading in the Torah and by daily prayers of their great task and to dedicate themselves to this task. Being far away from the Sanctuary as most of them were, they tried to let the words of prayer and Torah-instruction have the same effect on their minds as had the symbols of the Temple with its service on the minds of those who were near it. Now it is just because our Houses of God and the Divine Services within them are not the essence of our worship of God, but are rather places and occasions for preparing ourselves for the real worship of God in practical life, that the synagogues are not Israel's holiest places. They take but second place in holiness as compared to the בְּתֵי מִדְרָשׁ, "the houses of learning," which are devoted to the study and teaching of the Torah, i.e. the enquiry into the prescription of the Divine Will as to how a godly life should be led by man.

There was a time when the worship of God in Israel did not reach its highest point with Divine Service in the House of God; when the worship of God was not at an end when one left the synagogue, but really only began when one stepped out of the synagogue into the

world again; when the Torah was not banished to the Aron Hakodesh but lived in the hearts and homes and lives of Israel. Our fathers in those days did not attach an excessive value and importance to the Houses of God. They did not think so much about the impression that the Houses of Worship made on outsiders, but were content with the fruits they themselves gathered in the House of God. They did not decorate synagogue and Divine Service as the worshippers decorated the sacrifices in the old days to exhibit their piety and devotion. There was no need for all that. Our fathers knew a different kind of sacrifice which they brought in the fierce battles of existence, as well as in the even tenor of their individual, family, and national life—sacrifices by which alone God desired to recognise that they were His people. They did not go to the House of God to sing hymns. They went there to speak to God, to converse with Him or rather to hear God speak to them; to renew in themselves the words of God and those thoughts that shaped their lives. To go to the House of God was to our fathers a work which everyone had to do for his own self, and what called them to the House of God was the desire to immerse themselves anew in the Fountain of Life, to renew their spiritual life, to give a new impulse to their spiritual development. Our patriarchs called their prayers שׂיחָ, which means “spiritual and thoughtful meditation.” They wished to be “planted,” שְׂתוּלִים, in the House of God; their roots were to be there, but the flower and fruit which sprung from them to be brought to the “Courts of our God,” i.e. to be displayed in the actual life which was lived around the House of God.⁴

Until recent times, our fathers called the Synagogue “Shool” (school), and, indeed, the house of prayer was a “school” for the Jew in which he prepared himself for life, in the presence of God. That function of the Synagogue was, of course, different from that of a theatre or an opera house—but it was also different from the function of temples and churches of other denominations.

All that is now changed. Since Judaism has become a “Religion” and a “Theology” with its “Worship” and “Divine Service”, the only truly Jewish worship of God, the fulfilment of the Torah, has more and more faded away from Jewish life. Those of our institutions which have some similarity to non-Jewish conception of Religion, and which, in non-Jewish circles, constitute the whole of the service of

⁴ See Psalm 92 and the explanation of S. R. Hirsch in his commentary on the Psalms.

God, have been pushed into the forefront. These institutions were designated by such names as "Divine Service" or "Divine Worship," and received the same prominence in the Jewish sphere as they had in the non-Jewish surroundings. The less one cared for obedience to the Torah and the practice of its teachings, the more attention did one pay to the mode of Divine Service in the House of God. As the visits to the House of God became less and less frequent, so was care taken to see that the architectural beauty of the Synagogue and the form of the Service did not offend the aesthetic feelings of the assimilated Jew when he paid his yearly visit to the Synagogue; or that even the non-Jew whose curiosity might lead him to attend a Jewish Service might be prompted to remark admiringly that the Jewish Services were almost as beautiful as his own services in Church.

We forgot the warning of the Prophet against just this localising of God in the House of Worship, whilst life outside shows a flagrant disregard of the word of God: "The heaven is My throne, and the earth My footstool. And ye want to build a house for Me and to give Me a place for My rest. My hand created all that came into existence in the whole of the universe. And only to him do I look down who—though he be poor or abject—knows only one care—the care of My word. . . ." (Isaiah 66, 1–2.)

We forgot that even the Temple of God in Zion was overthrown as soon as they began to consider the formal Temple rites as the be-all and end-all of the service of God, when they shouted *היכל ה' היכל ה'*; from the point of view of the Torah the real temple of God is not the mere building but the Jew whose whole life is a continuous glorification of God. (See Jeremiah 7, 3–4.)

