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MORDECAI M. KAPLAN'S CONCEPT OF JEWISH HISTORY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS PHILOSOPHY OF JUDAISM

DANIEL FRIEDMAN

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and Ordination.

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DIGEST

Mordecai M. Kaplan maintains that the heterogeneous character of modern Jewry threatens the survival of Judaism. A common denominator must be found which will unite all Jews, regardless of their religious orientation or lack thereof. He arrives at the formulation of Judaism as a civilization: It is their common civilization which unites Jews, not their religion. Religion is only one element in the Jewish civilization, which also comprises rootage in a common land, use of a common language, possession of a common history, and loyalty to a common tradition consisting of laws, mores, folkways, and art. Only if Jews realize their status as a civilization will their differences be overcome, and the continued existence of Judaism be insured.

Kaplan seeks to substantiate his contention that Judaism, correctly understood, is a civilization, by appealing to history. He attempts to prove that Judaism was <u>always</u> a civilization and must therefore continue to be one. His reconstruction of the Jewish past exhibits, he claims, the fact that throughout their history, the Jews constituted primarily a nation, or a people united by their common civilization, and only secondarily by their religion.

However, Judaism <u>was</u> primarily a religion, and

Kaplan's claim thus requires the distortion of historical fact. Kaplan's misconception of Jewish history is revealed in the contradictions which characterize the terminology he utilizes to describe Jewry and Judaism.

Jewish history does not substantiate Kaplan's assertion that Judaism was always a civilization. His concept of Jewish history is thus inadequate and inaccurate, as it is based upon a fallacious premise rather than an objective evaluation of historical facts.

TO

FELICE,

without whose aid, encouragement,
and patience this study could not
have been completed.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

It is said that philosophy was once the handmaiden of theology. In a similar sense, history often has been used by religious thinkers to buttress their respective claims and systems. An appeal to the past, or to the meaning of the past, seems to lend authority to a cause or philosophy or program espoused in the present.

The utilization of the past to underwrite philosophies of the present is a phenomenon familiar to the student of Judaism. A large portion of Jewish thought and a great deal of the effort of Jewish thinkers have always been devoted to attempts to reconcile the past with the present. Indeed, Judaism has developed a vast literature which consists primarily of various reconstructions of the past, the object being to harmonize events, concepts, beliefs, and commitments of the past with those of the present.

Prior to the modern period, the reason for this need to reconstruct the past in accordance with the needs of the present is obvious. During the two thousand-year period in which the Bible was believed to have been divinely revealed, and thus absolutely and eternally valid and authoritative, Jewish thinkers were compelled to justify their ideas by relating and identifying them with

those contained in the holy text. The requirement that no contemporary idea or belief contradict or deny those expressed in the holy text led to the inevitable distortion of the contents of the Bible. Concepts demanded by present needs and determined by present thought-patterns were read into Biblical passages whose authors had lived and thought centuries, and even millenia, ago; Biblical ideas which were foreign to contemporary values or unseemly by contemporary standards were "reinterpreted" so as to render them acceptable. Jewish thinkers could not view the Bible as it was, but as their present required it to be. "They had to 'find' their particular views in the Bible; for had they not found them, their truth would not have been truth, nor would the Bible have been holy."[1]

Not only is the Bible a source of religious beliefs and practices; it contains valuable historical data. Accounts are given of the origin, vicissitudes, and destiny of the Jewish people. Biblical accounts are the source of much historical information about other nations, such as Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria. Some of this data is accurate; however, it is interspersed with legend, myth, and miracle. In addition, the authors' subjective interpretations color their accounts of people and events and their relative significance. Scholars throughout the ages found it necessary to reinterpret the historical accounts, resulting in even further distortion.

Hence, the past itself was subjected to disfigurement in order to tailor it to present needs. The distortion of the original text was not deliberate, but it was necessary if present claims were to find their sanction and justification in the writings which were deemed infallible.

With the dawn of the modern era, the authority of the Bible crumbled under the weight of scientific Biblical criticism. It became possible to remove from much of Jewish history the disfigurements which had accumulated during the previous two thousand years. Students of Jewish history were relieved of the blinders which had prevented them from seeing the Jewish past objectively. They were released from bondage to an authoritative text, and could approach the Bible without the preconceptions which formerly were imposed upon them.

As the holy texts lost their authority, it became possible to develop concepts and philosophies of Judaism which did not require a rooting in Scriptures. Jewish religious thought was no longer forced to justify itself on the basis of Biblical exegesis. However, a new authority was embraced to replace the old; an authority far more flexible and diverse than the Bible, but no less subject to distortion. Jewish history itself became a source for the justification of current philosophies of Judaism. In order to provide "historical sanction" for contemporary

Jewish thought, the Jewish past was searched through for precedents or themes which would lend a legitimacy, or authentic "Jewishness," to ideas or even movements required by the present. Jewish history was used as a gigantic "proof text" to substantiate the claims of the present. It became as necessary to root present thinking in Jewish history as it had formerly been to base it upon Biblical verses.

If the Bible were a homogeneous document, it would not have lent itself so easily to the diverse meanings which were read into it. However, its characteristic heterogeneity rendered it capable of an infinite variety of interpretations, each of which finds some basis, however remote, in the text. The Bible contains such a wealth of different and mutually exclusive concepts--including conflicting God-ideas, ritual and ceremonial requirements, ethical codes, and concepts of history--that any idea can be supported with a Biblical verse. Even the devil can quote Scripture.

Jewish history is characterized by a similar diversity. Since the Jewish past is in no sense homogeneous, but includes virtually every possible theme of human experience,[2] it, like the Bible, lends itself to an infinite variety of interpretations. Moveover, any reconstruction of the Jewish past will contain <u>some</u> truth, since it will correspond to at least one manifestation of Jewish history.

It is thus possible for an inadequate interpretation of Jewish history to be partially correct, and to find an approving audience on the basis of that element within it which is true.

However, any interpretation or reconstruction of the Jewish past, based upon a principle of organization which fails to account for all of its diversity, can be only partially true. It is a distortion of Jewish history, to the extent to which it overlooks, discards, or belittles elements within the past which do not conform to the presupposed organizing principle.

When Jewish history replaced holy texts as the authority to which the ideas of the present appealed for justification, a characteristic mode of approaching the past developed among Jewish thinkers.[3] They attempted to find a link between past and present, a link which would integrate all of the events of the Jewish past with conditions and requirements of the present, in order to maintain a continuum which would render present Judaism meaningful and legitimate. It was believed that Judaism contained some central theme, or "essence" which all periods, stages, and locales of the Jewish past possessed in common--one theme, which, although often surrounded by superficial elements, constituted "true" Judaism. This authentic version of Judaism, it was thought, was eternally true and valid, and should be recaptured, refined, and nourished in the present and future.[4] The specific nature of the "essence" depended on, and varied according to

the particular conception of Judaism which the individual historian entertained. This conception, in turn, was determined primarily by the age and locale in which he lived.[5] Thus, Jewish history was reconstructed in terms of its "essence" or "kernel," which, it was claimed, represented authentic Judaism; whereas the "husk" simply consisted of temporary and dispensable accretions which could, and should, be trimmed off.

These versions of Jewish history achieved a greater understanding of the past than previously had been possible. However, an approach to Jewish history in terms of its essence inevitably distorts the data of the past. Graetz's claim, for example, that the essence of Judaism is its monotheism,[6] is not totally wrong, but is only partially correct: Monotheism <u>is</u> an important element in Judaism, but it is not the only important element and is not, in fact, true of <u>all</u> periods and strands of the Jewish past. Even in those periods when it did occupy a place of prominence in the life and thought of the Jews, it does not account for a multitude of other phenomena which are equally significant, and which must be included in an adequate reconstruction of the past. To reduce Judaism to such an "essence" is to abstract from the past those of its elements which are judged valuable or desirable by present standards, and to assign to an historical limbo whatever data do not fit into the arbitrarily

constructed scheme. A particular manifestation of the past may appeal to present needs, and may lend itself well to the promotion of a contemporary religious, social, or political program. However, to subordinate the data of the past to a conception necessary for a meaningful Judaism in the present is a distortion of history, unless that conception recognizes and includes all the data in their diversity. Ellis Rivkin writes:

> Judaism consequently eludes abstraction, however much each manifestation insists that it alone represents the genuine and the basic Judaism. The concrete history of Judaism belies every formulation which insists that it has finally captured its real essence.[7]

The reconstruction of the Jewish past in terms of its supposed essence persists even today. The past still retains its grip upon the present, and Jewish thinkers often attempt to bolster their claims and programs by appealing to precedents in the Jewish past. So long as the past is accepted as authoritative, it will be subject to manipulation in order to serve the needs of the present; it will be distorted to suit whatever conception is required of it by the present. It will be seen, not as it was, but as the present needs it to be. Only when the Jewish past is freed, as was the Bible, from its role as the authoritative source for the requirements of present conditions, will it be possible to view it without the preconceived notions which distort it. The past must

necessarily be viewed from the present, but it need not be created in the image of the present.

Since it is the purpose of the historian to attempt to see the past as it was, his approach must be devoid of all preconceptions, prejudices, and commitments which would result in the disfigurement of the past. His sole obligation is to the achievement of as true a record and explanation of the data as possible, and his only commitment is to the acceptance of whatever conclusions the data demand. His political, philosophical, or religious orientation and commitment must not intrude upon his investigation of the past. He must be willing to accept the consequences of his investigation, although they may jeopardize or invalidate prior convictions or loyalties. The past must not be viewed as a threat to be combatted, nor as an authority to be obeyed, but as a source of truth, whatever that truth may be. In short, the historian's task is to let the past be what it was, and not what the present may desire.

* * * * * *

When the study of Jewish history comprises a large portion of the work of a significant religious thinker, it is necessary to subject it to a critical analysis in order to determine the extent to which his reconstruction of the past is free from distorting influences. If the

individual offers a comprehensive philosophy of Judaism and suggests a program for its implementation, it is important to assess the accuracy of his claims, insofar as they are based upon historical arguments. Should the philosophy attract a sizeable audience or following, it is incumbent upon the historian to undertake such a task.

Mordecai M. Kaplan is one of the leading contemporary Jewish thinkers. A philosopher, theologian, and historian, he has created a distinctive interpretation of Judaism and a highly developed scheme for its practical implementation. Both his philosophy of Judaism and his proposed program for the future of Judaism have enjoyed wide acceptance among American Jews. The movement known as "Reconstructionism" was founded, developed, and supplied with its ideology by Kaplan. It "is in every essential feature the creation of a single thinker."[8] "Many of Dr. Kaplan's major concepts have been absorbed into the basic vocabulary of contemporary Jewish thinking, frequently without benefit of 'b'shem omro.'"[9]

Kaplan's influence has been felt, not only within his own Conservative movement, but perhaps even more profoundly within the ranks of Reform Judaism. Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn writes:

> I believe the impact of Dr. Kaplan on Reform Judaism may prove to have been as great as that of all but the very fewest of pre-eminent thinkers within our movement itself.[10]

> History may yet prove Mordecai Kaplan's influence on Reform to have been greater than on the Conservative wing of Judaism to which, in an immediately formal sense, he more properly belongs.[11]

Jewish history is one of Kaplan's primary concerns. Every one of his writings is devoted entirely, or in large part, to the reconstruction or interpretation of the Jewish past. Moreover, Kaplan recognizes the necessity of removing from the past the distortions and misconceptions which so often surround it. The following statements indicate Kaplan's emphasis upon the importance of the study of Jewish history, as well as his contention that it must be free of misrepresentation:

> The place in history to which we assign any people, the possibilities and prospects of any people in the life of mankind, depend upon our understanding of its beginnings and development, and so with the Jewish people. In the words of Zangwill, "We shall never get the future straight until we disentangle the past."[12]

> The knowledge of the past is indispensable, for there can be no meaning to the present without it. But we must not make the mistake of investing the historical with the sanctity of the eternal.[13]

> To acquire . . . necessary self-knowledge in terms of the present, Jews have to become knowledgeable in terms of the past.[14]

> All too often tradition is invoked to validate as authentic whatever derives its authoritative character from its connection with the past. . . . That is why we should be on our guard against forming a distorted picture of Traditional Judaism.[15]

> . . . histories of the Jewish People and of its religion are more often idealizations than a recording of facts.[16]

> The modern Jew cannot utilize the past as means of rendering the present significant, and the future possible, unless the traditional ideas about the past are disentangled.. . . .[17]

> For the reconstruction of the Jewish past we must avail ourselves of the reconstruction of Jewish history which the scientific study of the Bible and post-Biblical literature has made possible.[18]

In view of the widespread tendency to impose upon the past conceptions which flow from the presuppositions of a particular philosophy, Kaplan's work merits a serious appraisal to determine if, in fact, it meets the criterion of objectivity which accurate historiography requires, and which Kaplan himself acknowledges is necessary. It was with this aim in mind that this study was initiated: Does Kaplan see the past as it was, or as he requires it to be?

As the research for the following study progressed, it became increasingly clear that certain basic elements of Jewish history were not permitted to appear in Kaplan's reconstruction until they had passed through, and were greatly distorted, by the filter of his subjectivity. The following pages will attempt to demonstrate the nature, extent, and significance of this distortion, and will suggest the underlying causes.

Kaplan's work may be divided into three categories or primary concerns, although all are closely related in his writing: 1) an analysis of what the Jews were in the past; 2) a description of the present status and problems of the Jews; and 3) a program for the future of Judaism. This thesis concentrates on the first category--i.e., Kaplan's concept of Jewish history. It is not the purpose of this study to question the validity of Kaplan's program for the future of Judaism, except as it is affected by, or as it effects, his concept of the Jewish past. Similarly, his description of the present status and problems of the Jews is treated only in its relationship to his approach to history.

Kaplan has written copiously on the subject of Jewish history. His first article,[19] "Judaism and Nationality," appeared in 1909, and since then he has published several books (the most significant and influential of which is Judaism as a Civilization, first published in 1934.) and hundreds of articles,[20] all of which deal wholly or in large part with the subject under investigation. Most of his significant articles have been incorporated into the books;[21] thus, for the purposes of this study, research was confined mainly to Kaplan's books, although many of his articles were carefully examined.[22]

This thesis utilizes as its basic secondary source, Solomon Zeitlin's excellent series of essays, "Judaism

as a Religion," which appeared in the Jewish Quarterly Review.

I should like to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my teacher, advisor, and friend, Dr. Ellis Rivkin. He possesses that rare combination of talents which enables him to bring history to life in the classroom. His enthusiasm and dedication to truth are inspiring and contagious.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Petuchowski, J. J., "The Grip of the Past--A Study in the Dynamics of Religion," in Judaism, vol. 8, no. 2, Spring, 1959, p. 139.

2. Judaism "has entered into the matrix of multiple civilizations; it has shared the vicissitudes of growth, stagnation, decay, and regeneration; it has innovated and it has absorbed; it has created and it has assimilated; it has developed now in frenzy, now in calm, now in ecstasy and now in agony. At times it has expressed unity, and at other times diversity. It has been rational and mystical, legal and prophetical, permissive and intolerant, hierarchical and democratic." (Rivkin, E., "Unitive and Divisive Factors in Judaism," in Civilisations, vol. VII, no. 4, 1957, p. 1 of off-print.)

3. This approach to Jewish history was formulated by such great nineteenth century Jewish historians as Nahman Krochmal, Abraham Geiger, and Heinrich Graetz, and by Simon Dubnow in the twentieth century.

4. Simon Dubnow, who conceived of Judaism as a "spiritual nation" (as opposed to a "political nation"), wrote:

"We . . . do not wish to break the chain that unites the nation's present with the nation's future, just as we do not separate both of these from the nation's past." (Dubnow, S., "Letters on Old and New Judaism," quoted in Nationalism and History, edited with an introductory essay by Koppel S. Pinson, p. 45.)

"Every generation in Israel carries within itself the remnants of worlds created and destroyed during the course of the previous history of the Jewish people. The generation, in turn, builds and destroys worlds in its form and image, but in the long run continues to weave the thread that binds all the links of the nation into the chain of generations." (Dubnow, "The Secret of the Survival and the Law of Survival of the Jewish People," quoted in op. cit., p. 45.)

"Jewry at all times, even in the period of political independence, was pre-eminently a spiritual nation, and a spiritual nation it continues to be in our own days, too. . . . Jewry, being a spiritual entity, cannot suffer annihilation . . . because a creative principle permeates it, a principle that is the root of its being and an indigenous product of its history." (Dubnow, S. "Jewish History. An Essay in the Philosophy of History," in op. cit., p. 322.)

5. The histories of the Jews which were written during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflect the prevalent spirit of nationalism, and are, by and large, histories of the "Jewish nation."

6. Cf. Graetz, H., History of the Jews (5 vols.), passim.

Graetz writes of "the inner kernel of Judaism," as opposed to "the foreign additions and excrescences, the fungous growth attached to the original trunk." (Ibid., vol. V, p. 559.) "Step by step the mountain heaps of obstructive rubbish had to be cleared away . . . ." (Ibid., p. 591.) "It was destined to be no easy work for Judaism to cast its slough." (Ibid., p. 560.) "During its long journey through the world, and its acquaintance with many nations, Judaism, in spite of its exclusiveness, had admitted various perverse ideas, which became as thoroughly a part of itself, as if derived from the original stock." (Ibid., p. 558.)

This interpretation of the Jewish past was adopted by Reform Judaism to substantiate its claim that it represented true Judaism, rather than a break with the tradition:

"Reform Judaism . . . is not meant to be a departure from the 'authentic' Jewish Tradition. On the contrary, it merely claimed to free Judaism from the doubtful accretions which had accumulated as a result of centuries of Ghetto existence. Reform wanted to 'restore' the 'pure' form of 'classical' Judaism, and, tending to disregard some two thousand years of Jewish history and development, it was, in time, to regard itself as the legitimate heir of 'Prophetic Religion.'" (Petuchowski, J. J., op. cit., p.135.)

7. Rivkin, E., "Modern Trends in Judaism," in Modern Trends in World Religions, p. 59.

8. Steinberg, M., A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem, p. 174.

9. Schulweis, H. M., "The Temper of Reconstructionism," in Judaism, vol. 3, no. 4, Tercentenary Issue, 1954, p. 321.

10. Gittelsohn, R. B., "Mordecai Kaplan's Influence upon Reform Judaism," in Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal, June, 1956, p. 23.

11. Ibid., p. 25.

12. Kaplan, M. M., "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," in S. A. J. Review, vol. VIII, no. 32, April 19, 1929, p. 4.