One forgot that either "the Torah" knows no worship at all or its worship comprises the whole of life.

6. Torah

But if the Torah is neither religion nor theology, nor worship, what then is it? The Hebrew word *תורה* is derived from *ידה*, akin to *הרה*, which has the double meaning "to teach" and "to conceive." Torah, therefore, means a seed put by God into the womb of a nation from which the whole life of that nation in all its personal and collective aspects is to develop; it is a Divine seed whose product we call "Israel," a section of mankind whose whole existence both as a nation and as individuals is a historical phenomenon as unique as the Torah

which gives it both life and a *raison d'être*, and as unique as God who has sent both Torah and Israel into this world as the manifestation of His will and power.

And if the essence of Torah has eluded every comparison and every definition, so the expressions which Israel has invented to describe the effects of the Torah on his life know no bounds.

Thus the Torah is for Israel the refreshing water and the purifying fire, the nourishing milk and the gladdening wine, the rock-splitting hammer and the conquering sword, the diadem on his head and the jewel on his neck. It is for him the staff supporting his foot and the light showing the way, the comparison in happiness and the counsellor in adversity, the hymn of the night and the song of the day, the light at the crossroads, the guardian of his sleep and the first greeting in the morning. The Torah is to Israel the priceless pearl, the matchless wealth, the inexhaustible treasure, the endless field, the gold to be won from the deepest mine. To him the Torah is the source of knowledge and understanding, the fountain of life and peace, the well of salvation and strength; the absolute good and the tree of life which—if planted and tended with proper care—is able to bring paradise back to this world.

7. Tradition.

And now, behold! The celebration in remembrance of the Torah, this soul of our soul, our highest good on which is based our whole existence, and without which all the precious things to which the other festivals are consecrated—freedom and soil, preservation and prosperity, purity and atonement—would lose their essence and meaning, just this celebration in remembrance of the Torah is not mentioned at all, no reference to it is made in the written word of God; it is only to the oral tradition, to *תורה שבעל פה*, that we owe the Festival of the Revelation of the written Torah, *תורה שבכתב*, and thus the first memorial of the Written Law directs us to the Oral Law, to tradition. How eloquent is this silence of the Torah concerning its own festival! The Written Law abandons itself if we deny the Oral Law; the Written Law renounces its own existence unless it is preceded by the Oral Law; the Written Law commits the very knowledge of its celebration to the living tradition of the word of mouth handed down from God. Thus the Written Law seeks to be celebrated only in a company of men who are permeated by the living breath of the Oral Law, which is Divine like the written word; and in this way the Written Law itself makes it clear that its

very being depends on the existence of the Oral Law. This is the second thought which the silence of the Torah with regard to *זמן מתן תורתנו* teaches us. And indeed, it is not the Oral Law which has to seek the guidance of its authenticity in the Written Torah; on the contrary, it is the Written Law which has to look for its warrant in the Oral Tradition.

When we raise aloft this Torah, the revelation of which we celebrate on Shavuoth, we jubilantly proclaim: *זאת התורה אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל* that it is still the same Torah which Moses brought to Israel "through the mouth of God, through the hand of Moses"—the same Torah, pure and unadulterated. When we live and die in the conviction that this precious heritage has been preserved pure and genuine amidst all the tempests and vicissitudes of a history of more than three thousand years, or when we rely for the earthly welfare and heavenly salvation of ourselves and our children on the truth of this Torah, what guarantee have we for all this other than the tradition of our fathers? Yea, the selfsame fathers who, together with the Written Torah, handed down to us the Oral Law also? If our fathers have deceived us with the one, how could they be trustworthy with the other? Indeed, there is no evidence or guarantee for the truth and reality of a historic fact save our trust in tradition. All sorts of documents and monuments, all kinds of internal and external circumstances may lead you to the conclusion that it is probable, or almost certain that such and such an event did really happen; but who tells you that what you consider probable or even certain has really happened? Or that the very documents from which you draw your conclusions are not in reality forged? What other assurance have you that the conclusions you draw are a safe enough basis both for your present and future course of action, if not your trust in the genuineness of tradition? The fact remains, however, that Jewish tradition—a phenomenon unique in its kind—refers us back to itself only; and that it refuses any documentation by the Written Torah which, after all, *is only handed down by that oral tradition* and presupposes it everywhere. This in itself is the most trustworthy sign of its truth — more trustworthy than any document with seven seals could possibly be. The fact is that Holy Writ contains no direct documentary evidence of this truth of the Oral Tradition. And yet, a whole nation has joyfully committed the preservation of its existence during more than 3,000 years to the authority of this Oral Tradition. This shows in the most striking manner how deeply