13. Kaplan, M. M., The Future of the American Jew, p. 473.

14. Kaplan, M. M., The Greater Judaism in the Making, p. ix.

15. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

16. Ibid., p. 5.

17. Kaplan, M. M., "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," op. cit., p. 4.

18. Ibid.

19. According to the bibliography of his writings cited in the following note.

20. Cf. "Bibliography of the Writings of Professor Mordecai M. Kaplan," compiled by Gerson D. Cohen in Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume, pp. 9-33. This compilation lists two hundred sixty items published through 1952. In many cases, an item represents a series of articles. Kaplan is still a frequent contributor to The Reconstructionist.

21. Kaplan refers to the fact that "about one third of the contents of the book [The Future of the American Jew] is based on material which has appeared in print in the form of articles in magazines, or in symposia in book form." (The Future of the American Jew, p. xix.)

22. See the Bibliography for a complete listing of books and articles consulted.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM: THE NEED FOR A COMMON DENOMINATOR

In modern times, it has become virtually impossible to arrive at definitions of the words "Jew" and "Judaism" which are universally acceptable and applicable. The character of world Jewry and the nature of modern Judaism have made former definitions obsolete. Solomon Zeitlin describes what "Jew" and "Judaism" once meant:

> In the period before the French Revolution if a Jew were asked who was a Jew he would have replied, "A Jew is one born of Jewish parents." If he were asked what was Judaism, the answer would have been "Judaism is the sum total of all the precepts, the ritual laws handed by God to Moses and finally through him to the Rabbis." If a Jew were asked what his relationship was to Palestine he would have replied, that Palestine is Erez Israel--the land of Israel, and that our forefathers were sinners whom God punished by burning the Temple and exiling them to the four corners of the world. He would have continued: A Redeemer (a Messiah) would gather all the Jews back to Palestine and that they would be ruled by one of the lineage of the family of David, that the Messiah would regather all the Jews, not by natural forces but by supernatural.[1]

Such a description of the meaning of "Jew" and "Judaism" is no longer adequate. "The aftermath of the emancipation witnessed a spectrum of Jewish marks of affiliation so extended as to break any narrowly restricting definition of a Jew."[2] The proliferation of Jewish religious expression and the phenomenon of the non-religious Jew have resulted in such contemporary definitions

as that of Horrace Kallen: "Anybody is a Jew who of his own free will calls himself by that name or who feels compelled to answer to it when others call him by it."[3]

While Kallen's definition would not be acceptable to all contemporary Jews, the fact that it is a respectable one suggests the upheaval which Judaism has undergone within the past two centuries. No longer does "Judaism" represent a specific system of belief and practice which is shared by all Jews. Nor does "Jew" signify a member of a group which subscribes to such a system. The existence of Jews "in name only" testifies to the truth in Kallen's definition.

According to Mordecai Kaplan, the difficulty in defining the term "Jew" results from the deterioration of the group to which the Jew belongs--the Jewish people.[4]

> The Jewish People has virtually disintegrated. The very term Jew can no longer be defined.[5]

> The fundamental difficulty nowadays in knowing what a Jew is stems from the inability to define the status of the group he is born into, or belongs to.[6]

Because the Jewish people defies definition, the individual Jew is confused regarding his identity, according to Kaplan.

> Without a definition of the Jewish collective unity, the Jew does not know how to act as a Jew, nor to what his Jewishness demands that he be loyal.[7]

Kaplan fears that the predicament of the individual Jew and the Jewish people is symptomatic of a disease which is fatal to Judaism. He warns that "the Jewish People is deathly sick."[8] "Judaism is passing through a crisis which is without precedent in its entire career."[9] Unless something is done to heal the Jewish people, nothing will stop "the process of disorganization which is reducing them to the status of a human detritus, the rubble of a once unique society."[10] "Jews . . . cannot afford the luxury of being without corporate status or not knowing what makes them Jews."[11]

The heterogeneous nature of contemporary Jewry serves as Kaplan's point of departure in the delineation of his entire philosophy of Judaism. In all of his writings, he refers to the lack of unity which permeates modern Jewish life. He notes that this diversity extends from the religious orientation of the Jews to their secular interests. In no respect, other than in name, do they represent a homogeneous group.

Jews were formerly bound together at least by a common religious commitment which was identifiably Jewish. However, "Jewish religion itself has become heterogeneous."[12] Jews profess mutually exclusive beliefs and observe widely divergent customs and ceremonies. The three major Jewish religious movements differ radically over such a fundamental concept as the authority of the Bible and the

Tradition. Far from being a source of cohesion among Jews, their religion is actually a disruptive agent.

> In the matter of religion, there is more in common between the liberal Jew and the liberal Christian, or between the orthodox Jew and the orthodox Christian, than there is between the liberal and orthodox either in the Jewish or in the Christian group.[13]

> Both Neo-Orthodoxy and Reformism are in their nature sectarian. The one purports to represent the only true Judaism, the other, Judaism at its best. Either contention must be a divisive influence in Jewish life.[14]

> What is there in the theory of any of the religious groups to point to a permanent <u>modus vivendi</u> with those who hold other views and practice a different regimen of observances?[15]

Kaplan does not advocate a return to traditional Jewish religion as a means of binding together the Jewish people. It is "full of outgrown truths and anachronisms."[16] The archaic assumptions underlying traditional Jewish religion preclude it from ever again uniting the Jews.

> With the disuetude of belief in the supernatural origin of the Torah, the very ground is removed from the entire structure of rabbinic thought . . . .[17]

> The traditional version of Jewish religion is adequate only for the rapidly dwindling number of traditionally minded Jews. Almost all Jews who have come under the influence of the modern world-outlook find that version of Jewish religion not only unrelated to the needs of contemporary life, but incapable of being fitted into the thought patterns of a modern minded person.[18]

> We must realize that those who have become imbued with the spirit and method of scientific thinking cannot but regard traditional religion as outdated.[19]

> During the last two centuries . . . events have rendered the Torah tradition inoperative as a uniting factor among the majority of Jews.[20]

Nor does Kaplan suggest that a modern form of Jewish religion can unify the Jewish people: "If Judaism is henceforth to be based on the principle of democracy, it should accept religious diversity as a normal expression of human life."[21] It is imperative that Jews recognize "the diversity of religious belief and practice to which we must resign ourselves as a permanent condition of world-Jewry."[22]

Furthermore, large numbers of Jews are unaffiliated with any form of organized Jewish religion. The "secular Jew" would be excluded, even were the Jewish religion homogeneous.

> To what category do the large number of Jews belong who are agnostic or atheistic, and yet want to remain Jews . . . ? Their ideas on religion may be all wrong, but who other than a traditionalist--and for that matter not even he--has a right to read them out of Jewry?[23]

Even among those Jews who are associated with the Jewish religion, their primary concerns are not with Judaism, but are directed toward earning a living, enjoying the distinctively secular forms of entertainment which modern civilization provides, and meeting the demands

which their society and state make upon them.[24]

Therefore, religion has ceased to be the link by which Jews can be united into one group and it is no longer the principal positive means of their identification. Indeed, Kaplan suggests that the negative factor of anti-Semitism is perhaps the strongest bond that ties Jews together.[25] He is thus disturbed by

> . . . . . the fragmentation of our people into four distinct denominations, three religious and one secular, held together far more by anti-Jewish hostility than by Jewish fellowship. At best we Jews are like veterans of a disbanded army, who once a year hold parades and celebrate memorial day, as when on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we put on our best clothes and walk solemnly to Shool and from Shool.[26]

Lacking the unity which formerly obtained among the Jewish people, "Jews are today without a recognized group status."[27] The loss of group status is, according to Kaplan, one of the most serious problems confronting contemporary Jewish life. It threatens the integrity of the individual Jew, as well as the survival of Judaism.

> The lack of corporate status puts Jews in the category of foundlings left, as it were, by fate upon the doorstep of the nations that they might take pity on them, and provide them with food and shelter. To be a Jew under these circumstances is not conducive to peace of mind, nor compatible with human dignity and moral stamina. It is impossible for the Jew to be true to himself, or to the part for which life has cast him, so long as he does not know to what kind of group he belongs as a Jew.[28]

That condition of statuslessness is psychologically and morally as damaging as statelessness.[29]

> Not to know what sort of a group we belong to means not to know our place in mankind, indeed not to have a place in mankind, except one that others may assign to us. It is not likely that we should want to occupy that kind of a place.[30]

> Many Jews see no sense in continuing to belong to a nondescript group, for such a group, far from conferring dignity, stigmatizes those associated with it, as somehow incapable of attaining full human status.[31]

> The ominous truth about present-day Jewish life is that the desire to escape it is deepening and spreading. It is taking possession of the entire conscious and sub-conscious life of many Jews in every stratum of Jewish society.[32]

Hence, the total disintegration of the Jewish people and Judaism is impending, Kaplan maintains, unless some common bond be found which will once again cement the Jews into a purposeful, significant group. Religion can not provide such solidarity,[33] nor can any concept which fails to reckon with the diversity of beliefs and interests which characterizes modern Jewry.

> The immediate need is for some conception of Judaism broad enough to include within its scope all who want to remain Jews, whatever the reason or motive be. That is not merely an academic need but a practical one. Some basis of creative unity among Jews has to be found that will not require anyone to surrender his convictions, or to do violence to his conscience.[34]

Needed to solve the problem of Jewish disunity is a common denominator which will link all Jews together and confer upon them identity and status. Only when Jews find a meaningful modus vivendi will the survival of Judaism be possible.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Zeitlin, S., "Judaism as a Religion," in Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 1.

2. Schulweis, H. M., "The Temper of Reconstructionism," in Judaism, vol. 3, no. 4, 1954, p. 330.

3. Kallen, H. M., Of Them which Say They are Jews, and Other Essays on the Jewish Struggle for Survival, p. 33.

4. "Contact with a variety of cultures and with people in different stages of cultural development has changed the Jews into an almost hopelessly heterogeneous human mass." (Kaplan, M. M., Judaism as a Civilization, p. 291.)

5. Kaplan, M. M., "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," in The Reconstructionist, vol. 27, no. 19, January 26, 1962, p. 10.

6. Kaplan, M. M., "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," in The Reconstructionist, vol. 15, no. 10, June 24, 1949, p. 12.

7. Kaplan, M. M., Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 29.

8. Ibid., p. 81.

9. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 80.

10. Ibid., p. 224.

11. Kaplan, "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," p. 12.

12. Kaplan, M. M., The Future of the American Jew, p. 64.

13. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 230.

14. Ibid., p. 223.

15. Ibid., pp. 174-175.

16. Ibid., p. 282.

17. Ibid., pp. 44-45.

18. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, pp. 44-45.

19. Kaplan, M. M., "Our Religious Vocation," in The Reconstructionist, vol. 27, no. 20, February 9, 1962, p. 9.

20. Kaplan, M. M., Judaism without Supernaturalism, pp. 155-156.

21. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 50.

22. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 303.

23. Ibid., pp. 230-231.

24. Ibid., pp. 20 ff.

25. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 70-79; "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," p. 11.

26. Kaplan, "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," p. 10.

27. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 58.

28. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 231.

29. Kaplan, "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," p. 10.

30. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 46.

31. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 58.

32. Ibid., p. 12.

33. "The status required by Jews cannot be that of a religious denomination, since the homogeneity of Jewish religion has been destroyed by the Enlightenment . . . ." (Ibid., p. 72.)

34. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 222.

CHAPTER THREE

SOLUTION: JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION

Mordecai Kaplan's concept of Judaism as a civilization is his solution to the problem of Jewish heterogeneity. As a civilization, Judaism "includes that nexus of a history, literature, language, social organization, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, esthetic values, which in their totality form a civilization."[1] Judaism is

> . . . coextensive with the entire civilization of the Jewish people. As such, it consists of all those elements which go into the making of a civilization, namely, rootage in a common land, use of a common language, possession of a common history, and loyalty to a common tradition consisting of laws, mores, folkways, and art.[2]

Kaplan maintains that only by means of this concept can a common denominator for all Jews be found. Judaism as a civilization will not only unify the Jews, but will confer upon them the status and incentive necessary for their continued existence in the future. Hence, it is "the only valid interpretation of Judaism for our day."[3]

Kaplan distinguishes between his concept of Judaism as a civilization and the conventional idea of Judaism as merely a religion. He often deliberately de-emphasizes the role of religion.[4] It will be noted that the above definitions of Judaism do not refer specifically to Jewish

religion as one of their elements. However, Kaplan does not eliminate religion from Judaism; indeed, it is "the integrating and soul-giving factor of all those [other] elements."[5] "Jewish religion is what makes of that pattern an organic whole, and gives meaning and purpose to Jewish life, both individual and collective."[6]

Although the various elements of a civilization can be distinguished for purposes of analysis, Kaplan stresses their inter-relatedness: "The main elements of a civilization are organically inter-related. . . . The organic character of Judaism is the crucial fact about it."[7] None of the elements is dispensable: "To omit any of them is to distort Judaism."[8] In fact, "it is this essential and organic inter-relation that differentiates a civilization from a religion, a religious philosophy, or a literary culture."[9] That is, a civilization is larger, more inclusive than a religion, although in the case of the Jewish civilization, religion is the predominant element.

Kaplan recognizes that his definition of "civilization" is not that which is customarily used.[10] Rather than signifying the large complex of institutions, habits, attitudes, etc. which are implied, for example, in the term "Western Civilization," Kaplan's "civilization" refers to an entity within such a vast system. Judaism is, according to Kaplan, only one of many independent

civilizations, each of which serves to integrate its respective members into a unified group. Rather than all persons participating in one common civilization (e.g., Western Civilization), they belong to smaller units, or civilization "blocks."

> The term "civilization" is usually applied to the accumulation of knowledge, skills, tools, arts, literatures, laws, religions and philosophies which stands between man and external nature, and which serves as a bulwark against the hostility of forces that would otherwise destroy him. If we contemplate that accumulation as it works in the life process, we realize that it does not function as a whole, but in blocks. Each block of that accumulation is a civilization, which is sharply differentiated from every other. Each block or unit of civilization can exist and flourish, even if every other should become extinct. This fact indicates that a civilization is a complete and self-contained entity. Civilization is an abstract term. The actuality is civilizations; . . . [11]

Each of these civilizations is distinctive. It comprises "non-transferable" elements which distinguish it from any other civilization:

> The elements which give it otherness and individuality are those which produce the human differentia in the individuals that are raised in it. The development of the human differentia is due mainly to non-transferable elements like language, literature, arts, religion, and laws. They are non-transferable in the sense that they cannot be adopted by other civilizations without essential changes in their character.[12]

An understanding of the cohesiveness, status, and distinctiveness which Judaism exhibits when viewed as

a civilization requires an elaboration of those elements which, according to Kaplan, are the most crucial characteristics of the Jewish civilization. Hence, it is necessary to discuss in further detail the following concepts which are implied whenever Kaplan refers to "Judaism": religion, peoplehood, nationhood, land, and language.

Religion

As was noted in the previous chapter, Kaplan does not consider it possible to formulate a religion acceptable to all Jews. Judaism as a civilization "must be so construed as to grant to the individual Jew the right to regard as his religion whatever he conscientiously accepts as such."[13] Since "'Judaism' is not synonymous with 'Jewish religion,'"[14] one may be a Jew without necessarily committing himself to a specific religious orientation: "Judaism as a civilization . . . allows for diversity of belief and practice . . . ."[15] It is their civilization which unites all Jews, not their religion. Thus, Judaism the civilization permits a religious flexibility not possible in more narrow concepts of Judaism.

> Judaism as a civilization admits of more than one religious viewpoint. Orthodox Jews may continue to insist that Jewish civilization is supernaturally revealed, and Reformists may cultivate the modern attitude toward the content of Judaism, without thereby altering the nature of Judaism as a civilization . . . .[16]

Kaplan deems it "a gross mistake to assume that being a Jew is solely a matter of religion . . . ."[17] However, neither can the Jewish civilization dispense with religion. It is "a quality inherent in the very substance of a civilization."[18] "Take religion out and Judaism becomes an empty shell."[19]

Since Jewish religion, as an aspect of the Jewish civilization, is neither homogeneous nor dispensable, it must somehow be identifiably "Jewish" without demanding specific and dogmatic beliefs and practices. Kaplan defines Jewish religion as "the cluster of concrete elements within the civilization, which figure in the consciousness of the Jew as indispensable to his self-fulfillment or salvation."[20] He refers to these concrete elements as "sancta."

> These are the heroes, events, texts, places, and seasons that the religion signalizes as furthering the fulfillment of human destiny.[21]

> These sancta, the attitude toward life that they imply and the specific observances that they inspire, together constitute the religion of a people. In Jewish civilization, such sancta are, among others, the Torah, the synagogue, Sabbaths and holy days, the Hebrew language, Moses and the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Sages.[22]

Hence, the distinguishing characteristics of Jewish religion are not its beliefs, but its sancta. These, in turn, are determined by the history and particular

experiences of the Jewish civilization in which the religion inheres. The civilization undergoes change, yet retains its identity as it evolves throughout its history. In the same way, religion is transformed without losing its distinctiveness: "The continuity of a religion through different stages, and its identity amid diversity of belief and practice, are sustained by its sancta. . . . "[23] Even as the bond which ties all Jews together is their common civilization, so their commonly held sancta preserve the identity of their religion.

Kaplan applies this description, not only to Jewish religion, but to all religions; that is, each religion is an element within the larger context of a civilization.[24] The differences between various religions reside not in dissimilar systems of belief, but in different designations of sancta.

> It becomes clear that we are on the wrong track when we try to discover differences in world-outlook between one religion and another. Careful study will reveal surprisingly much in common among religions that are most hostile to each other. Group religions differ from each other mainly by virtue of the fact that they belong to different groups, and therefore refer to different constellations of sancta. Each religion has its own objects, persons, places and events that are deemed holy, or occupy a place of supreme value in the collective consciousness of its adherents.[25]

Each civilization has its own, unique religion, or cluster of sancta.[26]

> Different religions result from the fact that every civilization identifies the more important elements of its life as sancta . . . .[27]

> The cluster of concrete elements thus singled out becomes the content of the historical religion.[28]

The members of a particular civilization automatically share a religion, to which they "are committed, generally by reason of birth and heritage."[29]

Therefore, Jewish religion is "Jewish" by virtue of its sancta.

> That it shares high ethical and spiritual ideals with other historical religions and religious philosophies cannot be denied. . . . But all this does not minimize one whit the truth that the unicum in the Jewish religion, the distinctive and colorful part of it, consists of the nexus of specific sancta, heroes, events, things, places, etc. . . . .[30]

Accordingly, no particular conception of God is necessarily characteristic of Jewish religion nor binding upon all Jews.

> To this day, there is no intellectually formulated conception which has acquired authoritative recognition in Judaism as the only true idea of God. . . . The Jewish civilization cannot survive without the God-idea as an integral part of it, but it is in no need of having any specific formulation of that idea authoritative for all Jews.[31]

Kaplan's concept of Jewish religion thus allows for wide variation in beliefs and practices. It unites traditionalist and modernist through the sancta they share

in common. Kaplan conceives of his formulation as the only one which accounts for religious diversity, yet maintains group cohesion. Furthermore, it distinguishes between Jewish and other religions without limiting or prescribing Jewish beliefs.

Summarizing his concept of Jewish religion, its compatibility with modern life and thought, and its distinctiveness, Kaplan writes:

> The difference between Jewish religion and all others does not consist so much in the uniqueness of its conception of God, as in the uniqueness of its sancta. Loyalty to Judaism need, therefore, involve no pretensions to religious superiority. Jewish religion differs from the other religions not in being unlike them, for they too, have sancta that help them to salvation or self-fulfillment, but in being other, in having sancta that are the products of Jewish historic experience and not of the historic experience of other branches of human society. We are faithful to Jewish religion, not because we have chosen it as the best of all religions, but because it is ours, the only religion we have, an inseparable part of our collective personality as a people.[32]

Peoplehood

A religion implies a group of people which fosters it.[33] Central to Kaplan's concept of Judaism as a civilization is the indispensable role of the people, without whom no civilization or religion is possible. Even more basic to a religion than its sancta are the people who develop and cherish them. The people confer upon the religion its identity.

> The Jewish People is the basic reality underlying the various stages of the religion it has been evolving. It is the Jewish People that gives continuity to those stages, despite their differences in content and form. As long as there will be a Jewish People, whatever religion it will evolve will be Jewish religion. The changes which have taken place in the Jewish religion do not break up its continuity which is maintained by the <u>continuity</u> of the Jewish People.[34]

> The common denominator in the different stages of Judaism is, therefore, not to be sought in the tenets and practices, but in the living people.[35]

Not only does a religion require a people;[36] the individual, according to Kaplan, must belong to a group if he is to achieve "fulfillment": "Human self-fulfillment can come only from participation in the life of a people . . . ."[37] " . . . The individual depends upon the community for conceiving the very need for self-fulfillment."[38]

To have no people to which one belongs is, Kaplan claims, a "catastrophe."

> Why is it a catastrophe? Because, as human beings, there are two states or conditions we cannot do without. We cannot do without being needed, and without something of which we are proud. . . . The average person requires a whole chain of families to be linked together into a social unit, for him to satisfy these essential needs. . . . If he lacks it [peoplehood], he feels rootless and nameless.[39]

Kaplan defines "people" as

> a succession of generations united by a common

> history and culture which originated in a particular land, and permeated by a sense of destiny. That destiny, insofar as it is shared by each individual who belongs to the people, is assumed to help him achieve maximum life or salvation.[40]

> A People is such by virtue of a cultural pattern which affords it sufficient cohesion to make those who belong to it desire to maintain some kind of unified life.[41]

Not all groups, Kaplan maintains, are peoples. Required is a particular "we-feeling" or "ethnic consciousness," which Kaplan attributes to the Jewish people throughout its history.

> It is ethnic consciousness which makes a group into a people. . . . It is the experience which every individual has, when he senses or becomes aware of the existence of the people he belongs to as an indivisible corporate entity. That experience expresses itself as consciousness of kind, like-mindedness, or "we-feeling." The Jews throughout the Middle Ages, and down to modern times, constituted a people despite their dispersion, because they identified with Jewish peoplehood all that was summed up in the term "Jew."[42]

Kaplan believes this "we-feeling" is one of the most striking features of the Jewish civilization,[43] although its strength recently has waned.(as was noted in Chapter Two). It is this "ethnic consciousness, or the sense of peoplehood"[44] which preserved Judaism in the past and which must be cultivated if Judaism is to survive in the future. Both the civilization and the religion of the Jews are inseparable from, and dependent upon, Jewish

peoplehood:[45] "The very essence of Jewishness consists in complete self-identification with all of the past generations of our people and with all that awaits their descendants."[46]

> The only element in Judaism which is both permanent and distinctive is the survival and enhancement of the Jewish People. That element, translated into a way of life, spells "a civilization."[47]

> Neither do the diversities in contemporary Jewish religion jeopardize its unity, so long as Jews know themselves to be part of the Jewish People, to whatever Jewish religious denomination they belong.[48]

Peoplehood is thus the indispensable bond which links together all Jews of the present and past.

> Without the element of ethnicity or peoplehood, what is there in common between the various stages in the evolution of Judaism to identify it as the same religion? And without the element of ethnicity or peoplehood, there is infinitely less in common theologically between Reform Judaism and Traditional Judaism than there is between Reform Judaism and Unitarian Christianity.[49]

Whereas Kaplan's concept of Jewish religion provides a bond between Jews with various religious commitments, the element of peoplehood includes even the secular Jew within the Jewish civilization. Kaplan considers peoplehood the sine qua non of one's Jewish identity: "We perceive the self-contradiction in trying to live as a Jew without Jewish affiliation or responsibilities to

the Jewish People. . . . One cannot be a Jew apart from the Jewish People."[50] "One either ceases to be a Jew altogether, or has to accept the fact of membership in a living, continuing organism--the Jewish people. . . . "[51]

In addition to its unifying value, Kaplan claims that the concept of Jewish peoplehood supplies the status which he regards necessary for the survival of Judaism:

> The sense of peoplehood is the awareness which an individual has of being a member of a group that is known, both by its own members and by outsiders, as a people.[52]

> That which unites all Jews is peoplehood. . . . If we will accept that concept of peoplehood as descriptive of what the Jews are, and if we will publicly proclaim our acceptance of it, and organize our collective life on the basis of that concept, the world, too, will have to recognize us for what we are. We shall then have achieved status.[53]

Thus, Kaplan strongly urges the Jewish people to rejuvenate their civilization by reaffirming their peoplehood. It is the one element which all Jews share, the enhancement of which will confer upon them universal acceptance and status.

> The recognition of this status would enable us Jews once more to feel that we "belong," that not only our right to exist as human beings is recognized, but also our right to exist as a collective entity, as the Jewish people.[54]

Kaplan's stress upon peoplehood, as the most significant of the elements which comprise the Jewish

civilization, is indicated in the following statement:

> The purpose in designating Judaism as a civilization is to emphasize the fact that our loyalty to Judaism is sustained basically by the natural and historical ties which bind us to the Jewish People, and only secondarily by specific religious beliefs or practices.[55]

Nationhood

Kaplan often uses the words "people" and "nation" interchangeably.[56] Just as the Jews were, are, and must continue to be a people, so have they always constituted a nation and should remain one in the future.

> For the last three thousand years all Jews have regarded themselves, and have been regarded by the rest of the world, as primarily a nation.[57]

> The development of Judaism as a spiritual civilization will be furthered by enabling Jewish nationhood to function again.[58]

> . . . "Israel" does not mean only the generations contemporaneous with the life of the individual, but that national being whose origin reaches back into the dim past, and whose future is endless.[59]

In the previous section, it was observed that Kaplan regards peoplehood as the essential bond which holds Jews together--the cause of Jewish "we-feeling"--as well as an indispensable framework for Jewish religion. Nationhood fulfills the same functions:

> The one concept which alone can account for these wonderful manifestations of Jewish fellow-feeling is Nationality, and for that reason the Jews form not only a religion . . . but a nation. . . . Jewish Nationality is not a fact to be proved or disproved; it is simply a fact to be dealt with by each Jew and by each according to his best lights.[60]

> . . . nationhood and religion were always intimately interwoven in Judaism.[61]

Nationhood is also the individual's road to self-fulfillment.[62] Actually, Kaplan's principal objection to the philosophy of Reform Judaism is that it repudiated the Jews' status as a nation, and thus robbed them of their chief means of individual salvation.[63]

Kaplan insists that all of traditional Jewish literature supports his contention that, ever since the Jews entered the Land of Israel, they have considered themselves a nation.

> Search as we may in the entire range of traditional Jewish literature for the conception of a denationalized and landless Israel, we shall not find the slightest evidence for it.[64]

> . . . Any conception of a denationalized Israel becomes a deliberate subversion and repudiation of the past.[65]

Since the Jews have always constituted a nation, they must continue to do so, or they will have broken with a distinguishing feature of Jewish civilization.

> Nationhood affords the only kind of social framework in which the Jews can play that role in the world which would be a continuation of the part they played under the name Israel.[66]

> If Judaism trained the Jews to a life of Jewish nationhood, it cannot be said to play any part in the life of the Jew who refuses to practice any such nationhood.[67]

However, Kaplan does not mean to imply by his appellation "nation" that the Jews are to be considered a politically separate group.[68] Rather, "nationhood" is to signify the cultural autonomy of the Jews.[69] Kaplan maintains that the Jews outside of Palestine must adjust themselves to the necessity of living in two nations simultaneously--the Jewish nation and the nation in which they reside, to which they owe exclusive political allegiance.[70]

Therefore, when Kaplan refers to Judaism as a civilization, he signifies both a people and a nation whose way of life constitutes the Jewish civilization. Both the peoplehood and nationhood of the Jews are indispensable for their unity, salvation, religious and cultural distinctiveness, and historical continuity.

Land

Kaplan maintains that a civilization without a land is inconceivable: "A sine qua non of a civilization is a place in the sun."[71] Nor is peoplehood possible

without a homeland.[72] Finally, "the function of nationhood can be discharged only through association with a definite territory."[73]

Thus, the three entities--civilization, people, and nation--find their common denominator in the land in which they developed.

> A civilization is the product of social interaction of a group commonly known as a nation, whose life is rooted in a specific part of the earth.[74]

> A common country molds an aggregate of human beings into a people. It serves as the physical basis of a people's civilization. . . . What soil is to the life of a tree, a land is to the civilization of a people.[75]

> It takes the physical propinquity of a land to mold an aggregate of human beings into a nation.[76]

Kaplan regards the Jewish homeland--called at various times the Land of Israel, Palestine, and the State of Israel--as the principal agency which brought the Jewish civilization into being.[77] It was also the constant object of Jewish attention and devotion throughout subsequent Jewish history.[78]

> Judaism has always contemplated Israel's life and destiny in terms of a collective existence associated with a particular land. Nothing in traditional Judaism indicates that Israel is to function in the world as a landless people.[79]

> The Jewish people has always been highly conscious of its relationship to the land where it developed its national life.[80]

Kaplan urges that Palestine now be considered "the source and inspiration of that cluster of institutions, language, literature, art, law and religion which constitutes the Jewish civilization."[81] For, "only Eretz Yisrael, where Judaism is the civilization of the majority of its people, can serve as the cultural center of Jewry."[82]

The "Jewish national home"[83] functions as a strong unifying force among all Jews, regardless of their beliefs.[84] That a vibrant Jewish community be maintained in Palestine is regarded by Kaplan as prerequisite for the survival of Judaism.

> For the culture and religion of Judaism to survive and flourish anywhere in the Diaspora, they must have rootage in the life of a thriving Jewry in Eretz Yisrael.[85]

> Judaism is unlikely to survive . . . unless it thrive as a primary civilization in Palestine.[86]

Once again Kaplan attributes to one of the ingredients of Jewish civilization (in this case, its land) the capacity to unify the Jews and insure their survival. In addition, it serves, as do nationhood and peoplehood, as a means of maintaining continuity with the Jewish past: "What the Crown is to England, that Eretz Yisrael is to the Jewish people--a symbol both of continuity and unity."[87]

Language

The Hebrew language, as "a vehicle of the group memories and devotions,"[88] occupies a position of crucial importance in Kaplan's concept of Judaism. It lends a distinctiveness to the civilization which no other element may provide.[89] "Whereas a common land is an indispensable condition to a civilization, a common language is an indispensable vehicle of a civilization, and the most conspicuous element in it."[90]

The language of a people is also "indispensable to an awareness of ethnic unity."[91] Kaplan thus encourages the cultivation of Hebrew in modern Jewish life, as an aid in strengthening the bonds of unity necessary for the survival of Judaism.

Summary

Kaplan claims that his concept of Judaism as a civilization provides a realistic solution to the manifold problems which confront modern Jewry. The foregoing description of the principal elements in Kaplan's formulation is intended to illustrate his contention. It is shown that by means of their common peoplehood, nationhood, land, and language, it is possible for the Jews to transcend their heterogeneity. Since it is their civilization which unites them, rather than a particular religion,

Jews are permitted the religious diversity which is inevitable and normal in the modern world, without sacrificing their unity.

Jewish peoplehood, sancta, and language provide the Jewish civilization with its uniqueness. Peoplehood and nationhood also confer upon the Jews the self-respect and status which are essential to their well-being.

Thus, Judaism as a civilization exhibits the unity, distinctiveness, and status which Kaplan deems necessary if the Jews are to survive as a group.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Kaplan, M. M., Judaism as a Civilization, p. 178.

2. Kaplan, M. M., The Future of the American Jew, p. 163.

3. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. xiii.

4. "It is imperative . . . to find outlets other than religion for the collective life of the Jewish people. Paradoxical as it may sound, the spiritual regeneration of the Jewish people demands that religion cease to be its sole preoccupation." (Ibid., p. 345.)

5. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 35.

6. Kaplan, M. M., Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 13.

7. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 218-219.

8. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 5.

9. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 218.

10. Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged defines "civilization" as "an ideal state of human culture characterized by complete absence of barbarism and nonrational behavior, optimum utilization of physical, cultural, spiritual, and human resources, and perfect adjustment of the individual within the social framework. . . . the stage of cultural development at which writing and the keeping of written records is attained. . . . the whole of the advances of human culture and aspirations beyond the purely animal level. . . . conformity to conventional patterns of behavior or expression : refinement of thought, manners, or taste. . . . " (p. 413)

11. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 179-180.

12. Ibid., p. 180.

13. Ibid., p. 303.

14. Kaplan, M. M., "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," in CCAR Journal, April, 1960, p. 4.

15. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 222.

16. Ibid., p. 223.

17. Ibid., p. 58.

18. Ibid., p. 201.

19. Ibid., p. 306.

20. Ibid., p. 323.

21. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. xii.

22. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 46.

23. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. xii.

24. "Whether a man recognizes it or not, he finds his real religion in his civilization." (Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 202; see also p. 331.)

25. Ibid., p. 319.

26. "Every civilization identifies the most important elements of its life as sancta, i.e., as media through which its people can achieve salvation, or self-fulfillment." (Kaplan, M. M., The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion, p. vii.)

27. Kaplan, M. M., The Greater Judaism in the Making, p. 459.

28. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 322-323.

29. Ibid., p. 322.

30. Ibid., p. 323.

31. Ibid., p. 394. Kaplan's concept of God will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Six.

32. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 47.

33. Cf. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 124.

34. Kaplan, "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," p. 7.

35. Kaplan, M. M., "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," in S. A. J. Review, vol. VIII, no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 14.

36. "The Jewish religion existed for the Jewish people and not the Jewish people for the Jewish religion." (Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. xii.)

37. Kaplan, M. M., "Our Religious Vocation," in The Reconstructionist, vol. XXVII, no. 20, February 9, 1962, p. 8.

"If we assume that the essential function of religion is to facilitate the fulfillment of the individual, we realize that it is unattainable without the cultural background provided by the group." (Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 341.)

38. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 341.

39. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 82.

40. Kaplan, M. M., "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," in The Reconstructionist, vol. XV, no. 10, June 24, 1949, p. 15.

41. Kaplan, M. M., Judaism as a Modern Religious Civilization, p. 4.

42. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 63.

43. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 8; "Judaism and Nationality," in The Maccabaean, vol. XVII, no. 2, August, 1909, p. 60; "Our Religious Vocation," p. 11.

44. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 83.

45. Cf. Kaplan, "Our Religious Vocation," p. 11; The Future of the American Jew, p. 63.

46. Kaplan, "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," p. 15.

47. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 3.

48. Kaplan, "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," p. 7.

49. Ibid., p. 6.

50. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 29.

51. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, pp. 62-63.

52. Ibid., p. 82.

53. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 46.

54. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 537.

55. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 3.

56. These terms will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

57. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 120. "Throughout the past, wherever Jews lived, they were regarded as a nation apart." (The Future of the American Jew, p. 61.)

58. Kaplan, M. M., "The Revaluation of the Concept 'Israel,'" in S. A. J. Review, no. 35, May 10, 1929, p. 20.

59. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 260.

60. Kaplan, "Judaism and Nationality," p. 61.

61. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 120.

62. Ibid., p. 257.

63. Ibid., pp. 110, 120, 230.

64. Ibid., p. 270.

65. Ibid., p. 269.

66. Kaplan, M. M., "Nationhood the Call of the Spirit," in S. A. J. Review, vol. 8, no. 37, May 24, 1929, p. 13.

67. Kaplan, M. M., "The Nationhood of Israel," in S. A. J. Review, vol. 8, no. 36, May 17, 1929, p. 14.

68. Cf. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 250-251.

69. Ibid.; see Chapter Six for an analysis of Kaplan's use of "nation" as referring to a cultural, rather than a political entity.

70. Ibid., p. 344; see the analysis of Kaplan's terminology in Chapter Six for further discussion of this point.

71. Ibid., p. 186.

72. Kaplan, M. M., "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," in The Reconstructionist, vol. XXVII, no. 19, January 26, 1962, p. 9.

73. Kaplan, "The Nationhood of Israel," p. 14.

74. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 186.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., p. 187.

77. "Judaism could neither have arisen, nor continued to exist apart from the land that gave it birth." (Ibid., p. 186.)
"It was our life in Eretz Yisrael that first gave us that we-feeling, or awareness of kind, which makes us a distinct and recognizable society." (The Future of the American Jew, p. 127.)

78. Chapter Four discusses the role of Palestine in Kaplan's concept of Jewish history.

79. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 264.

80. Ibid.; see also ibid., pp. 264-271.

81. Ibid., p. 240.

82. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 33; see also Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 251, 344.

83. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 536.

84. "Only Eretz Yisrael can give the Jews a common historical consciousness through history in the making." (Ibid., p. 131; see also Judaism as a Civilization, p. 278.)

85. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 37.

86. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 273.

87. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 37.

88. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 218. Kaplan regards Hebrew as "the medium in which the most vital interests of the people found expression." (Ibid., p. 192.)

89. Ibid., p. 190.

90. Ibid.

91. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 132; see also Judaism as a Civilization, p. 191.