convinced all these generations were of the truth of this tradition; how sure our forebears were of the veracity of what had been handed down to them by their own fathers and would one day be passed on to the children—a truth which they themselves had sealed with their life and death. So completely assured was the people of the faithful transmission of this tradition that it required no other legitimation. Nothing would have been gained—it would even have been dangerous—if the Holy Writ (whose authenticity rests in the last resort only on the veracity of tradition) had itself contained a direct legitimation of this same tradition. The same enemies of Israel's tradition—who now use the argument that tradition is not legitimated in the Written Law—would have argued that a clerical error might have crept into Holy Writ.

That part of the Torah which has been handed down orally shares the fate of the whole Torah. The Oral Law like the Written Law suffers from misapplied terminology and wrong conclusions drawn from it owing to the fact that people do not take into account that the Oral Law, too, is a unique phenomenon. This failure to recognise the validity of the Oral Law is due to the fact that to others "tradition" means something vague and unreliable in contrast to that which is laid down in writing. And this is so, because for these others certain individuals have posed as the sole bearers of tradition and have used that monopoly for their own gain and advantage. And in order to maintain that monopoly they tried to prevent the people from reading Holy Writ. Hence for these others tradition became suspect. And owing to similarity of name the same suspicion was transferred to Jewish Torah-tradition, in spite of the fact that the conditions in which the tradition of the Torah grew up are diametrically opposed to those found in other religions.

The Torah-tradition was entrusted to no special calling or priestly caste, but to the entire Jewish nation. In virtue of the maxim "raise up many disciples," it was the first and most sacred duty taught by tradition to spread the knowledge of the Torah among all classes of the people—every honest Jew, whether he was a "shepherd" or a "weaver at the gate of Jerusalem" was listened to and respected as the bearer of Jewish tradition by the highest legal authorities in Israel. No kind of material advantage was attached to the knowledge of Jewish traditional law. We know for certain that until the third millennium of its existence no word of the oral tradition was taught other than in an

honorary capacity; not a single law was applied by a paid judge. The most eminent protagonists of the Torah were always the first to make a sacrifice for its sake, to live in accordance with its precept and thus by their conduct to demonstrate its truth. It was the Oral Law which made it the duty of every Jew to listen three times a week to the public reading of the Written Law and to be in possession of a copy of it. It was the Oral Law which enjoined every Jew, with promise of special Divine reward, to read every year the text of the whole Torah twice in the original and once in the vernacular translation of Onkelos.⁵ How absurd to compare this tradition, maintained with such publicity by the entire nation, and purely for its own sake, with any other tradition which merely shares its name, whilst being its complete opposite otherwise.

It is indeed due to the oral character of the *תורה שבעל פה* that it was able to perform such miracles. If the Torah whose festival Shavuoth celebrates is "perfect," "restoring the soul," "rejoicing the heart," "enlightening the eyes," "pure," "enduring for ever;" if the laws of the Lord are "truthful" and "righteous altogether;" if the Torah has been able to preserve our national life for more than 3,000 years; if it could compensate our people for the lack of everything that to others makes life beautiful, noble and happy; if it bestowed upon our nation clarity of mind, purity of morals, gentleness of heart, unequalled family life, a unique spirit of charity, along with an enthusiasm for all that is humane, pure, good and noble—and, at the same time, with a courage, endurance, steadfastness and self-sacrificing spirit that are recognised and envied by our enemies; if you praise the Torah on the festival of Shavuoth for all these blessings, verily—do not deceive yourselves—it is the *תורה שבעל פה*, the part of the Torah entrusted to Oral Tradition, to which we owe it all.