CHAPTER FOUR

"CIVILIZATION" JUSTIFIED BY HISTORY

Kaplan contends that the conception of Judaism as a civilization is productive of the most auspicious program for the future. In addition, it is the most accurate rendition of the past. Kaplan claims that Judaism was always a civilization, and must continue to be one. "It has functioned as a civilization throughout its career, and it is only in that capacity that it can function in the future."[1]

In Chapter Three, it was noted that Kaplan regards the people as the principal component of the Jewish civilization. The continuity of the Jewish religion is maintained by the continuity of its sancta; but underlying the sancta is the Jewish people, "the common denominator in the different stages of Judaism."[2] Kaplan also maintains that the Jews have always constituted a nation:[3] "Nationhood has historically always been the only type of collective functioning consistent with the continuity of Judaism."[4]

It is this continuity with the past which Kaplan constantly stresses as the chief characteristic and asset of his "civilization." Therefore, he reasons, Judaism may undergo changes within its various elements and yet remain Judaism, so long as it retains its character as a civilization. "As a civilization, Judaism can continue

vigorously in the spirit of modern thought, and can discard its theurgic character without discontinuity or loss of vitality."[5]

Kaplan devotes a major portion of his writings to substantiating his claim that Judaism was always a civilization, rather than a religion. He utilizes the Jewish past to prove that his philosophy of Judaism is firmly grounded in Jewish history. In order to judge the adequacy of Kaplan's concept of Jewish history, it is necessary to review, briefly, his reconstruction of the Jewish past.

Kaplan divides Jewish history into three major periods, corresponding to the three different types of religion which he claims were developed by the Jewish people.[6] Although these types are outwardly dissimilar, Kaplan maintains that they are actually related by means of a common denominator:

> The Jewish religion is so far from changeless that a chronological survey reveals three distinct orders of belief and practice so different from each other as almost to appear like different religions. It is only because throughout the history of the Jewish religion most of the sancta have been the same, and because there has been an unbroken continuity in the civilization of the Jewish people, that these types . . . merged into each other. . . . If the three orders of religious belief and practice are not three distinct religions they certainly mark three distinct stages of the one religion.[7]

Kaplan designates the three periods as follows:

"The period of the First Commonwealth may be identified as the first stage, that of the Second Commonwealth as the second stage, and the eighteen centuries preceding the modern era as the third stage."[8]

The First Stage: Israelitism

To distinguish it from "Judaism," Kaplan calls the first period "Israelitism." During this period, the people were identified with henotheism.

> The first stage of the civilization which later became Judaism should properly be designated as Israelitism. It may be said to date from about 1200 B.C.E., by which time all the tribes identified as the Bnai Yisrael are said to have entered Palestine. As a theophanic civilization, Israelitism had its social and religious values center about YHWH. Its religion was thus henotheistic.[9]

The religion of this period was henotheistic, as it was believed that while YHWH was the greatest of the gods, he was not the only God.[10] It was theophanic, since it was believed that the God of Israel could, and did, reveal himself to the people and express his desires.[11] "It is characteristic of the civilization at this stage that the center of gravity of the spiritual interests is this world, the here and now."[12]

By "Israelitism," Kaplan means "the totality of the usages, traditions, religious practices, moral and legal codes, by which the tribes of Israel were

individualized in character and differentiated from other peoples. . . . "[13] The bond which most strongly held the people together was the tradition that their God had made a covenant with them which insured his protection, in return for their loyalty.[14] The group at this time developed into a nation: "As the determination to remain in permanent possession of the land [Canaan] grew, they gradually coalesced into a nation that knew itself as the people of YHWH."[15]

This first period began its transformation into the second (the period marking the beginning of Judaism) when, in the year 621, the scroll of the Torah was found.[16] However, "a long time elapsed before the Torah came to occupy the place of primacy in the life of the Jews."[17] "Almost two centuries had to elapse before Judaism was fully consummated."[18]

> Judaism, not being a religion, did not spring into existence at a particular moment in history. The pattern of life we now call Judaism developed gradually and imperceptibly as the outcome of collective life. The process of living together in Palestine molded the various invading Israelitish tribes into the people that in time evolved the civilization which has come to be known as Judaism.[19]

Kaplan considers "Judaism" to signify a "theocratic civilization," to be distinguished from "Israelitism," a "henotheistic civilization."[20] Only when the theocracy was established did Judaism come into being.[21]

The Second Stage: Theocracy

"The second, or theocratic, stage of the Jewish religion may, on the whole, be said to have been contemporaneous with the period of the Second Commonwealth."[22] This period ends with the destruction of the Second Temple.[23] During this stage, "Judaism based the whole of life, both individual and social, upon the idea that God was the actual sovereign of His people. . . . God, the only one, beside whom there is no other."[24]

> By this time the God of Israel is no longer conceived merely as a god, or as the principal god, but as God, the creator of the world and of all that it contains, the one Being who is sui generis . . . . The notion that he exercised dominion only over Israel had grown obsolete. God is designated the "God of Israel" merely because he had singled out Israel from among the nations to give them his laws.[25]

The idea that God had chosen the Jews "was tantamount to the assertion that they alone constituted a nation."[26] Furthermore, when the Jews arrived at the belief that theirs was the only true God, they concluded "that the other nations were not nations in the true sense of the term. They would become such only when, like Israel, they would come to acknowledge Israel's God, who was the only true God."[27]

The source of the belief that the Jews were "God's chosen nation,"[28] as well as the instrument that made the theocracy of the Second Commonwealth possible, was the

Torah.[29]

> The Torah itself, its formulation and redaction, constituted that re-interpretation of the theophanic civilization which enabled it to function as a theocratic civilization.[30]

Whereas the previous stage was characterized by the belief that God reveals himself directly to the people,[31] the acceptance of the authority of the Torah made theophany, as a normal experience, unnecessary.[32]

> Instead there is what is avowed to be the ancient product of a supreme theophany, the Torah--given by God, and regulating the whole of life. . . . In conjunction with the Torah there was the central sanctuary, the Temple. . . . The constituents of the civilization in this stage are dominated by the implications of Torah and Temple . . . .[33]

Kaplan defines a theocracy as

> that form of social organization in which the instruments for the expression of the people's will are conceived to have been given directly by God and to operate under his direct providence. In a theocratic civilization, it is further assumed that an instrument of this kind, whether it exist in the form of a written document or some kind of organization, is fixed and unchangeable.[34]

Hence, the religious life of the Jews was inseparable from their political and cultural activity: "Religion constituted the principal medium through which the Jewish people found its collective or <u>national</u> self-expression."[35]

Kaplan stresses the crucial role of Palestine in molding the Jewish people into a nation,[36] and in

maintaining their status as a nation. Only in Palestine did the Jews become a nation;[37] it was in Palestine that the Jewish people "developed its national life."[38] He insists that throughout the Second Commonwealth period, the Jews constituted a nation which was inseparably linked with its land:

> We find it necessary to harp on this fact [that the land was essential] in view of the opinion which is widely held among modern scholars that when the civilization of the Jewish people entered upon its theocratic stage during the period of the Second Commonwealth, the Jews ceased to be a nation and became a church, an ecclesia. These scholars, accustomed to thinking of nationhood as the product mainly of political government and statehood, and finding that from the Return to the inauguration of the Maccabean Dynasty the Jews were a vassal state with a minimum of political machinery, conclude that the Jews became a "Temple-community" and passed into the class of organization best designated as a church. Assuming that a church is a social or spiritual organization upon which territory exercises no determining influence (a current assumption which is rather wide of the facts) they conclude that after the Return, the life, the habits and the hopes of the Jews were those shared by a church, insofar as their conception of God now transcended the limitations of territory and nationhood. The Jews were accordingly an ecclesiastical entity, a kingdom of priests. This view totally misrepresents the facts. Apart from what we would infer a priori from the nature of the Torah which dominated the life of the Jews--that they could not possibly have thought of their future in any other but national-territorial terms, the actualities of Jewish history during the entire period of the Second Commonwealth confirm that inference.[39]

Finally, Kaplan contrasts the this-worldly attitude of the first stage with the orientation of the theocratic stage, which "vacillates between this life and the

next according to whether it is related to the individual or the group."[40]

> In the main, the traditional view that virtue was rewarded and evil punished in this life was vigorously upheld. It was otherwise with the ideal of well-being which concerned the nation.[41]

Thus, the theocratic stage is characterized by the continuation of the nation Israel, now returned to its land, where it established its national monotheistic religion, Judaism. During this period, individual hopes were concentrated on the present, while national aspirations were directed toward a hereafter.

The Third Stage: Other-Worldly Civilization

When the Second Temple was destroyed and the Jews lost their political independence, they entered the third stage of their career, which Kaplan calls "other-worldly."[42]

> In the third stage of the Jewish civilization, as political independence becomes, under Roman rule, a mere shadow of reality, and especially after the complete annihilation of the national hopes in the defeat under Hadrian, the summum bonum of experience has been definitely transferred to the hereafter. We have henceforth to deal with an other-worldly civilization.[43]

> In this stage of the civilization all its constituents and all the life of this world is treated as an interim state between that attractive past when men lived in the constant presence of a self-manifesting God and the anticipated future when men will again so live. The center of gravity of the spiritual interests is, of course, the hereafter.

> This stage of the Jewish civilization has lasted well into the beginnings of modern times.[44]

The loss of political sovereignty did not, however, jeopardize the nationhood of Israel, according to Kaplan. The people "evinced once again the Jewish capacity for national reconstruction. From being a nation with a central state, the Jews became a nationality . . . ."[45] The Jewish religion had been, during the period of the Second Commonwealth, "the principal means of national self-expression";[46] now, "it became the one and only means."[47] "All the religious ideas, emotions and habits were very much intensified in order to further the survival of the nation."[48]

The role which the religion played in insuring the continued existence of the nation is evidenced by the development of Messianic expectations: "Fealty to the expected Messiah who was to be none other than a descendant of David continued to function as a bond of national unity."[49]

In addition, the belief in other-worldliness itself contributed to group cohesion and thus contained survival value.

> Philosophic dissent or social ambition never impelled the Jew to break away from his people, for the salvation he regarded as worthwhile could be achieved only by participating in its life. Thus did the belief in other-worldliness sustain the solidarity of the Jewish people.[50]

Kaplan also points to the transformation of the Jewish holidays into national festivals, which served to remind the Jew of the "epochal national experiences"[51] of his civilization.

> Pesah, the spring festival, became essentially the day whereon Israel was redeemed from Egypt. Sukkot, the festival of ingathering, served as a reminder of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness. The process of giving historic significance to festivals continued for a long time. Thus, Shabuot, the wheat harvest festival, came to commemorate the giving of the Torah. Hanukkah and Purim, like Pesah and Sukkot, were reinterpreted to commemorate historical events significant in the life of the nation Israel.[52]

To further document the continued existence of the nationhood of Israel subsequent to the destruction of the Second Temple, Kaplan cites the writings of the Rabbis. He refers to their use of the term "Kenesset Yisrael" to signify the Jewish people. He notes that

> insofar as the Pharisaic view-point came to predominate, the Jews, as a corporate entity, acquired a new character. In addition to continuing as a nation, they became an ecclesia. They no longer knew themselves merely as an Am, or, Goy, as was the case in biblical times, or as an Ummah, in post-biblical times. Henceforth they considered themselves a dedicated People, a conception which was embodied in the description Kenesset Yisrael. Kenesset is the Hebrew equivalent of "Synagogue" which came to be a term applied to the entire body of the Jewish People, in the same way as "Church" came to be applied to the entire body of Christian believers.[53]

He explains that "Kenesset" is synonomous with "ecclesia";[54]

> "'ecclesia' is a distinctly religious concept, religious

in the traditional sense of being based upon some supernatural revelation of divinity."[55] Thus, "the frequent designation of Jewry in rabbinic literature as Kenesset [sic] Yisrael, the ecclesia of Israel, points to the emphasis upon the element of supernaturalism as the factor which accounts for the corporate character of the Jewish people."[56]

However, Kaplan maintains that it is a misunderstanding of the Rabbis to claim that by "Kenesset" they meant to refer merely to a religious community:

> This [use of "Kenesset"] must not be confused with the modern attempt to identify the Jews as a religious community. A religious community is less than a nation. A religious community has none of the organizational features and agencies of a nation. A church, provided it is a visible one, or an ecclesia such as the Jews said they were, is more than a nation. It not only has the organizational features and agencies of a nation; it regards them as divinely ordained and supported.[57]

Kaplan, therefore, believes that the Jews regarded themselves as a nation and more---a divinely ordained nation. Since the Rabbis themselves designated the Jews as an ecclesia, he is careful to add a disclaimer, lest one mistakenly believe that the Rabbis intended to confine Jewry to the status of a religious community:

> This fact [that Israel was to the Rabbis an ecclesia] has misled some present-day Jewish thinkers into believing that rabbinism altogether denied the nationhood of the Jewish people, or considered it of secondary importance. The barest acquaintance,

however, with rabbinic writings should disabuse one of such an error. We may question the logical consistency of a tradition which considered salvation in the other world as the principal purpose for which Israel was called into being, and yet insisted that Israel must remain a nation held together by the same kind of physical bonds as any other nation. But whether consistent or not, it is an incontestable fact that there is not the slightest hint anywhere in rabbinic literature that Eres Yisrael, the holy tongue or messianic government can be omitted from the program of Israel's future.[58]

Even as Kaplan maintains that the nationhood of the Jews persisted throughout the Second Commonwealth period, he insists that rabbinic literature exhibits "the same unequivocal acceptance of nationhood as the only possible status for Israel, whether in exile among the other nations or redeemed from exile."[59] He concentrates specifically upon the continued role of Palestine as the force which conferred upon the Jews their nationhood.

The amazing fact is that, in the past, Eretz Yisrael actually functioned as the homeland of the Jews wherever else they happened to live. Being segregated from the rest of the population, they continued to live in accordance with the ways of life which had been fashioned by the landscape and social conditions which obtained in Eretz Yisrael before their ancestors were exiled from it. Consequently, they experienced a sense of solidarity, such as no state or government could confer upon its citizens.[60]

No matter where the Jews lived, culturally and spiritually they moved in a Palestinian milieu.[61]

So long as the Rabbis found it feasible to retain Erez Yisrael as the seat of authority, they did so despite the larger and wealthier communities that may have existed elsewhere. . . .[62]

He appeals to rabbinic texts to demonstrate that, "search as we may in the entire range of traditional Jewish literature for the conception of a denationalized and landless Israel, we shall not find the slightest evidence therefore."[63]

Kaplan regards the theme of a return to Palestine, which was central in the hopes and prayers of the Jews,[64] not merely as wishful thinking:

> It is a mistake to imagine that the Jews throughout all the centuries since the destruction of the Second Commonwealth merely dreamed about Palestine, or found in reciting prayers about it a substitute for living there. The fact is that until the Arab occupation in 634 the Jews probably constituted a majority of the population in Palestine. Except for the hundred years between the first and second crusades, Palestine was continuously inhabited by Jews. The number of Jews in Palestine throughout the centuries was determined not by the economic opportunities of the land, which shrank with the years, but by the degree of relaxation of the rigorous governmental measures against Jewish immigration.[65]

He cites the action of Nachmanides who, in 1267, "established the practice of having the Jews in the Diaspora support those who migrated to Palestine."[66] This proves, contends Kaplan, that "as soon as there was the least chance of re-entering the Land, the Jews did so, despite the impossibility of establishing themselves economically."[67]

Summarizing the importance of the land to the Jews, as well as its significance even today, Kaplan writes:

> Judaism has always contemplated Israel's life and destiny in terms of a collective existence associated with a particular land. Nothing in traditional Judaism indicates that Israel is to function in the world as a landless people. The proposal that the Jews reconstruct themselves into a religious organization that would completely omit Palestine from its reckoning, except as an ancient memory, must ultimately lead to a complete severance with the Jewish past. Whatever the religious philosophy or program of action of such an organization, it would not be Judaism.[68]

> If we realize to what extent everyone who had anything to do with moulding Jewish life centered his efforts upon maintaining the national integrity of the Jewish people, we can understand why we would have to start de novo if we were to dissociate Jewish life from Palestine, and form ourselves into a religious organization pure and simple.[69]

Related to Kaplan's emphasis upon the Land is his claim that throughout the dispersion the Jews remained an independent, autonomous nation.[70] "Their being exiled from their homeland and dispersed among the other nations in no way altered their status."[71]

> Before the emancipation the Jews regarded themselves and were regarded by the rest of the world as a nation in exile. This meant . . . that every local Jewry in relation to the nation as a whole occupied a status analogous to that of the ancient colony in relation to its mother country.[72]

Kaplan refers specifically to the Middle Ages, when

> the Jews as a group were reckoned as a nation, and each local Jewry as a fragment of that nation. . . . The very fact of their being Jews meant that they constituted a culturally autonomous group. It was generally taken for granted that the only way they could live as Jews was by being permitted to foster entirely all such institutions as are usually associated with national life.[73]

By "nation," Kaplan means a politically sovereign entity.[74] The Jews during the Middle Ages, according to Kaplan, were granted not only religious, but also political, autonomy.[75]

His status as a member of the Jewish nation made the Jew an alien within the particular country of his residence: "The Gentile populations treated him at all times as an alien . . . ."[76] As such, he was excluded from "the privilege or the responsibility of sharing in the spiritual and cultural interests of the host nation."[77] Not only were the Jews aliens in the eyes of non-Jews; they regarded themselves as aliens.[78]

However, Kaplan does not regard their status as aliens entirely as a disadvantage. For, according to Kaplan, it allowed the Jews an absolute autonomy which they could not have enjoyed had they not constituted an alien community. Their isolation from the rest of the nation within which they lived actually "made of them a nation in a truer sense than were those who lived in one country under their own government."[79] The Jews constituted "a state within a state."[80] Kaplan notes "the remarkable uniformity in all matters pertaining to Jewish life that prevailed within the various Jewries, and the unparalleled discipline and obedience to authority that obtained everywhere among the Jews."[81] Furthermore, their local autonomy served to unite the Jews into a world

community.

> The measure of autonomy and freedom from non-Jewish interference in its internal affairs each local Jewry enjoyed was of more than local significance. It made possible the cultural and spiritual interaction of world-Jewry.[82]

The geographical diversity of the Jews, therefore, did not hamper them from maintaining their unity as members of one, homogeneous civilization.[83] Kaplan emphasizes the importance of the autonomy of the Jews for the survival of Judaism:

> Living together in groups as a result of voluntary or enforced segregation enabled the Jews to cultivate their own mode of life . . . and to govern themselves in matters economic and judicial as an autonomous community.[84]

> This fact, which is the most fundamental commonplace of Jewish history, is seldom viewed from the standpoint of its true significance for the survival of Judaism. The connection between the segregation of the Jews and the continuance of Judaism throughout the centuries is treated as purely accidental, when, as a matter of fact, it is that of cause and effect. Without segregation there could have been no collective self-determination, and without that, there could have been no Judaism.[85]

Kaplan claims that the Jews had maintained their nationhood throughout their history; however, they sacrificed it after the French Revolution. Referring to the Sanhedrin, convoked by Napoleon I in 1806, Kaplan charges that the Jews were "terrorized into declaring that the Jews of France were no longer part of a

nationality, un corps de nation, but a religious community, or Frenchmen of the Mosaic persuasion."[86] He claims that Napoleon virtually forced[87] the Jewish people "to surrender its international unity and become merely a religious sect."[88] He maintains that "the representative Jews of the time who composed the French Sanhedrin . . . had become thoroughly secularized," and that, "allowing considerations of this-worldly salvation to sway them, they submitted to Napoleon's demand" that they repudiate their national status.[89] Such action was tantamount to a betrayal of Judaism: "It implied the surrender of the age-old hope for a return to their ancestral land."[90]

Kaplan qualifies his condemnation of the French Jews, explaining that they were faced with a virtually impossible and unprecedented choice:

> We may deplore their answer, but we must remember that during the half-century beginning with the French Revolution the Jews were, to use a colloquialism, put on the spot. Their entire history conditioned them only for two alternatives: Independence in Eretz Yisrael, or subjection and exile somewhere. It had no directives whatever, if they chose to be at home as Jews outside Eretz Yisrael. And the new spirit of modern nationalism also put before them only two alternatives: civic rights and surrender of their yearning for Zion, or the continuation of their former status as aliens, with all the attendant sufferings and persecutions.
>
> It is easy to find fault with the choice of those who were confronted by the dilemma of continuing to languish in ghettos or compromising with their historic destiny.[91]

However, Kaplan can not condone the choice made

by the members of the Sanhedrin, nor that of any Jew who renounces the nationhood of the Jews:

> This surrender of Jewish nationhood is a new kind of suicide, suicide on a national scale. Considered objectively, one may ask: what right has an individual Jew or a group of Jews officially to change the status of all the Jews in the world? For the last three thousand years all Jews have regarded themselves, and have been regarded by the rest of the world, as primarily a nation.[92]

> Assuming that the emancipation precludes the granting of civic rights to those who declare themselves members of the Jewish nationality, that difficulty is circumvented by voting that the Jews are no longer a nation. The only proper thing, it seems, for the Jew to do when he finds Jewish nationhood irksome to him is to read himself out of it, but not to read the Jewish nationality out of existence. . . . The inevitable effect of declaring that Judaism has nothing to do with Jewish nationhood is to cast a reflection on the civic patriotism and loyalty of those who insist upon retaining their Jewish nationhood.[93]

Kaplan regards it still a fact that the Jews are a nation, despite the decision of the French Sanhedrin. However, that experience sets a dangerous precedent, which threatens the survival of Judaism. He warns:

> If that process of integration had been permitted to go on unhampered, it would have led to the complete assimilation of Western Jewry.[94]

> Had it not been for the recrudescence of Jew-hatred in its modern form of anti-Semitism, the Jews would in all likelihood have been absorbed by the majority population, and Judaism would have ceased to exist.[95]

The foregoing review of Kaplan's reconstruction of the third, or other-worldly, period of Jewish history, reveals a major characteristic of the Jewish civilization: its capacity to survive by means of its nationhood and peoplehood, irrespective of whether the Jews reside in a common physical land. To be noted is Kaplan's assertion that

> until the emancipation the Jews were, to all intents, a territorial group. . . . The fact that they did not all occupy a continuous stretch of territory, or that they were not confined to one single pale or ghetto but were distributed in a number of pales or ghettos, did not render a common territory less of a factor in their lives.[96]

The ability to maintain their status as a nation is attributed to the Jewish religion, which, after the destruction of the Second Temple, became the only means of "national self-expression." Whereas the Jews became an ecclesia, they were no less a nation than they were during the previous period, when they occupied a common territory. Their autonomy permitted them to foster their civilization as if they still resided in Palestine.

Summary of the Three Stages

Kaplan's reconstruction of Jewish history traces a three-stage development of the Jewish people and their religion: from a henotheistic kingdom (corresponding to the period of the First Commonwealth) to a monotheistic

theocracy (during the Second Commonwealth) to an other-worldly ecclesia (from the destruction of the Second Temple to modern times). During the first stage, the people were transformed from a loose federation of tribes into a nation; by adopting the Torah, they later became an ecclesia, yet retained their nationhood. The identity of their religion, which expressed the national will, remained constant although it underwent internal change, by virtue of its connection with the continuous people. Thus, Judaism as a civilization "has maintained its continuity for three thousand years."[97]

The Impending Fourth Stage

Kaplan suggests that the third stage of Jewish history is drawing to a close, and that Judaism is about to enter the fourth stage in its development--the "democratic stage."[98] "The civilization into which it will grow will be humanistic and spiritual."[99]

> The next phase of Jewish civilization will constitute, in some respects, a return on a higher level to the first stage; the center of gravity of the spiritual interests will again be the here and now, and communion with God will again be a possible normal experience for the Jew. Instead, however, of being an outward visible experience, communion with God will be realized in the inwardness of mind and heart.[100]

> Now, the Jewish People, like every other, must learn to live both in its own historic civilization

> and in the civilization of the environment. That will usher in the democratic stage of Judaism during which the reconstitution of the Jewish People, the revitalization of its religion, and the replenishment of its culture will be achieved.[101]

Kaplan believes that since Judaism has always been a civilization, his program for the future is merely a further stage in Judaism's evolution. His program is authentic Judaism, as it is consistent with the pattern revealed during the three thousand years of Jewish history.

> Nothing . . . would be more fantastic than to suggest that Jews should constitute a solidarity that is to be based on using their civilization as an instrument for the improvement of human nature, if they would have to create such a civilization de novo. But the truth is that they have the making of such a civilization in Judaism, which has functioned through the centuries as an evolving spiritual civilization, though hitherto not consciously identified as such. If we omit the aspect of evolving, this is actually how the priests, prophets and sages who wrote the Torah intended it to function.[102]

> In reconstituting Jewish Peoplehood we are not creating something new; we are reviving the idea of the Keneset [sic] Yisrael . . . . The only element that differentiates the Jewish People of the future from the Jewish People of the past is that the latter was geared to a religion based on a supernatural and other-worldly conception of salvation, whereas the former is to be geared to a religion based on a conception of salvation which combines transcendence with this-worldliness.[103]

Kaplan thus seeks to justify by an elaborate appeal to the past his claim that his program merely advocates the transformation of Judaism "from an ancient civilization into a modern civilization."[104]

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Kaplan, M. M., Judaism as a Civilization, p. 180.

2. See above, p. 35.

3. See above, pp. 39-40; see also Kaplan, op. cit., pp. 227-263.

4. Kaplan, M. M., "Nationhood the Call of the Spirit," in S. A. J. Review, vol. 8, no. 37, May 24, 1929, p. 12.

5. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 215.

6. "So many have been the changes that have taken place in Judaism that in their cumulative effect they disclose three distinct stages in its career. To discern these stages we have to take cognizance of the development of the Jewish religion, for though religion is but one element in a civilization, it is the most self-conscious one and therefore the truest index of its character." (Ibid., p. 209.)

7. Ibid., p. 352; see also Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 446.

8. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 352.

9. Kaplan, M. M., "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," in S. A. J. Review, vol. VIII, no. 32, April 19, 1929, p. 7; see also Judaism as a Civilization, p. 210.

10. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 210.

11. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," p. 5.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 10.

14. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 353.

15. Ibid.
"Our ancestors transformed themselves from a loose federation of tribes into a nation." (Judaism without Supernaturalism, p. 139.)
"The Godhood of YHWH was based upon his relationship to the nation of Israel." (Judaism as a Civilization, p. 356.)

16. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 362.

17. Ibid.

18. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," p. 15.

19. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 186.

20. Ibid., p. 211.

21. Kaplan, M. M., "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," S. A. J. Review, vol. VIII, no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 4.

22. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 362.

23. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 32, April 19, 1929, p. 15.

24. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 4.

25. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 362-363.

26. Ibid., p. 255; see also p. 256.

27. Kaplan, "Nationhood the Call of the Spirit," p. 15.

28. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 255.

29. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 5.

30. Ibid.

31. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 210.

32. Ibid., p. 211; see also "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 32, April 19, 1929, p. 6.

33. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 32, April 19, 1929, p. 6.

34. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 211.

35. Ibid., p. 369, emphasis mine.

36. Ibid., p. 187.

37. Kaplan, M. M., "The Nationhood of Israel," in S. A. J. Review, vol. VIII, no. 36, May 17, 1929, pp. 14-18; Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 187, 264-267.

38. Kaplan, "The Nationhood of Israel," p. 14.

39. Ibid., pp. 18-19, emphasis mine.

40. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 9.

41. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 212.

42. Ibid.

43. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 9.

44. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 32, April 19, 1929, p. 6.

45. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, pp. 28-29.

46. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 369.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Kaplan, M. M., The Greater Judaism in the Making, p. 46; cf. The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion, p. 346.

50. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 10; see also "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 33, April 24, 1929, pp. 10-11.

51. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 262.

52. Ibid.; cf. "Nationhood the Call of the Spirit," p. 19 and The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion, passim.

53. Kaplan, The Greater Judaism in the Making, pp. 72-73.

54. Ibid., p. 11.

55. Ibid.

56. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 227.

57. Ibid., pp. 227-228.

58. Ibid., pp. 268-269.

59. Kaplan, "The Nationhood of Israel," p. 20.

60. Kaplan, M. M., "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," in The Reconstructionist, vol. XXVII, no. 19, January 26, 1962, p. 10.

61. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 188.

62. Kaplan, "The Nationhood of Israel," p. 21.

63. Ibid., p. 22.

64. "It does not need a practiced eye to discern the hope for the recovery of Palestine in every move and turn of Jewish life and thought since the destruction of the Second Commonwealth." (Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 188.)

65. Kaplan, "The Nationhood of Israel," p. 22.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 264.

69. Kaplan, "The Nationhood of Israel," p. 13. "The Rabbis held on to the national prerogatives of land, language and group autonomy with an unwavering tenacity that renders a denationalized Israel a deliberate subversion and repudiation of the past, and in no sense a continuation of it." (Ibid., p. 20.)

70. "Because the Jews in all lands wanted to be a nation in their own land, they really had a far stronger bond of unity and cooperation to serve as a basis of common life and civilization than any people living unmolested on its own native soil. As a result, the Jews managed to maintain enough of a civilization during the many centuries of dispersion to feel that their identity as Jews had grown dependent upon their perpetuating that civilization." (Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 189-190.)

71. Kaplan, Judaism without Supernaturalism, p. 155.

72. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 227; see also The Future of the American Jew, p. 61.

73. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 19-20, emphasis mine.

74. "A nation is a political group." (Kaplan, The Greater Judaism in the Making, p. 11.)

75. Ibid.,
"All pre-modern civilizations were identified with specific religions. The Jews were permitted to live among these civilizations as a completely autonomous group, except that, for the privilege of domicile, they had to pay a collective tax or tribute to the state." (Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, pp. 34-35.)

76. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 11; see also The Future of the American Jew, p. 61.
"The relation of Jews to the state, under ancient or medieval regimes, was always that of a tolerated (or persecuted) alien community . . . ." (Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 35, emphasis mine.)

77. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 35.

78. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 24.

79. Ibid., p. 189.

80. Ibid.; The Future of the American Jew, p. 61.

81. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 189.

82. Ibid.

83. "The autonomous life which all Jewish communities led throughout the diaspora afforded the Jews an opportunity to live their Judaism as a civilization." (Ibid., p. 195.)

84. Ibid., p. 189.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., p. 121, emphasis mine.

87. Kaplan refers to the Sanhedrin as having submitted its answers "virtually under duress." ("The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," in The Reconstructionist, vol. XV, no. 10, June 24, 1949, pp. 10-11.)

88. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 31.

89. Ibid.

90. Kaplan, "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," p. 11.

91. Ibid.

92. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 120.

93. Ibid., p. 121.

94. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 31.

95. Kaplan, "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," p. 11.

96. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 189.

97. Kaplan, "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 12.
"By some divine gift, the Jewish people managed to bridge the gaps between the different stages of its history so that it did not experience the least break in the continuity of its life." (Judaism as a Civilization, p. 213.)

98. Kaplan, "The Principles of Reconstructionism," in The Reconstructionist, vol. XXVII, no. 19, Jan. 26, 1962, p.32.

99. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 214.

100. Ibid.

101. Kaplan, "The Principles of Reconstructionism," p. 32.

102. Kaplan, "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," p. 7.

103. Kaplan, Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, pp. 54-55.

104. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 209.

CHAPTER FIVE

CIVILIZATION OR RELIGION? THE EVIDENCE OF HISTORY

At the heart of Kaplan's concept of Jewish history is the proposition: Judaism was always a civilization, rather than a religion.[1] This statement may be subdivided into three propositions, corresponding to the topics which were discussed in Chapters Three and Four, namely:

1) The Jews have always constituted a nation, and have been regarded as such both by themselves and by non-Jews.[2] [See Chapter Six for discussion of Kaplan's use of the terms "civilization" and "nation."] Even when they became an ecclesia, they still maintained their nationhood.[3] Rabbinic literature affirms the nationhood of the Jews.[4] By virtue of their status as a nation, the Jews have always enjoyed the autonomy necessary to develop their own civilization.[5] The Jews have always occupied the status of aliens outside the Land of Israel.[6] Only after the French Revolution did some Jews, against their will, renounce Jewish nationhood.[7]

2) Until the emancipation, the Jews were a territorial group, although they have not always occupied the same land.[8] Palestine was responsible for the birth and the continued existence

of the Jewish nation.[9] Palestine "actually functioned as the homeland of the Jews wherever else they happened to live."[10] Rabbinic literature evidences the indispensability of the land to the Jewish religion.[11]

3) The Jewish religion served as the medium of Jewish national self-expression.[12] It acted as a cohesive force through the sanctification of national experiences[13] and the engendering of other-worldliness.[14] The Jewish religion was not a universal religion, as its content consists of the sancta which are peculiar to the Jewish civilization.[15]

Kaplan's claims regarding Jewish history, summarized above, must be validated by historical fact. The remainder of this chapter will reconstruct those aspects of the Jewish past which are of crucial importance to Kaplan's concept of Jewish history. For purposes of comparison, the periodization will correspond to Kaplan's, except that the various "stages" will bear different titles.[16]

The First Temple

During a portion of the First Temple period, the Jews constituted one nation. They occupied their own country, Palestine, were ruled by their own government, spoke one language, and were united by a common history.

They shared a common religion, which was henotheistic and which celebrated the God who had rescued them from Egypt. Their religion was intimately linked with their land, as it was believed that their God ruled only within its borders. Those who lived outside the land, or who left it, did not enjoy the protection of its God--they worshipped the gods of the country in which they resided.[17]

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided: in the North, ten of the tribes established a separate kingdom, with Shechem, and ultimately Samaria, as its capital; those who remained in the South continued to regard Jerusalem as their capital.[18] The kings of the Northern Kingdom were called the "Kings of Israel," while the kings of the Southern Kingdom were known as the "Kings of Judah."[19] The people of the northern territory were called "the children of Israel,"[20] and those of the south were known as "the children of Judah,"[21] or "Judaeans."[22] The lands were known, respectively, as "the Land of Israel" and "the Land of Judah"; however, even the prophets of Judah spoke always in the name of the God of Israel, not of Judah.[23]

Thus, the nation which had formerly been united under one state in one land became two nations,[24] each with its own government. Although both still shared the same ancestry, history, and language, they constituted different states and adopted different names. At times, the two nations were engaged in warfare.

Eventually, both nations were conquered, the northern

by Assyria and the southern by Babylonia. Both populations were exiled to foreign lands. Solomon Zeitlin writes:

> The Jewish Diaspora began after the Assyrian and Babylonian period. There was no Jewish Diaspora before that time. In the period of the First Temple, all the Jews lived in their own country, Palestine. When the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom and later the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom, they each took the Jews into captivity, and Palestine the mother country was desolate.[25]

The Restoration, Second Temple, and Second Commonwealth

In the year 538, when Cyrus issued his edict authorizing the Jews to return to Jerusalem, only a small portion of them left Babylonia. They established a small settlement, rebuilt the Temple, and developed a theocratic government.

Zeitlin documents the fact that from the time of the Restoration, "the inhabitants of Judaea were always called Judaeans."[26]

> In the books of the Prophets of the Post-Exilic Period, like Ezra and Nehemiah, the name of Israel is still used, but the name of Judaeans is most prevalent. Later, the name "Israel" disappears and the name "Judaeans" takes its place entirely. In the Book of Esther, the name of Israel is not mentioned at all. The word יְהוּדִים Judaeans appears throughout the book. When the author of the book relates that many people of the land accepted Judaism, he used the word מִתְיַהֲדִים, "Judaized." . . .
>
> Josephus in the first ten books of the Antiquities, where he relates the history of the Jews up to the Restoration, uses only the term Hebrews. After that

> period, he calls them Judaeans.[27] The word Judaeans is applied to the inhabitants of Judaea, in the entire Hellenistic literature. . . . It is possible that originally the people who lived in Judaea were called Judaeans because they were descended from the tribe of Judah, since the tribe of Judah really predominated. Later the name Judaeans was applied to all inhabitants of Palestine, regardless of the tribe from which they came. The name was now connected with the country. Still later all the Jews, regardless of where they lived, were designated as Judaeans by the Gentiles, since the land of the people was called Judaea.[28]

When the Jews were restored to Palestine, their religion was transformed from henotheism into monotheism. The one God was believed to be "the God of the people of Israel, regardless of whether they lived in the land of Judaea or elsewhere."[29] Thus, the Jews constituted a religious community, united by their common beliefs and not by territorial or national loyalties. No longer was it necessary to reside within the borders of a particular land to worship God. Since the majority of the Jews lived in Babylonia, the Jewish people can not be regarded as a single nation at that time: "Already in the time of the second Temple only the Jews who lived in Judaea considered themselves a nation, while those who lived outside of Judaea in the Diaspora were regarded only as a religious community."[30]

Both the Jews in Palestine and in Babylonia were at first governed by Persia and then by Alexander of Macedon. However, when the death of Alexander led to the

collapse of his empire, and to a series of wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucides, the Jews found themselves caught between the two struggling forces. Jews actually fought against one another, some with the Ptolemies, some in the Seleucidean armies.[31]

Zeitlin notes that during the period prior to the establishment of the Jewish state, both the Ptolemies and the Seleucides invited Jews to settle in their respective empires and granted them religious freedom. Those who removed to Alexandria were known as Alexandrians and those in Antioch called themselves Antiochenes.[32]

It is incorrect, therefore, to refer to the Jews after the Restoration as constituting one nation: those who resided in Judaea were known as Judaeans, whereas the Jews who moved elsewhere adopted different names: Jews fought in opposing armies; their common bond was merely their religion which was no longer restricted to the inhabitants of one land.

The national differences which divided the Jews become more apparent after the establishment of the independent Jewish state in 141. Although the Commonwealth was short-lived, it represented "the first time in Jewish history the Jews had an independent state in Judaea while a considerable part, if not the bulk, of the Jews, lived outside of Judaea."[33] However, only the Jews who lived in Palestine constituted the Jewish nation, and were

governed by their own state. Those Jews who lived outside of Judaea were related to them only by means of religious bonds.