It is only the oral part of the Divine Revelation which made the commandments of the Torah an instrument capable of shaping and moulding life, of carrying the spirit of Godliness into all the details of earthly existence, and thus transforming the poorest cottage of the Jew into a Sanctuary. It turned his everyday life into a service of God, all his endeavours and actions into a hymn of glorification of God Almighty. It helped to bring the Jew in his faintest impulse, in his

⁵ Mishnah-teacher of the second century. Supposed to be the author of the Aramaic translation known as "Targum Onkelos".

every thought and feeling, in all his words and deeds, his aims and enjoyments, nearer to the covenant of his Creator, that covenant in which he finds ever new strength and courage, a serenity, peace, and bliss which all the vicissitudes of fate cannot take away or darken.

It is that part of Divine Revelation which was entrusted by God to Oral Tradition that has made the mental eye of the Jew keen to survey and judge even the smallest manifestations of human life in their relation to truth and justice and duty; to equity and love, to guilt and innocence; to what is permitted and what is not. It is just through its oral character, and its accessibility to all, that it has sunk so deeply into the collective and individual mind of the Jew, and has given mental nourishment to a whole nation for over 3,500 years; that it has united all our minds in a common effort to construct a great national edifice of the intellect and spirit. It is this common spiritual endeavour that has combined all sections of our people—however different in age, intellect, social station and prospects in life—and welded all Jews into a unique intellectual aristocracy and spiritual order—an aristocracy in which even the poorest could find his place and feel his importance, and by which Jewish mental development has been reared into so strong and healthy a plant that even the latest generations in Israel draw from it sustenance, even those who in their proud ignorance do everything possible to prevent their own descendants from continuing to enjoy this intellectual and spiritual inheritance.

And finally, it is that Torah Revelation entrusted by God to Oral Tradition which has endowed its adepts with the wisdom needed for creating, in the spirit of the Torah, those admirable enactments which we call *גזירות* and *תקנות*.

These legal enactments of our sages have served as a powerful bulwark, safeguard and stimulus to Jewish life; so much so that wherever in the world over ten Jews assembled, they could give new life to the Jewish people by means of a Kehilla-organisation on the basis of Torah, for Divine Service and charitable activity, *חורה עבודה וגמילות חסדים*, with a "family-and-community life" that filled the smallest Jewish cottage with bliss and happiness arousing the envy even of our detractors.

Or do you doubt this? Do you think it is the Written Law which performed all these miracles? If so, just ponder for a moment on the fact that while many another nation has taken over from us the "written Bible"—centuries ago—they could never attain the spiritual

height of Israel; just because they lacked the oral tradition, which is the key and the indispensable complement to the Written Law.

That is why the Written Law needs to be brought into actual life by Oral Tradition only; that is why the Written Law announces itself as dependent on the Oral Law only, and that is why the commemoration of the Revelation of the Written Law as celebrated by Shavuoth was entrusted only to the Oral Law.

8. Torah and Life.

But why then is this celebration itself on so small a scale, so quiet, and restricted in the Torah to the fleeting span of but a single day? And on that day itself the celebration is marked by scarcely one positive symbol, and is expressed merely in a negative way—by abstaining from doing any work!

One day only? One quiet day? Only one quiet day for the Torah? Verily, one cannot say that celebrations and festivals have brought only blessing into the sphere of the Torah. Celebrations not properly understood have often been misused in times of religious decadence. The weaker a generation is, the less willing is it to serve those ideals, the greatness and truth of which it cannot, after all, entirely deny. The less a generation is inclined to pay homage to these ideals by dedicating to them its life and to build an altar to their honour by sacrificing its possessions and enjoyments, the more eagerly does it grasp at easier substitutes in order to bedeck itself with lip-service to these ideals. And thus it builds monuments, institutes festivals and holds banquets, intoxicating itself with the fragrance of such symbolical veneration, in order to soothe its conscience for the obvious betrayal and negation of these ideals in its everyday life.

The same applies to the great ideals, aims and truths of the Torah, if we betray and deny them in our lives, if we have not the will to devote our lives to them, if we do not want to realise the truths of the Torah in our daily existence, refusing to use the symbolism of the festivals for their realisation. If we celebrate these festivals in order to give a mere symbolical recognition to the existence of these truths while refusing to them the power to mould our lives, and sneering at them in practice by living without thought of the Torah, then the spirit of the Torah frowns at us too—*לא אוכל און ועצרה חדשיכם ומועדיכם שנהא נפשי*—"I cannot

tolerate iniquity combined with solemn meeting. My soul hateth your new moons and your appointed feasts." (Isaiah I, 13–14.)