Zeitlin produces a wealth of evidence which proves that whereas the Jews of Judaea called themselves "Judaeans"[34] and were called "Judaeans" by non-Jews,[35] the Jews who lived in the Diaspora were not called "Judaeans"[36]—they were citizens of their respective countries (not aliens) and were Jews by virtue of their religion.[37] They called themselves either "Israelites" or "Hebrews";[38] since the Jews of the Diaspora were not members of the Jewish nation, they could not be designated by the national term "Judaeans."

The political authority of Judaea did not extend to the Jews residing in other lands,[39] for they did not belong to the Judaean state. They were, however, governed by the religious directives emanating from Jerusalem. "Jerusalem for those Jews was the holy city, the holy metropolis, while to the Jews of Judaea Jerusalem was the capital of their state."[40]

> These two groups, those who lived in their own land, in Judaea, and those who lived in the Diaspora were united only in religion. They worshipped one God, the God of Israel. The Jews of the Diaspora were guided and controlled in their religious life by the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem.[41]

> The term applied to God was always the same as that used in the Bible, the God of Israel, not the God of the Jews. . . . Thus Israel became a theological name connected with God, not with the Jewish State.[42]

That the Jews were united by a universal religion,[43] rather than by common nationhood or a national religion, is documented by Zeitlin. He notes that the term "laos" is applied to any group of people, while "ethnos" refers specifically to a group which resides in a specific territory[44]--that is, a nation. In addition, the Biblical term "am" is usually translated in the Septuagint by the word "laos," and "goy" is rendered "ethnos."[45] "However, when the word Am refers to the Jews, the Septuagint renders it Laos--people, but when it refers to non-Jews, it is usually translated by the word Ethnos--nation."[46] "The translators purposely applied the word Laos to the Jews and Ethnos to non-Jews to emphasize the point that the Jews are a people of God and not a particular nation, although in their time there was a Jewish nation in Judaea."[47]

> Likewise the authors of the gospels, in referring to the pagans, used the word ethnos. However when they referred to the Jews they used the word laos--people but not ethnos--nation. The Apostolic Fathers in like manner always used the term ethnos in speaking of the pagans, but when they referred to the Jews they used the term laos--people. Thus the early Christians differentiated the Jews from the pagans. They referred to the Jews as a people and to the pagans as a nation. The pagans worshipped a national god and therefore were called ethnos, while the Jews, whose religion was universal and not confined to one particular state or nation, were called laos. People of other races who accepted Judaism were called Jews. Therefore the term ethnos--nation could not be applied to the Jews of the Diaspora during the Second Commonwealth . . . .[48]

Prior to the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews restricted Jewish peoplehood to those who professed the Jewish religion:

> A Jew who accepted another religion was no longer considered a member of the Jewish people, according to the early Halakah. He belonged to another religion and had excluded himself from the Jewish people. . . .
>
> Thus, as long as the Jews lived as a nation, in their own land, Judaea, those who accepted Judaism were considered co-religionists, not Homo Ethnos of the same people, unless they lived in Judaea. On the other hand, any Jew who accepted another religion ceased to be a co-religionist. He had the status of a pagan.[49]

This attitude was consistent with that which prevailed among the Hellenes. The Jews were granted citizenship in the Hellenistic cities, since their religion did not imply any prior national loyalties.[50] Thus,

> a Jew who rejected Judaism as a religion and accepted Hellenism was no longer a Jew but a Hellene,--the Jews of Antioch were only his fellow citizens but not his co-religionists.[51]

Zeitlin remarks that it follows logically that the term "Judaism" was developed not by Jews living in their own nation, but by Jews of the Diaspora.[52]

> The people in the Diaspora who adhered to the Jewish religion lived in the midst of different cultures and various religions. While they were a part of the general population politically they were different religiously, and thus they coined the term Judaism to express their religious differences from the Hellenes. The term Judaism became in the

> Hellenistic world and later in the Roman, one that denoted a particular religion which differed from others. . . . The word Jew became a term not of a particular race or nationality but of the devotees of a particular religion.[53]

> It is understandable that the term Judaism was coined in Antioch, since the people there adhered to the same religion as the Judaeans, although politically and economically they were divided. . . . Judaea was a politically independent state; however, the Antiochian Hebrews had one religion which was moulded by the Judaeans through the religious Sanhedrin and through the Temple. Hence they coined the term Judaism, although in name they were Hebrews and politically separated from Judaeans. . . . This definition of Judaism as expressing the religion of the Jews could not have been coined in Judaea.[54]

The Roman period provides ample evidence that the Jews were regarded as a religious community, and not as a nation. "The Jews in the Roman empire were considered citizens and were called Roman citizens."[55] They were permitted to own slaves, which, according to Roman law, was a right accorded only to Roman citizens.[56] The Jews were allowed their own courts, as their religion was considered a religio licita.[57]

> Dio tells us that when the Romans subjugated Judaea, Vespasian and Titus received the title of Imperator but not of Judaicus. It was the custom of the Roman Caesars, when they received the title of Imperator for their victories over a particular nation, to append the name of the nation to the title of the Imperator. However, in the case of their victory over Judaea, they did not append the title Judaicus. The reason was that Judaism, even before the destruction of the Temple, was held by the Roman people to be a religion. They considered the people who lived in Judaea as only a part of those who professed Judaism.[58]

Any reconstruction of Jewish history subsequent to the establishment of the Second Commonwealth which fails to note the extent to which the Jewish religion was universalized neglects one of the most outstanding characteristics of this period. Under the direction of the Pharisees a thoroughgoing revolution in religious belief and practice was achieved. The Pharisees succeeded in reducing the power and importance of the theocracy, and prepared the way for a system which no longer required a priesthood to mediate between man and God. They developed the conception of God, the universal Father of all men, who may be approached without the aid of intermediaries. The Pharisees stressed Judaism as a universal religion, not dependent upon land or Temple, but available to all wherever they lived. Due to the Pharisaic transformation of Judaism into a universal religion, Judaism was enabled to survive after the destruction of the Temple and state.[59] The universal God could be worshipped in any land, and the universal religion could be practiced in local synagogues which replaced the central Temple.

The universalism achieved by the Pharisees is revealed in the change in attitude toward proselytes which they accomplished. Proselytism was not encouraged nor acceptable so long as a particularistic concept of God prevailed. Such a concept is advocated by the Pentateuch,

which excludes foreigners from joining the Jewish people.[60] In order to circumvent Pentateuchal opposition to proselytism and to transform the God of the Jewish people into the God of the universe, the Pharisees reinterpreted the exclusivist passages in the Pentateuch so that they no longer prohibited foreigners from accepting the God of Israel.[61] The Pharisees also de-emphasized the Exodus from Egypt, and stressed the idea of spiritual redemption.[62]

> Anyone who accepted Judaism could recite with the rest of the Israelites on the night of Passover, "who redeemed us and who redeemed our forefathers," since proselytes are indeed the spiritual descendants of those whom God redeemed from Egypt.[63]

The encouragement which the Pharisees offered proselytes is indicated in the interpretation which they placed upon the tradition that God revealed the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, rather than in the Land of Israel. The Rabbis explained that God chose the desert, which is a no-man's land--neutral territory--to teach that his law is available to all peoples; membership in the community of God is not restricted to any one nation.[64]

To confer status upon proselytes, the Pharisees canonized the Book of Ruth. It was thus implied that King David himself was the descendant of a proselyte.[65] A proselyte was accorded equal status with born Jews, and was designated as an "Israelite."[66] Talmudic legends even ascribe non-Jewish ancestry to such outstanding sages as

Rabbis Meir and Akiba.[67]

Pharisaic universalism is clearly evidenced (after the destruction of the Second Temple) by their transformation of the major festivals from national commemorations of historical events to spiritual expressions of universal ideals. The Biblical "Festival of Unleavened Bread" had been associated with the Exodus from Egypt. It was renamed "Passover," and was transformed into an expression of the redemptive powers of God.

> Thus the former is more in the character of a national festival, while the Passover is religious in character. Hence, the sages purposely dropped the name unleavened bread and named the festival Passover, to stress the religious significance of this festival.[68]

Likewise, the agricultural holiday known as the "Festival of Weeks" became, after the destruction of the Second Temple, a religious holiday commemorating the Revelation at Mount Sinai.[69]

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which had centered about Temple rites and priesthood, became holidays devoted to the individual's spiritual refreshment and atonement.[70]

After the destruction of the Temple and the loss of Jewish independence, Hanukkah, originally commemorating the Hasmonean victory, lost its national significance. Therefore, the legendary miracle of the oil--a religious motif--was introduced, and Hanukkah was retained as a religious holiday celebrating the rededication of the

Temple.[71]

The Jewish religion was thus relieved of the particularism which would have prevented it from receiving proselytes and from surviving the destruction of the Jewish state. It was noted that even prior to the Second Commonwealth, Judaism was not a national religion, confined solely to the occupants of a particular land; but it served as the link which united the inhabitants of Judaea--the "Judaeans"--with the majority of the Jews, who lived in the Diaspora. Subsequently, when the Jewish state was established, Judaism remained the common religious bond between the Jews of Judaea and those "Israelites" and "Hebrews" who held the status of citizens in nations outside Palestine. Only the Jews of Judaea constituted the Jewish nation, while those in other lands were Jews by virtue of their religion. Thus, the seeds of universalism were present in Judaism even before the Pharisees nourished them, and cultivated a Judaism to include not only Jews in various lands, but also proselytes who had been excluded previously. The Pharisaic innovations formally created a universalistic religion, available to all people and capable of being practiced in any locale.

From the Destruction of the Second Temple through the Middle Ages

During the period of the First Temple, the Jews first constituted one, then two nations. After the Restoration, the Jews were primarily a religious community, although a portion of them--those who resided in Judaea--represented a Jewish nation. With the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jews ceased to occupy the status of a nation, and became a purely religious community.

Zeitlin explains that prior to the destruction of the Second Temple,

> the Jews of Palestine were called יהודים, Judaeans.[72] Their language was called עברית in the rabbinic literature, and by Josephus Hebrew. . . . Palestine was called ארץ, the land, not Erez Yisrael. The Diaspora was called חוץ לארץ, "beyond the land."
>
> After the destruction of the Temple the word Judaeans disappears entirely from the Talmud. The name Israel now became the only term for the Jews. Up to the time of the Hadrianic period we sometimes do find the word Judaeans, but after that it disappears entirely, and the name Israel supplants it.[73] After Judaea was conquered by the Romans, particularly after the last struggle of Bar Kokba, the Jews ceased to exist as a nation. They were not even allowed to enter Jerusalem, their metropolis. They segregated themselves as a religious group without a country of their own. They spoke different languages, those of the countries in which they dwelt. Their tongue which before the destruction of the Temple was called Hebrew עברית, was now called the "Sacred Tongue," not the language of the people, but the language of prayers and of the Bible. Judaea which in the time of the Second Commonwealth was called the Land, now was called the Land of Israel.[74]

He demonstrates that the Jews changed their name

from "Judaeans" to "Israelites" in response to the Christian claim that they were the true Israelites, the people of God; the Jews, therefore, registered their counter-claim by adopting the name which the Christians used.[75] By abandoning the name "Judaeans," the Jews signified that they considered themselves a religious community, the people of God.[76] Since "Israel" was a purely religious term, and had no national overtones,[77] they used it to proclaim, explicitly, that they no longer constituted a nation.

In addition, they applied a new term to themselves as a group--"Kenesset Yisrael," "the Assembly of Israel."[78]

> The term Keneset Israel, the synagogue of Israel, was coined to indicate that Israel after Bar Kokba became a religious community in contrast to the ecclesia of the Christians . . . .[79]

In the preceding section it was noted that before the destruction of the Temple, when there existed a Jewish nation in Judaea, "those who accepted Judaism were considered co-religionists, not Homo Ethnos of the same people, unless they lived in Judaea. On the other hand, any Jew who accepted another religion ceased to be a co-religionist."[80] However, when they lost their state and the Jews became strictly a religious community, one became a member of the Jewish people when he was born into or accepted the religion, and remained a member even if

subsequently he converted to another, or reverted to his former, religion.[81] The universality of the Jewish religion thus attained its ultimate development after the destruction of the Temple:[82] "Kenesset Yisrael" included all who were Jews ("Israelites") by virtue of their religion.

Not only did the Jews regard themselves as a religious community, "but the Hellenistic world as well as the early Christians so regarded them."[83]

> That the Romans after the destruction of the Temple considered the Jews only as a religious group may be seen from the fact that before the destruction of the Temple, the term ethnos or genos was always given in the Roman official documents addressed to the Jews of Judaea; while after the destruction of the Temple, the word ethnos or genos was never used. In the epistle of Emperor Julian to the Jews, he addressed them as the community of the Jews, not as ethnos--nation.[84]

Prior to the time that Christianity became a state religion, the Jews held the status of a religious group, except for those living in Judaea. However, when Christianity achieved power within the Roman Empire, the attitude toward the Jews changed radically. Whereas Judaism had been considered a universal religion, now the Church began to apply the term "ethnos" to the Jews, signifying that they were a nation.[85] The Church was intent upon establishing Christianity as the only universal religion. Thus it regarded the Jews as an ethnic group and Judaism as a national religion.

> The policy of the Church was that Judaism was a superstition and must be confined only to the people who were stubborn and would not see the light of truth. . . . They maintained that although the Jews were the chosen people up to the time of Jesus, that God then forsook them. Thus for the Church there was no Judaism as a universal religion but a superstition confined to one people called Jews which must be kept in their own circle as an ethnic group.
>
> Therefore, with the advent of Christianity the word "people" came to be applied to the Jews. . . . In later periods the word "nation" was applied to the Jews.[86]

Whereas the terms "people" and "nation" were originally applied to the Jews by the Church as derisive appelations, the Jews themselves later adopted them, without their pejorative connotations.

> The Jews thus followed the Christians and called themselves nation. . . . In like manner the name Judaeans was applied by the early Christians as a nickname, a term of contempt for the people who rejected Jesus, who were Israelites no longer but Judaeans, while the Christians considered themselves to be the true Israelites. This nickname, Judaeans, was later accepted by the people themselves. . . . The Romans after the time of Bar Kokba and the Christians never referred to the Land of Israel as Judaea but called it Palestine, in order to demonstrate that the land of Judaea no longer belonged to the Jews. The name Palestine, however, was later adopted by the Jews themselves.[87]

Zeitlin notes that although the Jews eventually adopted the terminology which the Church applied to them, they did not accept its meaning. The Jews did not relinquish their conception of Judaism as a universal religion, nor did they deny that they were united only by religion.[88]

Zeitlin cites numerous responsa[89] which prove conclusively that "throughout the Middle Ages the Jews never gave up the idea that Judaism was a universal religion."[90] The responsa consistently agree that once an individual was born a Jew or accepted Judaism he could never become a non-Jew. They thus express the universalism of Judaism, for "a universal religion does not recognize conversion to another faith."[91]

Furthermore, the Jews

> also held that the country where they lived was their fatherland. Rabbi Solomon ibn Adret called Spain his country. Maimonides signed his name, Moses the Spaniard. Rashi called France his country, the French language his language. . . . The term Galuth--Diaspora--was for the Jews only a theological term.[92]

It is true that the Land of Israel remained an object of Jewish devotion after the destruction of the Temple. The Jews were spiritually attached to the land.[93] They looked forward to the reconstitution of their religion there.[94] "The enthusiasm for Palestine was not shared, however, by all the rabbis of the Diaspora. Rabbi Judah, the founder and the leader of the Academy of Pumbedita, put a ban on those who wanted to leave for Palestine."[95] Prior to the Middle Ages, the religious authority was shifted from Palestine to Babylonia.[96]

> Some Geonim, in order to show the superiority of the Babylonian to the Palestinian academies, even amended the text of the Talmud so that the authorizations to try civil cases received in Palestine

> were considered void in Babylonia, while the authorizations received in Babylonia were considered valid in Palestine.[97]

The Jews outside of Palestine in the days of the Second Commonwealth regarded Palestine as their religious capital. They were citizens of their respective countries and were designated by corresponding nomenclature. Similarly, during the Middle Ages, Palestine retained its religious significance for world Jewry, but it did not serve as their national homeland.

> Pinto called the Jews who were expelled from Spain and those who fled from Portugal Spaniards and Portuguese. The Jews who lived in the southern part of France before the revolution considered themselves as Spaniards and Portuguese. In like manner Maimonides, although he had to flee from Spain (because of his religion) and settled in Egypt, always signed his name Moses, the son of Maimon the Spaniard.[98]

Nor did the Jews speak a language different from that of the country in which they resided. "They spoke the language of the countries of their birth and considered it as their own."[99] As early as the Restoration period, the Hebrew language "ceased to be the language of the people."[100] It was replaced by Aramaic, which was spoken by the Jews in Judaea as well as in Babylonia.[101] Hebrew was maintained only as the sacred tongue, which served to unite the Jews into a religious group.[102] The Jews of the Middle Ages, likewise, retained Hebrew as the sacred tongue but spoke the language of their respective

homelands. Guido Kisch writes that the Jews of medieval Germany

> were not bound together as a linguistic (national) community by a common tongue that could have been considered foreign from the German point of view. Long before, the Jews had given up Hebrew as their vernacular; they knew and employed the German language of their native province. They even used it for annotating and translating single parts and books of the Scriptures.[103]

During the Middle Ages, the Jews regarded themselves strictly as a religious community. They did not consider themselves as a separate ethnic group,[104] but as a community governed by religious law.

> The Jewish communities throughout the Middle Ages were of a religious character. Jewish life was shaped in accordance with the canon law. The rabbis guided their mode of living according to the Talmud both in ritual and civic matters.[105]

> All the rabbis throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in the Franco-German and the Russian-Polish communities, believed that the Jews were a religious community. They held that the Jews are a people of God, a people through the Torah.[106]

The Jews were also considered by the rest of the population as a distinct religious, not national, group. Kisch demonstrates that Jews were accorded legal treatment different from other groups, not because they were considered a separate nation or ethnic entity, but because they constituted a religious community apart from the rest of the population.[107] They differed only in their refusal

to convert to Christianity.

> While neither language nor general law nor social considerations placed any obstacle in the way of a full assimilation of the Jews, such assimilation was never accomplished. For the medieval Jew it was attainable only through conversion to Christianity. No better evidence than this could be adduced as additional proof that the medieval mind did not understand the "Jewish problem" in terms of nationalism but exclusively under the aspect of religion. While the former conception is not specified at all in medieval sources of law, the latter everywhere comes clearly into view, directly as well as indirectly.
>
> That the contrast between the Jews and the Christian world was principally based on religious and not on nationalistic grounds can readily be gathered also from extra-legal sources.[108]

Furthermore, the Jews were despised and persecuted purely on the basis of their religious convictions.

> The sole ground for antagonism against them was their refusal to recognize Christ and to accept his teachings. No mention is made of any national or racial difference. In short, in the view of the Middle Ages, the religious distinction was the dominating factor that determined the political and legal situation of the Jews. There is no trace of a conscious national antipathy or opposition toward them as an alien element or group.[109]

Kisch quotes a statement which is found in the Preamble to King Venceslas II's charter for the Jews of Moravia, which clearly defines the opinion of the Jews held by the state:

> Because of the crime once committed by their fathers against our Lord Jesus Christ, the Jews are deprived of the protection of their inborn rights

> and condemned to eternal misery for their sin. Although they are like us in the form of human nature, we are severed from them by our holy Christian faith.[110]

The Jews were not, therefore, regarded as aliens in the Middle Ages. Indeed, they were often granted citizenship virtually equal to that of their Christian neighbors:

> Up to the middle of the fourteenth century, the law content of the municipal rights and duties of the Jews was almost identical with that of Christian citizens. The Jews were actually designated as citizens, and the rights of citizenship conferred on them were not essentially different from those enjoyed by Christian city dwellers. The Jews had the right of domicile, enjoyed legal protection of life and property, were entitled to acquire real property and mortgages in all parts of the city, and were permitted to dwell among the other citizens. Their activity in trade and industry was scarcely subject to legal restrictions, and Jewish craftsmen were to be found in many places. Jews, like the Christian citizens, were subject to the cities' taxes and military requirements.[111]

It is thus clear that the Jews regarded themselves, and were considered by non-Jews, as a distinct group only by virtue of their common religion. Whatever autonomy they enjoyed was sought and granted on the basis of their religious orientation, which set them apart from the majority population. It was their religious system, and not their status as a nation, which characterized the Jews, as it had throughout their history, particularly since the demise of the Second Commonwealth.

Conclusions

The foregoing analysis has demonstrated that Kaplan's proposition "Judaism was always a civilization" is not substantiated by the facts of Jewish history. Rather, Judaism was a religion which served to unite its adherents into a religious community.

Nor have the Jews always constituted a nation. Only during the period of the First Temple, and subsequently, during the Second Commonwealth when the Jews of Judaea had a land and government of their own, did the term "nation" apply to all or part of the Jewish people. Those Jews who lived in lands other than Judaea did not belong to the Jewish nation, and were united with the Judaean Jews only in terms of their common religion. Neither the Jews nor the non-Jews regarded the Jewish people as a nation. When the destruction of the Second Temple eradicated the Jewish state, the Jews became a purely religious community and designated themselves by a new name devoid of national connotations. Rabbinic literature confirms the status of the Jews as a religious group. The Jews were not regarded as aliens, either prior to the destruction of the Temple, or throughout the Middle Ages. Their local autonomy was a result of their religious affiliation, which set them apart from their neighbors. Thus, when the Jews of France declared that they were strictly

a religious community, they were merely reaffirming the status which the Jews have always occupied.

Palestine functioned as the homeland only for those Jews who lived within its borders. Jews who resided elsewhere attributed to it great spiritual significance, and regarded it as their religious capital; however, they adopted the culture, language, and institutions of the countries in which they lived.

Judaism was a universal religion, which served as the common bond among Jews of different nationalities. Pharisaic influences succeeded in removing from the Jewish religion those traces of particularism which would exclude proselytes. Festivals which were formerly based upon national experiences were transformed into religious holidays.

It will be noted that virtually every one of Kaplan's assertions concerning the Jewish past has been proved inaccurate. At no time in Jewish history does Judaism conform to Kaplan's characterization. His concept of Judaism as a civilization is not an outgrowth of historical fact. On the contrary, history must be distorted if it is to validate his theory.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. See above, pp. 52, 53, 72.

2. See above, pp. 39-41, 62-65, 69.

3. See above, pp. 62-63.

4. See above, pp. 40, 62-65.

5. See above, pp. 65-67.

6. See above, p. 66 and corresponding notes.

7. See above, pp. 67-69.

8. See above, p. 70.

9. See above, pp. 42, 57-58.

10. See above, p. 63.

11. See above, pp. 42, 63-65.

12. See above, pp. 57, 60.

13. See above, p. 61.

14. See above, p. 60.

15. See above, pp. 31-34.

16. The titles derive from Solomon Zeitlin's series of essays, cited below.

17. Cf. Zeitlin, S., "Judaism as a Religion," in The Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 323; vol. 35, no. 2, 1944, pp. 186-187.

18. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 4; cf. Roth, C., History of the Jews, pp. 28, 31.

19. Zeitlin, S., "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," in The Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. 43, no. 4, 1953, p. 366; "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 5.

20. II Chron. 13:18.

21. Ibid.

22. II Kings 16:6.

23. Cf. II Kings 19:15, 20; II Chron. 15:13; Isa. 37:16; Jer. 7:21.

24. The two nations were so regarded even by the Judaean prophets; cf. Ezek. 37:22.

25. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 210.

26. Zeitlin, S., "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" in The Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. 26, no. 4, 1936, p. 317.

27. "Philo similarly distinguishes between the term Hebrews and the term Judaeans. When he speaks about the Jews before the time of Ezra he uses the term Hebrew, but when he writes about the Jews after the return from Babylon he uses the term Judaean. . . . When speaking of the Jews in general or when referring to the Jews of his own time, Philo always uses the term Judaeans." (Ibid., p. 326.)

28. Ibid., pp. 317-318; cf. "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, pp. 7-8; "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," p. 368.

29. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 326.

30. Ibid., p. 359.

31. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 11.

32. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, pp. 210-211.

33. Ibid., no. 1, p. 11.

34. Ibid., pp. 8-11; "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," pp. 368-369; "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" pp. 319-320.

35. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, pp. 8-10.

36. Zeitlin, "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" pp. 346-347; "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," pp. 369-371; "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 11.

"Hillel who came from Babylonia to Judaea to study under Shemaiah and Abtalion was known to the Jews of Judaea as 'the Babylonian,' so as to differentiate him from those who lived in Judaea and were called Judaeans--Jews." ("Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 209.)

37. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 363; no. 1, 1943, p. 12; "The Jews: Race, Nation, or Religion--Which?" pp. 325-326, 346-347.

38. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, pp. 11-12; "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," pp. 369-371; "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" p. 322.

39. Zeitlin, "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" pp. 325-326, 343-344; "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 11; vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, pp. 114-115; vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, pp. 329-330.
"Thus in Judaea there were also foreign Jews besides the natives, as in the cities of the Diaspora were native Jews and foreign Jews." ("Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 345, note 344.)

40. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 363.

41. Ibid., no. 1, 1943, p. 12.

42. Ibid., p. 10.

43. "Their religion was a universal religion, and the Jews of Judaea constituted only a part of the people who followed it." (Ibid., no. 3, 1944, p. 343.)

44. Ibid., p. 321.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p. 360.

47. Ibid., p. 361.

48. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, pp. 85-86.

49. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 16.
"The Jews of Judaea called the Jews who lived in the Diaspora our brethren. Josephus applied the term homophulon co-religionists to all peoples who accepted Judaism." (Ibid., no. 3, 1944, pp. 343-344.)

50. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, p. 96.
"During the Graeco-Roman period the Jews were considered a religious group. Jews living in Judaea, really constituted a nation, and were so designated in the Hellenistic literature. The Jews of the Diaspora were regarded by the Hellenes as a religious community. These Jews were united with the Jews of Judaea by religion only. They were co-religionists of the Jews of Judaea, but not homo-ethnos of the same nation." (Ibid., p. 85.)

51. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 224.
"Thus, Hellenism was a kind of religion in opposition to Judaism and later to Christianity. Therefore a Jew who gave up Judaism, i.e. rejected the Jewish religion and accepted the mode of life of the Hellenes, was considered a Hellene and ceased to be a Jew." (Ibid., pp. 222-223.)

52. "The earliest appearances of the term Judaism are in the Fourth Book of Maccabees and in the Epitome of the Second Book, both of which were composed in the Diaspora, in the city of Antioch." (Zeitlin, "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," p. 372.)

53. Ibid., pp. 373-374.

54. Ibid., pp. 372-373.

55. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 212; see above, note 51.

56. Ibid., p. 231.

57. Ibid., p. 214; cf. p. 229.

58. Ibid., p. 227; cf. pp. 212 ff. for detailed evidence regarding the status of a religious community which the Jews occupied during the Roman period.

59. "Other states which had a national religion disappeared with the destruction of the state. . . . The Jewish religion, not being based on country, could not be destroyed with the fortress of Jerusalem." (Ibid., vol. 35, no. 3, 1945, p. 346.)

60. Ibid., p. 309; no. 2, 1944, p. 193.

61. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 2, 1944, pp. 193-195.

62. Ibid., p. 197; vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, pp. 331-333.

63. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 3, 1945, p. 309.

64. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 334.
"Thus these agadic passages reveal clearly that the Jewish religion is not a religion of one race but a universal religion, and anyone who wants to accept God is welcome." (Ibid.)

65. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 2, 1944, p. 195.

66. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, pp. 333-335; "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" p. 338.

67. Agus, J. B., "Nationalistic Philosophies of Jewish History," in Judaism, vol. 5, no. 3, Summer Issue, 1956, p. 266.

68. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 24.

69. Ibid., pp. 24-26. It is significant that for this holiday Jewish tradition prescribes the reading of the Book of Ruth, testifying to the universal nature of the festival.

70. Ibid., p. 26.
"It is worthwhile to note that the first day of Tishri (the 7th month) is never mentioned in the Bible as the day of New Year. This holy day, the first day of the seventh month is called in the Pentateuch זכרון תרועה . However, during the Second Commonwealth, the first day of the seventh month became New Year's day. After the destruction of the Second Temple, this day became the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar." (Ibid.)

71. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

72. Zeitlin demonstrates that the rabbinic literature of the Second Commonwealth period never uses the word "Israel" to refer to the Jewish people; only the term "יהודאין," "Judaeans," appears: ("Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, pp. 9-10; "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" pp. 319-320; "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," pp. 368-369.) "The term Israel was used only in contrast to the priests and Levites. The country was called Judaea, or sometimes the land of Judaea. The tannaitic literature of that period used the term ארץ the 'land.' The language of the people was called Hebrew." ("The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," p. 369.)
Although "Israel" is used in the first chapters of I Maccabees, "Judaeans" replaces it when the account

of the establishment of the Jewish state begins. "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, pp. 8-9.
II Maccabees does not contain references to "Israel," but always designates the Jews by the term "Judaeans." Ibid., p. 9. Similarly, "in official documents between the Jews and the Spartans and the Romans the name Judaeans is used. In the official communications from the Romans to the Jews, the term Ethnos Joudaion, (the Jewish nation) is given. The word Israel never occurs in these official documents." (Ibid., pp. 8-9.) "Thus, we readily see that in the official Jewish documents, and in that used between the Jews and the neighboring states, the expression Jehudim--(Judaeans) was employed and not the word Israel." (Ibid., pp. 9-10.)

"However, the term applied to God was always the same as that used in the Bible, the God of Israel, not the God of the Jews. . . . Thus Israel became a theological name connected with God, not with the Jewish State." (Ibid., p. 10.)

73. "The word Judaeans occurs in the Talmud only when used by Gentiles or when a Jew is represented as speaking to a Gentile. Otherwise, the word Israel is used throughout." ("The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" p. 337, note 85.)

"The documents which previously had the term Judaeans, now were changed and the term Israel substituted." ("The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," p. 375.)

74. Zeitlin, "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" pp. 336-338.

"The Romans and Christians surnamed the land of Judaea Palestine after Bar Kokba's defeat to emphasize the fact that the land did not belong to the Jews. On the other hand, the Jews stressed the name Eretz Israel to point out that the country was theirs." ("The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," p. 375.)

75. Zeitlin, "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" p. 340.

76. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 21.

77. See above, p. 85.

78. Zeitlin, "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," p. 377; "The Jews: Race, Nation or Religion--Which?" p. 341; "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, p. 86.

79. Zeitlin, "The Names Hebrew, Jew and Israel," p. 377.

80. See above, p. 87.

81. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 34, no. 1, 1943, p. 28.

82. See also, pp. 91-92 for the discussion concerning the transformation of the festivals subsequent to the destruction of the Temple.

83. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, p. 86; see above, p. 86.

84. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 228.

85. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, pp. 86-87.

86. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 238.

87. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, p. 92.

88. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 239.

89. Ibid., no. 1, pp. 29-35.

90. Ibid., no. 2, p. 239.

91. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 1, 1944, p. 93.

92. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 2, 1943, p. 239.

93. Ibid., vol. 35, no. 2, 1944, p. 218; vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 364.

94. Ibid., vol.35, no. 2, 1944, pp. 220-221.

95. Ibid., p. 219.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid., pp. 219-220.

98. Ibid., no. 1, p. 115.

99. Ibid., no. 3, 1945, p. 339.

100. Ibid., vol. 34, no. 3, 1944, p. 336.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid., pp. 339-341.

103. Kisch, G., The Jews in Medieval Germany, p. 309.

104. Zeitlin, "Judaism as a Religion," vol. 35, no. 3, 1945, p. 339.

105. Ibid., no. 1, 1944, p. 93.

106. Ibid., no. 3, 1945, p. 313.

107. Kisch, op. cit., p. 306.
"It was their religious difference, above all, which made the Jews conspicuous to the world around them and caused their special treatment in law." (Ibid.)

108. Ibid., pp. 310-311.

109. Ibid., p. 311.
Kisch refers to the fact that while his conclusions derive from his study of medieval law, they "are in complete agreement with prevailing opinion, even of those scholars who have not attacked the problem specifically from the point of view of legal history." He cites the work of James Parkes, who "in his sociological analysis of the Jewish situation in the medieval community, arrived at this conclusion: 'The Jews lived the lives of ordinary townsfolk, shared in the privileges and responsibilities of their fellows, and were distinguished from them only by their religion.'" (Ibid., p. 317.)

110. Ibid., p. 347.

111. Ibid., p. 345.

CHAPTER SIX

A QUESTION OF TERMINOLOGY

The preceding chapter demonstrates that acceptance of the theory that Judaism has always been a civilization requires the distortion of historical fact. Kaplan's distortion of the past necessitates his use of ambiguous and contradictory terminology.

"Nation," "People," and "Civilization"

It was noted in Chapter Four[1] that Kaplan uses the term "nation" to signify a political entity. He refers to "nationhood" as "solidarity based on loyalty to a state."[2] He remarks that "the British government, in offering the territory of Uganda to the Jewish people in 1903, performed an act which implied the national status of the Jews as a body"[3]--that is, nationhood implies the status of statehood. Commenting on the "English civilization,"[4] which he regards as a combination of "religio-national" elements, Kaplan explains that the term "national" refers to "obedience to the specific laws of the state, payment of taxes, enrollment in the army." These references indicate that "nation" is to be associated with the political conditions involved in statehood.[5]

However, Kaplan contradicts his own concept of nationhood when he writes:

> The current conception of nationalism, based upon the misleading assumption that nationhood is synonomous with statehood, makes it impossible for a people to be considered a nation unless it is represented by a state. Furthermore, it is assumed that since no one can be a citizen of more than one state, no one can belong to more than one nation. Such assumptions will have to yield to the more ethical conception of nationhood fundamentally as a cultural rather than a political relationship.[6]

> Fundamental to the reorganization of Jewish life is national unity. That unity is not determined by geographical boundaries; it is cultural rather than political.[7]

Kaplan claims that "a nation is . . . a cultural group,"[8] "nationhood is the principal spiritual opportunity by which man is enabled to fulfil himself to the utmost,"[9] and "nationalism is not a political but a cultural concept."[10]

Thus, Kaplan defines a nation as "a political group" and as "cultural rather than political."[11] In addition, he offers a concept of nationhood which conforms to no objective standards:

> Whether we are a nation or not does not depend upon what we were in the past, nor upon the definitions in dictionaries and scientific books. Whether we are a nation or not depends upon what we ourselves believe we are, as well as upon the way we act, and if we believe we are a nation and act as such, no amount of protests will keep us away from being such. I go a step further and say that even if we believe we are not a nation but for all practical purposes act as a nation, we are one.[12]

The ambiguity and contradictions evidenced in

the foregoing statements are intensified when Kaplan announces that the concept of Jewish nationhood, which he had strenuously supported for years,[13] must be abandoned. In his "Foreword" to the 1957 edition of Judaism as a Civilization, Kaplan explains that the concept of nationhood which the original edition offered, and which had formed the basis of his entire philosophy of Judaism, is no longer meaningful. It must be replaced, he suggests, by "peoplehood."

> The concept "nationhood," as applied to the Jews, had come to be closely identified with statehood, and was, therefore, in need of being replaced by the concept "peoplehood."[14]

Yet it was precisely this concept of nationhood which Kaplan himself had espoused. Moreover, Chapters Three and Four have documented Kaplan's insistence that the Jews have always constituted a nation and must remain one if they are to "play that role in the world which would be a continuation of the part they played under the name Israel."[15]

The new term, "people" or "peoplehood," is no less confusing than the term "nation." Indeed, Kaplan's definition of "people" is virtually equivalent to the last cited definition of "nation":[16]

> What essentially distinguishes a people from any other societal group, and what alone constitutes the common characteristics of groups designated as

> peoples, is their own identification of themselves as such. . . . A group is a people, when and because it knows itself as such.[17]

> The sense of peoplehood is the awareness which an individual has of being a member of a group that is known, both by its own members and by outsiders, as a people.[18]

The ambiguity of this concept of "peoplehood" is recognized by Kaplan: "The term 'people' when applied to a group has hitherto meant little more than a conglomerate of human beings. . . . We shall have to fill the term 'people' with new content."[19]

> What shall the concept "people" denote for us? It should mean to us a succession of generations united by a common history and culture which originated in a particular land, and permeated by a sense of destiny.[20]

However, Kaplan seems to have found this formulation unsuitable, for he reverts to a more flexible definition of "people" when he suggests that

> the concept of people is not fixed, but varies with circumstances. Its content depends on what actually, in any particular era, happens to be the recognized basis of homogeneity. Thus, in the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah, peoplehood consisted mainly of land, government and cult; in the Babylonian Exile, of race and religion; in the Second Commonwealth, of land, law and community life. But in all these epochs, whatever constituted the basis of homogeneity was felt to constitute the <u>peoplehood</u> of the Jews.[21]

Further complicating his concept of peoplehood,

Kaplan writes that "it is ethnic consciousness which makes a group into a people."[22]

Seeking to avoid a definition of "people" which would apply only to the Jewish group, Kaplan explains that

> in designating ourselves "a people," we do not wish to imply that we are the only group in the world that is entitled to use that name. The term "people" . . . may indeed be applied to Christendom and the entire Moslem world. What is Christendom if not "a people" . . . ?[23]

This concept of peoplehood is so amorphous that it can be used to designate virtually any group. In fact,

> the same person can belong to more than one People . . . . This distinguishes the concept of peoplehood from that of political nationhood,[24] since it is obvious that at present one cannot owe political allegiance to more than one national government. But a person may, and in democracies most persons do identify themselves with more than one spiritual or cultural People.[25]

Such a formulation of "peoplehood," applicable to Jews, Christians, Moslems, as well as to other spiritual and cultural groups, is so general that it loses all meaning. Kaplan's claim that the Jews have always constituted a people becomes a tautology.