This, then, is the final reason why the Torah rejects any symbolic expression and even any designation of Shavuoth as the Festival of Revelation. From the very beginning it should clearly be conveyed to us that the Torah, the quintessence of all that is good and precious, is not satisfied that we devote a Festival—be it a day, a week or even a month—to it. The Torah demands of us the dedication of every hour and every moment throughout the year.

God has designated the Torah to be the soul of our whole life—**אשדח**—the invisible gentle flame of our whole being which permeates our homes and animates and moulds our being. And just as you can find organs for all sensual functions of life, and yet will look in vain for an organ which is the bearer of the soul—because the whole human organism is its bearer and no part of it can be without the soul—so also the Torah, the soul of Israel as a national entity, is not limited to a special day or week or month, because the whole of Israel's life belongs to it and is to be regulated by it. Any localisation within this life would but limit the realm of the Torah.

Why not a whole week or a month, and why not a symbolical celebration for the Torah? Because it is not the week nor the month but the whole year that belongs to the Torah, and this is so because the Torah does not demand a symbol only, but life and conduct.

9. National Symbolism.

For the Jew, as an individual, the celebration of the Festival of the Torah thus hardly found an outward symbol of any consequence. But, in the heart of Israel as a nation, at the national centre of the Temple, Shavuoth was given a highly characteristic expression through the **שתי לחם**—the two leavened loaves—and the **כבשי עזרה**—the lambs of Pentecost.⁶ In the Temple service, the new produce of the soil was not allowed to appear as the property of Israel in the offering of the **מנחות** (meal-offerings) before the day of the Revelation of the Torah had arrived and homage had been paid to the Torah through these very sacrifices. For as regards Israel, property and independence and the

⁶ Cf. Levit. 23, 17.

soil which is the source of both are dependent upon the Torah. They derive from it and are handed to us and guaranteed by the Torah. 'The two leavened loaves' and 'the peace-offering of two one-year-old lambs'—שני כבשים בני שנה לזבח שלמים—are but the symbolic expression of what Israel owes to the Torah. This typical offering on the day of the Festival of the Torah again expresses the essence of Torah in a manner which has often been and is still entirely misunderstood. The underlying ideas of the sacrifices offered up during the rest of the year are Devotion and Atonement (חטאה and עולה); the acknowledgment of Israel's utter dependence on God (מנחה מצה); and the religious joy which flows from this act of homage (נסכים). These ideas were to lead Israel along the path from the profane and the secular (חולין) to the sacred sphere of the Torah, at the summit of which the whole of human existence is but a means for the realisation of the Divine on earth (לחם אשה) which alone can bring satisfaction to God (ליריה נחמה ליה).

But this summit and culmination of human existence must never become a kind of ecstasy which is remote from the reality of this world. The ways of the Torah do not lead to that asceticism in the eyes of which the earth with its flowers and blossoms, with its attractions and joys is nothing but folly and sin. The devotion required by the Torah is not negation, its atonement is not mortification; its affirmation is not weakness, its homage is not self-degradation. The Torah is not summed up in despising and rejecting the earth in order to climb to heaven. At its crowning height the Torah presents you with the bread of human independence (לחם חמץ) and with that state of complete human happiness which is expressed in שלמים, and which we call inward peace, inner harmony. For those who have achieved this inner harmony, this blessed peace of mind, there is no longer any contrast and disharmony, any conflict or chasm between heaven and earth, between time and eternity, between temple and home, altar and table. For heaven and eternity, bliss and supreme happiness have entered the daily, temporal concerns of such people. Their psycho-physical existence, their material and spiritual being has been changed into something heavenly and eternal. They are able to assemble their families around the table of God. And, in the presence of God, together with wife and children they can enjoy these eternal values which transform every moment of our fleeting existence on earth into a taste of eternity.

Here again we see the uniqueness of the Torah and how it defies all

comparison. In all other cults, religions, theologies, or whatever you may call the imagined relationships of men to their imagined gods, this world—with all its boons and delights, joys and pleasures—shuns the presence of all those gods which (to use an expression of the prophets) have created neither heaven nor earth—*וְרִי שְׁמַיָא וְאֶרְקָא לֹא עֲבָדוּ*.⁷ These gods are enemies of human independence, and their teachings are opposed to human happiness and genuine joy of life. “Thus shall ye say unto them, the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.” (Jeremiah 10, 11.) Their falsehoods are exposed by the real character and the just claims of the earth. But He Who created heaven and earth with the same care and attention, He for Whom every moment lived by man on this earth in His service is equal with any other moment in the life beyond, He “Who hath made the earth by His power, Who hath established the world by His wisdom and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion,”⁸ His Torah is a revelation which creates life. Its teaching is intended for this earth above which the heavens are extended; it includes in its scope life in this world with all its Divinely created relationships with the heavenly sphere. The Torah is meant to regulate human life on earth with its wisdom and to transform the world into a paradise of peace and salvation, of joy and inner happiness for God-serving mankind. It is as the culmination of its teaching that man achieves his independence and the world attains its real significance. *לֹא כַאֲלֵה חֵלֶק יַעֲקֹב וְגוֹ*: “The portion of Jacob is not like them; for He is the Former of all things.” (Jeremiah 10, 16.)

It is, therefore, not *עוֹלָה* and *חֲטָאָה*, offerings of devotion and atonement, but *שְׁלָמִים*, offerings of peaceful serenity, that represent the highest aim of the Torah. According to ancient tradition *עוֹלָה* (burnt offerings), that are offered up when the earth is still wrapped in darkness, were already known to the Noachides long before the revelation at Sinai. But *שְׁלָמִים*, offerings of harmonious joy and inner peace in the presence of God, that are offered up when the earth is lit up by sunshine, such sacrifices were first named and ordained in the Torah. (See Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus ch. 9.)

It is significant that the offering ordained for Shavuoth consisted of two loaves and two lambs. In the symbolism of sacrifice the figures one

⁷ Jer. 10, 11, 12.

⁸ *Ibid.* 10, 12.

and seven always represent the nation as a whole. But the figure two, the pair, always points to Israel not as "גוי," as a nation representing a collective unity, but as "עם," as a society with all its members. For שתי לחם means independence for every member of society and שני כבשים לזבח signifies harmony, peaceful joy for every cottage. The Torah which goes out from Zion and the word of God which comes from Jerusalem are supposed to create peace not only externally between nation and nation, but also within, between the individual members of society. (See Micah 4, 1-4.)

This condition of independence and joyful harmony which the word of God seeks to bring to every individual is meant to unite them all in brotherly love. The Torah wants more than the unity created by calamity and distress; it aims at unity flowing from happiness. Herein lies a deep principle of the Torah's social outlook. There can be no independence or happiness of one member of the community without the independence and happiness of the others; everyone should enjoy his own independence and happiness only if he knows that his brother is equally independent and happy. That is the inner meaning of the halachic dictum (זה אח זה) ושתי לחם מעכבין זה את זה and, (זה אח זה) ושתי כשב עזרה מעכבין זה את זה according to which the two leavened loaves and the two one-year-old lambs to be offered up on Shavuoth cannot be brought except in conjunction.

10. "Bikkurim."

Thus in the stillness of the Temple Service the representative of the community offered up the sacrifices ordained for the Festival of the Torah, symbolically expressing the lesson that independence and happiness for Israel can ripen only on the tree of the Torah. Then, between Shavuoth and Succoth, when the national joy reached its culmination, the individual pilgrims themselves went up to Jerusalem and placed their fruits upon the altar of God, as visible signs of their independence and the blessing which only the Torah had brought to them.

The first ripe fig, cluster of grapes or pomegranates which a farmer noticed was marked by him and dedicated as "First-fruits" to express gratitude for the soil and the blessing given to him by God to enable him to carry out the Torah. The whole country was divided into