Kaplan's use of his crucial term, "civilization," abounds in similar ambiguity and contradictions. Not only does he claim that Judaism is a civilization, but he refers to the "American civilization,"[26] the "English

civilization,"[27] and the French and German civilizations.[28] Furthermore,

> by the same token that we must reject the assumption that Judaism is, or can be reduced to, a religion only, we must see in Christianity and Mohammedanism not merely religions but civilizations.[29]

Catholicism and Protestantism are also regarded as civilizations.[30]

Although he refers to Christianity as a civilization, he views "Judaism as analogous to Hellenism or Hinduism and not to Christianity. Like Hellenism or Hinduism, Judaism is the 'ism' of a people, with all of the civilization which enables it to function as a people."[31] Yet, as was noted above, "what is Christendom if not 'a people'?"

Just as Kaplan's "people" becomes so general that it may be applied arbitrarily to any group, his "civilization" signifies such a variety of entities--national and religious--that it lacks significance. Moreover, Kaplan identifies "civilization" both with "culture"[32] and with "nation."[33]

The blatant contradictions involved in Kaplan's concept of "civilization" are revealed when he writes that nations cultivate civilizations,[34] but also that "a nation is the product of a civilization;"[35] and cementing the contradiction, he writes: "A civilization is

the product of . . . a nation, whose life is rooted in a specific part of the earth."[36] Thus, a nation cultivates a civilization, which is the product of a nation, which is the product of a civilization!

The hopeless confusion which pervades Kaplan's terminology is climaxed when he designates Christendom as "an international people,"[37] Judaism as "an international nation,"[38] and Judaism, Catholocism, and Protestantism as "transnational peoples."[39] All are civilizations. Furthermore, since he also regards a "people" as equivalent both to a "nation" and a "church,"[40] and "nation" equivalent to an "historic culture,"[41] Christianity and Judaism become civilizations, international peoples, international nations, historic cultures, and churches simultaneously.

The above noted contradictions stem from Kaplan's distortions of Jewish history. Denying that Judaism was simply a religion, Kaplan finds it necessary to describe Judaism first as a nation. When he realizes that "nation" has political and territorial implications which Judaism did not have, he attempts to coin a new definition of "nation." The cultural formulation of "nationhood," however, does not conform to accepted usage of the term, and Kaplan thus searches for a more appropriate word (even though he had vigorously asserted that only "nationhood" adequately describes Judaism). "Peoplehood" proves futile,

too--it is either too vague to be meaningful or too specific to be universally applicable to Judaism. The way in which Kaplan uses his basic term, "civilization," involves all the ambiguities and inaccuracies of both "nation" and "people": it signifies political, cultural, as well as religious, entities. It succeeds only in confusing the nature of all these groups.

Based upon a distorted picture of the Jewish past, Kaplan's vocabulary thus exhibits a maze of inconsistencies. The words "religion" and "God" fare no better, as will be demonstrated below.

"Religion" and "God"

Kaplan stresses the flexibility of the Jewish religion. Chapter Three cited Kaplan's claim that since it is their civilization rather than their religion which unites all Jews, the content of the Jewish religion is bound by no doctrinal limitations. Jews may believe whatever they please and still remain Jews, by maintaining their association with the Jewish civilization. Religion is but one of many elements which comprise a civilization.

Furthermore, the content of the Jewish religion consists of its sancta; a religion is its sancta. The distinctiveness of a religion is due solely to its sancta, which are different from those of other religions.

Therefore, Jewish religion is to be distinguished from Christianity, not in terms of different systems of belief, but by virtue of their different constellations of sancta. The identity of the Jewish religion throughout the ages, likewise, is due to the continuity of its sancta. Since Judaism is Jewish by virtue of its sancta, no particular concept of God is characteristically Jewish.

This formulation of the Jewish religion, essential to Kaplan's concept of Judaism as a civilization, results in numerous contradictions. Having claimed that the identity of the Jewish religion is maintained by its sancta,[42] Kaplan attributes the same function to Jewish peoplehood: "Without the element of ethnicity or peoplehood, what is there in common between the various stages in the evolution of Judaism to identify it as the same religion?"[43] Kaplan himself has answered the question--the sancta identify it as the same religion. Yet, he declares: "The common denominator in the different stages of Judaism is . . . not to be sought in the tenets and practices, but in the living people."[44]

Asserting that the individual Jew must be granted "the right to regard as his religion whatever he conscientiously accepts as such,"[45] Kaplan nevertheless maintains that "to be a Jew, religiously, means to believe in God."[46] Earlier, Kaplan had stated that "to be a Jew religiously is to go to all lengths in actualizing the potentialities

of the Jewish people . . . ."[47]

Discussing what it means "to believe in God," Kaplan maintains that "the God-idea is not an idea but the reaction of the entire organism to life,"[48] and "God is not an identifiable being who stands outside the universe. God is the life of the universe . . . ."[49]

The contradictions are manifold: a Jew may believe whatever he wishes; but he must believe in God, which means to believe in "the reaction of the entire organism to life," or, to believe in "the life of the universe."

Asserting that its sancta confer upon the Jewish religion its uniqueness and continuity, and that God is not an idea but a reaction to life, Kaplan also states:

> Jewish religious behavior requires an idea of God, but were it contingent upon a particular idea of God, the continuity of the religious heritage would be broken. . . . However, the Jewish civilization succeeded in retaining its own continuity and that of its religion, despite the changes in the God-idea . . . .[50]

> Without a certain sameness and continuity in its [the Jewish religion's] conception of God, there would be no means of identifying the Jewish religion.[51]

> The way to discover the unique character of the Jewish civilization is to note wherein its God idea differed from the type of god conceptions evolved in the other ancient civilizations. . . .[52]

> It may be said without exaggeration that no single belief contributed so much to the unique development of the Jewish religion as the belief that the God of Israel was someday bound to reveal himself

in his full glory and power to all the world.[53]

Kaplan maintains that sancta constitute a religion, and that religious differences consist in different systems of sancta. Yet, he declares:

> In the matter of religion, there is more in common between the liberal Jew and the liberal Christian, or between the orthodox Jew and the orthodox Christian, than there is between the liberal and orthodox either in the Jewish or in the Christian group.[54]

However, liberal and orthodox Jews certainly have more sancta in common than do Jews and Christians.

Kaplan contradicts his own definition of the Jewish religion (as consisting of sancta) when he notes that "changes will undoubtedly take place in the beliefs and practices that have hitherto constituted the Jewish religion."[55]

Glaring contradictions are revealed in Kaplan's choice of which sancta and religious values are to be preserved and which are to be discarded. He explains that

> to make revitalization possible, the sancta of religion must be reinterpreted in each generation so that their meanings are relevant to the needs of that generation. . . . When sancta have become meaningless, they cease, in the nature of the case, to be sancta.[56]

> Continuity of the Jewish consciousness demands that as large a number as possible of traditional

> Jewish values be retained. This does not mean, however, that all traditional values must necessarily be retained. This does not mean, however, that all traditional values must necessarily be retained. Some are inherently of such a character as not to be capable of reinterpretation, or of being fitted into the pattern of the present-day outlook on life. Not even the fact that they suffuse the entire tradition, and that their elimination must produce a radically altered tradition, should be sufficient to save them.[57]

However, Kaplan demands that Palestine be retained as a primary sanctum, on the following grounds:

> The proposal that the Jews reconstruct themselves into a religious organization that would completely omit Palestine from its reckoning, except as an ancient memory, must ultimately lead to a complete severance with the Jewish past. Whatever the religious philosophy or program of action of such an organization, it would not be Judaism.[58]

Kaplan thus utilizes a rationale--continuity with the Jewish past--which he himself considers invalid. He asserts that because the Land has always been a crucial element of Judaism, it must be retained in the future.[59] Yet, he rejects the doctrine of revelation, recognizing that "there surely is not a single syllable or letter of the Jewish tradition which is not thoroughly saturated with the idea that the whole of the Pentateuch was dictated by God to Moses."[60] Abandoning the doctrine of revelation is thus also "a complete severance with the Jewish past"; yet Kaplan does not hesitate to do away with it.[61]

Similarly, Kaplan maintains that the Hebrew language, as well as certain Jewish texts, holidays, personalities, etc. are indispensable to Judaism and must necessarily be retained if the continuity of Judaism is to be maintained; however, he feels free to discard supernaturalism, revelation, other-worldliness, the chosen people idea, offensive codes, laws, customs, and all other elements within the Jewish tradition which in his opinion, are meaningless. Kaplan's choice of "indispensable" items is purely arbitrary; any other group of elements might be designated, with as much validity.

The contradictions and inconsistencies apparent in Kaplan's use of the terms "religion" and "God" result from his misconception of the Jewish past. Whereas Judaism was actually a religion, Kaplan regards it as a civilization. In order to confine the Jewish religion to a single element in the civilization, he reduces the religion to an arbitrarily selected collection of sancta. This device permits him to retain a Jewish religion free of outmoded beliefs (since he does not consider beliefs as the essential characteristics of a religion). However, Judaism was essentially a religion--consisting of very definite beliefs--and, though Kaplan's efforts are valiant, he can not prevent the truth from disturbing his system of distortions. He presents an artificial characterization of the Jewish religion; but the true nature of Judaism periodically

reveals itself in Kaplan's description, causing the contradictions above illustrated.

It is thus apparent that a distorted version of Jewish history can not be maintained without the distortions ultimately revealing themselves. In the case of Kaplan's theory, the disfigurements become apparent in his choice and application of the terminology which he uses to describe Judaism and Jewry.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. Chapter Four, note 74.

2. Kaplan, M. M., "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," in The Reconstructionist, vol. 27, no. 19, January 26, 1962, p. 6; see also "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," in Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal, April, 1960, p. 10.

3. Kaplan, M. M., Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 239-240.

4. Ibid., p. 199.

5. Cf. Ibid., p. 238.

6. Ibid., pp. 233-234, emphasis mine; see also p. 41, above.

7. Ibid., p. 515, emphasis mine.

8. Ibid., p. 259.

9. Kaplan, M. M., "Nationhood the Call of the Spirit," in S. A. J. Review, vol. 8, no. 37, May 24, 1929, p. 17.

10. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 245.

11. Emphasis mine. Kaplan also offers a psychological definition of "nationhood": "Nationhood is the matrix of human personality." (Kaplan, "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," p. 9.)

12. Kaplan, M. M., "Judaism and Nationality," in The Maccabaean, vol. 17, no. 2, August, 1909, p. 59.

13. Cf. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, passim.

14. Ibid., p. ix.
"[Jews] should henceforth look to peoplehood as their bond of unity and cooperation." (Kaplan, "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," p. 6.)

15. See above, p. 41.
"The 'Israel' which the Jews in the past regarded as divinely chosen was a nation in a real and consequential sense." (Judaism as a Civilization, p. 255.)

16. Actually, "people" was not a new member of Kaplan's vocabulary. In Judaism as a Civilization, the word "nation" is used synonomously with "people": "The only nation in ancient times which, despite its military weakness, refused to fall in with the political and religious imperialism of any of the great empires of which it formed a part, was the Jewish people." (P. 339, emphasis mine.)

17. Kaplan, M. M., The Future of the American Jew, p. 63.

18. Ibid., p. 82.

19. Kaplan, M. M., "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," in The Reconstructionist, vol. 15, no. 10, June 24, 1949, p. 15.

20. Ibid.

21. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, pp. 63-64.

22. Ibid., p. 63.

23. Kaplan, "The State of Israel and the Status of the Jew," p. 15.

24. However, Kaplan's "people" is not devoid of political implications: "World Jewry should unite as a people, and apply to the United Nations Assembly for recognition of its claim to peoplehood. . . . What is needed is a bill to legitimatize Jewish association and cooperation for all purposes that would secure for the Jew freedom of worship and freedom from fear.

"Such an application to the U.N. presupposes, of course, a change in the Charter of the U.N. At present, only sovereign states are accepted as members. . . . That Iraq should be represented in the Council of the Nations, while we Jews who play a role in the world's affairs, not only as individuals but as a group, should not have their corporate existence recognized, is an unconscionable wrong." (The Future of the American Jew, p. 80.)

25. Kaplan, M. M., Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 44.

26. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 78, 250; The Future of the American Jew, p. xvii; Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 31.

27. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 199.

28. Ibid., p. 246.

29. Ibid., p. 304; see also The Future of the American Jew, p. 97; Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, pp. 31-32.

30. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jews, pp. 97, 101; Judaism as a Civilization, p. 218.

31. Kaplan, "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," p. 5, emphasis mine.

32. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 243.

33. Ibid., pp. 199, 305.

34. Ibid., p. 246.

35. Ibid., p. 260, emphasis mine.

36. Ibid., p. 186, emphasis mine.

37. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 89.

38. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 251, 515.

39. Kaplan, "The Reconstitution of the Jewish People," pp. 12-13; Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 55.

40. " . . . in the Western civilizations, the individual is a member of two peoples at the same time, the people he calls his nation and the people he calls his church." (The Future of the American Jew, p. 89, emphasis mine; cf. Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 227-228.)

41. "Religious freedom is . . . essentially the freedom to remain loyal to one's historic culture. The notion that allegiance to a state precludes identification with more than one nation will therefore have to be scrapped." (Judaism as a Civilization, p. 234, emphasis mine.)

42. See above, pp. 32, 53.

43. Kaplan, "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," p. 6.

44. Kaplan, M. M., "The Stages of the Jewish Civilization," in S. A. J. Review, vol. 8, no. 33, April 24, 1929, p. 14; see also "Where Reform and Reconstructionism Part Company," p. 7.

45. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 303.

46. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 162.

47. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 328.

48. Ibid., p. 330; see also p. 317.

49. Ibid., p. 316.

50. Ibid., p. 397.

51. Kaplan, M. M., "The Sovereignty of the Moral Law," in The Reconstructionist, vol. 27, no. 11, October 6, 1961, p. 7.

52. Kaplan, M. M., "The Revaluation of the Concept 'Torah'" in S. A. J. Review, vol. 8, no. 34, May 3, 1929, p. 12.

53. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 357.

54. Ibid., p. 230.

55. Ibid., p. 324, emphasis mine.

56. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 49.

57. Ibid., p. 225, emphasis mine.

58. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 264.

59. See above, p. 65.

60. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, p. 224.

61. Virtually all of his books recommend that the belief in revelation be discarded; cf. Judaism as a Civilization, passim.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: THE PAST SERVES THE PRESENT

Chapter Two noted that Kaplan finds Judaism facing the most challenging crisis in its history. The death of Judaism is impending unless a common denominator be found which can unite all Jews, regardless of religious orientation or lack thereof. In Chapter Three, Kaplan's solution to the problem of Jewish heterogeneity was presented: Judaism must be construed, not as a religion, but as a civilization.

Kaplan conceives of the Jewish civilization as comprising "rootage in a common land, use of a common language, possession of a common history, and loyalty to a common tradition consisting of laws, mores, folkways, and art."[1] Religion is "the integrating and soul-giving factor of all those elements."[2] However, religion is only one of the many ingredients in the Jewish civilization, and it consists not of beliefs, but of sancta.

Individuals are Jewish by virtue of their civilization. Since "the conception of Judaism as a civilization . . . allows for diversity of belief and practice,"[3] it provides "a rationale for Jewish survival that would be acceptable to all Jews who wish to remain Jews, regardless of denominational divisions."[4] Therefore,

> the sooner Jews will come to think of that which unites them as a civilization, the sooner will they overcome the process of disorganization which is reducing them to the status of a human detritus, the rubble of a once unique society.[5]

In Chapter Four it was shown that Kaplan contends the Jews maintained their status as a civilization throughout the three "stages" of their history, and he attempts to bolster this thesis by an appeal to historical facts. However, Chapter Five illustrates the inaccuracy of Kaplan's historical reconstruction. It further demonstrates that Judaism was a religion rather than a civilization.

Chapter Six notes that Kaplan's distortion of Jewish history is reflected in his ambiguous and contradictory terminology.

Kaplan maintains that a people requires "the sense of historic continuity which confers meaning and zest upon its career in the world."[6] Therefore, Kaplan regards it necessary that a cogent philosophy of Judaism maintain a direct link with Jewish tradition--that it be "true" to the Jewish past. At the same time, Kaplan desires to formulate a philosophy of Judaism which will answer the needs of modern Jews and solve the problems of contemporary Judaism. It is his attempt to combine all of these requirements into one inclusive system which leads him to misconstrue Jewish history.

Kaplan believes that his conception of Judaism as

a civilization, translated into a program, provides a modus vivendi for all Jews in the modern world. However, he also feels that "if Judaism is to survive, it has to be identified with something that is both permanent and distinctively Jewish."[7] That is, his philosophy and program will be effective only if they are shown to be authentically "Jewish"--continuous with the Jewish past. Kaplan thus appeals to Jewish history to verify a philosophy designed to meet present needs.

Since Kaplan needs a Jewish civilization to solve the problems of the present, he seeks to find a civilization in the past. By claiming that Judaism as a civilization faithfully represents the Jewish past he hopes to infuse his concept with that "sense of historic continuity" which he deems so essential. However, Judaism was not a civilization in the past; to claim that it was requires Kaplan to distort historical data. His presuppositions thus intrude upon his reconstruction of history, and the past is disfigured.

Chapter One indicated that it is not the purpose of this thesis to challenge Kaplan's program for the future of Judaism, but to evaluate the accuracy of his claims regarding Jewish history. The preceding chapters reveal that the standards of objectivity which are desired of an historian are not met by Kaplan. He sees the past not as it was, but as he requires it to be.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Kaplan, M. M., The Future of the American Jew, p. 163.

2. Ibid., p. 35.

3. Kaplan, M. M., Judaism as a Civilization, p. 222.

4. Kaplan, M. M., Judaism Without Supernaturalism, p. 194.

5. Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, p. 224.

6. Kaplan, M. M., "Our Religious Vocation," in The Reconstructionist, vol. 27, no. 20, February 9, 1962, p. 9.

7. Kaplan, M. M., Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers, p. 3.

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