districts, and when the time had come the villagers would assemble outside the chief town of their district and encamp there for the night. At early morn they were roused by the cry of the watchman: "Arise ye and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God." (Jeremiah 31, 5.) Those who had to come but a little way would bring green figs and grapes; those who lived at a distance would bring dried figs and raisins. The fruit was brought in gaily-decked baskets of willow; but the rich used caskets of gold. And so the pilgrims set forth to the sound of musical instruments. Before them went an ox destined for the sacrifice, his horns decked with gold and his head crowned with olive leaves. When they had drawn nigh to Jerusalem they sent messengers before them and decorated their first fruits. Leading priests and treasurers and officials of the Temple went forth to meet them. And all the workmen in Jerusalem used to rise up before them and greet them saying: "Brethren, men of such and such a place, ye are welcome, enter in peace." The flute was played before them and so the joyous procession made its way up to the Temple Mount, and there, even the King himself would come forth, and taking one of the baskets, would carry it on his shoulder. On arriving at the Court of the Sanctuary, they were received by the Levites with song. "I will extol Thee, O Lord," so they chanted, "for Thou hast raised me up and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me." (Psalms 30, 2.)

Then each pilgrim with his basket on his shoulder began the recital of the famous declaration enshrining the early history of Israel, as ordained in the twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy. With these First-fruits he would testify that he now possessed the land which God had sworn unto his forefathers; he would recall how long, long ago his ancestor had been a servant at the house of Laban the Aramean, how the fate of his forefathers had more and more deteriorated until they had sunk into Egyptian slavery, how the God of their fathers had delivered them, then led them to the Sanctuary of His Torah and given them the land flowing with milk and honey. Finally, the priest solemnly waved the fruits and placed them on the altar, and the pilgrim, having prostrated himself, went his way.

"And thou shalt rejoice at all the good which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou and the Levite, and the stranger that is in the midst of thee." (Deuteronomy 26, 1-11; Mishnah Bikkurim 3.)

11. Torah the Final Goal.

And thus, this still and silent day of the Torah, bare of any adornment or symbol, enters your life. Strange it is how, in all its stillness, this Day of Revelation is so impressive, in all its silence so eloquent, in spite of the absence of any symbols so full of significance; the day of "the Giving of the Law" invites you to meditate earnestly on the uniqueness of the Torah which it brought to you, and to realise the fullness of life and happiness which this Torah is able to give to you.

Alas, the flute which accompanied the march of the pilgrims to Jerusalem has long since been silenced; the figs do not ripen any more in the fields of Israel; gone is the glow of the grape; the pomegranate no longer gives its juice; real joy is not felt in our days in the land of milk and honey. Indeed the time of independence and happiness that Israel was allowed to enjoy in the land of the Torah has been short and fleeting. The eternal hills of Judea are still there, the brooks still purl and ripple, the plains of the Holy Land still unroll, the same sky still spreads its canopy over the same earth; but as long as Israel is not returning thither, Israel as Israel, as the people of God and His word, as long as the Torah is not realised there in full, you may build colonies and industrial schools, and yet the soil of that paradise will remain—a wilderness.

The Torah is the Divine seed of all human happiness that is to come, the indispensable condition of independence and progress in this world which man seeks in vain through other means. This Torah has by no means come yet into its inheritance; it has hardly had a past and in its bosom it carries the future of eternity; and yet there are those who would cast it aside as obsolete, as a thing that had been good in its time, but has been superseded and has no longer any value for our days—as if the conditions of our time, and the relationship of the nations of the world to one another had not abundantly shown where a Torah-less mankind is likely to end.

Behold, the festival of the Torah has not presented you a symbol, it has not impressed itself upon your souls with any particular celebration; but it presents itself to you under two names by which it is to be remembered. One of these names points to that supreme happiness of life which the Torah can bring to you like a blossom of Paradise; the other name carries an indignant denial of the false allegation that the Torah is obsolete and antiquated. One designation of the festival of the

Torah is **יום הבכורים**, "The Day of the First-fruits." We have already dealt with the happy associations which it evokes. The other name is **תג השבועות**, "The Festival of Weeks," the deep implication of which should be earnestly laid to heart. Just as the term **יום הבכורים** refers to the joyful period that begins with the festival of the Torah, so does the name "Weeks" indicate the time of preparation which precedes it.

Is the Torah obsolete? Has our time—or any time—already progressed beyond the Torah, has it really left the ideal of the Torah behind it and outgrown its institutions? It is to this question that the name **שבועות** is able to provide the answer. "Seven weeks shalt thou count." So the Torah calls to us on its own festival. "Seven times seven days must you count before you can celebrate the day of my festival, seven times seven purifications you must go through before you can make yourself worthy of my institutions." "Not only the past is mine," says the Torah, "but the whole future; I am the ideal placed on high, to which all your generations have to raise themselves; my flame burns upon the summit of the mountains, but ye stood and are still standing at the foot of the mountain, **בחחית ההר**, you have never sunk lower than when you imagine you have risen above my lofty heights."

Do you know the generation that "curses their father and does not bless their mother;" that are "pure in their own eyes and yet have not yet outgrown their childhood's impurity;" "whose eyes are so lofty and whose eyelids are lifted up?" (Proverbs 30, 11–13.) That is the generation which belittles the Torah of its God and the institutions of its forefathers, and yet would need seven times seven purifications and transformations before it could be in a condition to reach the height to which that Torah and those institutions call it.

Whenever the Torah deals with a transition from a lower to a higher standard of morality, from a primitive, raw condition to an advanced state of purity and holiness, we find that the primitive stage is always made to pass through a sevenfold cycle of time before the higher stage of moral freedom, purity and dedication begins. Thus, an animal is only considered capable of being offered as a sacrifice seven days after its mother; a child can only be initiated into the covenant of Abraham after seven days; those who have become **טמא**, impure can re-enter the pure precincts of the Sanctuary and pure married life only after seven days. The liberated Jewish nation, however, had to pass through a period of seven times seven days before they could dare to look to the heights on which the Torah was enthroned; and when they

had settled in the Holy Land they had to count again seven times seven days from the moment the sickle was put to the corn until the celebration of the festival of the Torah; before they were considered mature enough to receive the full content of the Torah they had to stand a test of sevenfold self-scrutiny, trial and purification.

The Torah was not meant for the generation of Revelation only, so that a future generation, more advanced, might be able to outgrow it. In very clear words was it stated that the covenant of the Torah was made for the most remote generations: *אח אשר ישנו פה ואשר איננו פה*.⁹ The Torah is not the starting point of Israel's world-historic development but its constant aim and goal. In reality, the whole of Israel's history of 3,000 years is but an application on a larger scale of the sevenfold period of purification through which we pass before the Festival of Revelation; and the purpose of our history is our education and preparation for the fulfillment of the truths and ideals of the Torah.

There is no doubt that we are going through that phase. Into whatever spiritual slavery we may sink, however estranged we may have become from the holy heritage of our fathers, whatever be the attractions and allurements of the possessions which we gained through an un-Jewish way of life, so that the ear that once heard: "Thou shalt not serve other gods," showed itself willing to be nailed to the doorpost of un-Jewish spiritual slavery—the Torah will never be forgotten. There was a time in our nation's life when the Shofar of the Jubilee was sounded at the end of a period of seven times seven years, and all the chains of serfdom were broken, liberty was proclaimed throughout the land and every man returned unto his family and unto his possession. And so, in God's good time, the great Jubilee of the Torah will come, after seven times seven historical phases of purification and education. Then the fetters of our spiritual slavery will be broken, the allurements of un-Jewish ways of life will have lost their attraction, even the remotest and most estranged of our brethren will then hear the ancient call of God in the powerful sound of the shofar, and they will turn and return to the sacred heritage of our fathers and the eternal, holy vocation of our people.

Thus Shavuoth presents the Torah not as something which we have already achieved, but as a high and everlasting aim; it calls to us *שבועה*

⁹ See Deut. 29, 13–14.

לך, שבעות תספר לך, “Seven weeks shalt thou count,”¹⁰ cleanse and purify yourselves sevenfold for that aim, for the lofty heights of the Torah, and even if you had achieved all other aims in life, if Jewish disabilities had been abolished in the whole world, if you were equal citizens everywhere and enjoyed equal rights, if you had again your own soil and could put the sickle to your own corn on your own broad acres, even then you would not have arrived at your goal, you would only stand at the beginning of your eternal vocation; then, more than ever before, would it be necessary for you to prepare and purify yourselves for the realisation of your Torah, to elevate yourselves and to dedicate yourselves, then, just then—would you have to begin and count the purifying weeks of the Torah: מהחל חרמש בקמה תחל לספר שבעה שבועות: “From the time thou beginnest to put the sickle to the standing corn shalt thou begin to number seven weeks.” (Deuteronomy 16, 9.)

¹⁰ Deut. 16, 9.