

Part VII

On Being
A Real Jew

Chosen

In a review of a recent book about the Jews a critic pointedly asked: "What of Jews who *do not choose to be Chosen?*"

That is a question of the foremost importance. Since it is God Who has chosen the Jews, the Jew who does not choose to be chosen has an argument with God.

Such a man denies or opposes the wisdom of God. In so doing he incurs consequences upon himself, and he injures the entire human society to a degree that he does not suspect.

It is possible to every man to reject the claim of God upon his life and person, to Jews and also to Gentiles. But there is a substantial difference between the two.

It is natural for Gentiles to live in ignorance of God, unless they have been enlightened about Him through the Jewish Scriptures and have decided that He—the God of Israel—will be their God.

Most Gentiles recognize no true claim of God upon their lives. They live as natural men, trusting in natural and earthly things,

ignoring God. They may be caught up in one or another of the many Gentile religious superstitions, properly regarded by the Jews as heathen idolatries. But some Gentiles repose a distinct and hearty trust in the God of Israel, having been awakened to a knowledge of Him by the Jewish Scriptures. They know the God of Israel and they possess and enjoy a saving relationship to Him.

The New Testament states the immutable fact that "salvation is of the Jews." Jesus declared that fact to a Samaritan—a Gentile—woman. The statement is found in John 4:22. "Salvation is of the Jews."

For many centuries the Gentiles have had their full opportunity of salvation through the Scriptures. Paul wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy, and reminded him that "from childhood you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, which is in Christ Jesus." (II Timothy 3:15.) It was through the Jewish Scriptures that I was awakened to faith in God.

That happened in a rather unusual way. While in high school I worked summers as a counselor at a camp where well over 90 percent of the staff and campers were Roman Catholic. While the Catholic boys were at Mass in the mess hall, something had to be done with the dozen Jewish and Protestant boys. I was the older of the two non-Catholic counselors, so the head of the camp handed me a copy of the Old Testament and told me to take the boys into the library and hold some kind of a service for them.

I began to look into the Old Testament. I found it an interesting book, much more so than I thought I would, and I settled it in my mind that as soon as the summer was over I would go to a store and buy myself a copy of the Bible. That fall I bought one, and I began to read a chapter a night, and that proved to be one of the most important acts of my life. It led, by a clearly traceable series of steps, to my becoming a believer in the God of Israel. There are several millions of Gentiles in the world who have come to know the God of Israel for themselves through the compelling truths of the Scriptures. They know that they have the salvation that is of the Jews.

The alternative to salvation is damnation.

"The soul that sins, it shall die," the Old Testament says in Ezekiel 18:4 and 20. "The wages of sin is death," the New Testament says in Romans 6:23. Sin and the practice of sin leads inescapably down to death and to hell. "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and the nations that forget God," Psalm 9:17 declares.

It is no novelty that Gentiles are able to obtain the salvation that

is of the Jews. God has always intended it to be so. In His first words to Abraham, God said: "By you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3.) The sweep of that phrase, "all the families," takes in all the Gentile peoples.

The relationship is fixed. Salvation is always *of* the Jews, it is never of the Gentiles. But salvation is never only *for* the Jews. It is for everyone *through* the Jews. All the families of the earth may obtain the blessing of God promised through Abraham the Jew.

If at no time in his life a Gentile turns to the God of Israel and becomes a worshiper of Him, finding the forgiveness of his sins and cleansing from them, his soul has its destiny in hell. A sinful soul cannot be taken into heaven. The Bible says, "It is appointed to man once to die, and after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27.

Such a Gentile is born in sin, lives in sin, dies in sin and goes to hell in sin. He chooses not to be chosen. The Bible says that "many are called, but few are chosen."

The God of Israel is the God of all the earth. There is no other God. For a Gentile to bypass the promises and commandments of the God of Israel is a fateful choice; but for him it is to continue in his natural course, unenlightened by the living words of the Jewish Scriptures, and therefore unawakened. Since he chooses to live in sin, he shall also die in sin and go to a sinner's reward.

That is one thing. The Gentile is given full opportunity to belong to God, if he will. But the Gentiles are not initially called to belong to God.

For a Jew to ignore or reject the God of Israel is not the same thing. A Jew who "chooses not to be Chosen" does not do so by a mere continuity in sin. He does so by turning his back on what it means to be a Jew, as God sees it. He willfully rejects the role for which he was made as a Jew. He, in fact, does not choose to be a Jew. He knows that he is a Jew by birth, but he rejects the element in that distinctive birth that is of God—the glorious fact that, because he is a Jew, he is chosen to belong to God; to serve Him with all his mind and soul; and to show Him forth to mankind.

If he does not want this element of Jewishness—and most Jews do not—he does not want to be a Jew in the original and pure, the intended meaning of the word: to belong to God, to be one of His people. He chooses *not* to be.

That does not mean that he casts off his Jewish identity in other respects—racial or cultural or even in regard to religious tradition—but that he rejects his Jewish identity at the heart and core, in precisely that point intended by the God Who made him a Jew.

Everything else is merely an *aspect* of Jewishness, a collateral facet of Jewish origin; it is not the thing itself.

It takes the union of two wills to make a Jew: the will of God and the will of the individual. The thing that makes a man a Jew is first that God chooses him to belong to Him and to be His love-servant, and second that he actively chooses to belong to God and to be His love-servant on the earth.

Join the intention of God in setting apart the Jewish people to belong wholeheartedly to Him to the willingness of any individual Jew to have it be so, exactly as God intended it in his own life, and you have a Jew who is a Jew in the sense that God meant in calling Abraham to be a Jew.

Abraham was called and chosen, and he responded to the call of God—to his chosenness—with a hearty willingness to be a Jew. It is very important to realize that Abraham did not start out as a Jew. He started out as a Gentile; he became a Jew by obeying the call of God.

It is a great thing for a man to be called by his boss to carry out some important mission. It would be a great honor to be called by the President to carry out an important mission. It is an incomparably greater honor to be called by God to belong to Him. Abraham grasped that. He did not say no to God. He showed himself willing to cast everything else aside—home, family, job, background, tradition—so that he could pursue the will of God.

He could have chosen not to be a Jew, to remain a Gentile. He could have said that God was asking too much. Abram could have chosen not to be chosen. Instead he chose to be chosen.

Since it is the Creator Who calls him, *the only thing for any Jew to do is to choose to be chosen.*

To refuse to be chosen is to defy God and to exercise an evil heart and an evil will against the purpose of God for Jews. A Jew who does not choose to be chosen rejects God, refuses absolutely to cooperate with Him in the end for which he was born, and brings upon himself a curse.

Moses said that. Moses told the people in plain terms, warning them with the utmost solemnity and urgency: “Behold, I set before you this day a *blessing* and a *curse*: A blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, and a curse if you will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but *turn aside out of the way* which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known.” (Deuteronomy 11:26–28.) “Other gods” does not refer only to the

false deities of the non-Biblical religions; it refers to anything that claims an allegiance that comes before God in a man's life. Silver and gold, achievement and renown can be "other gods," too.

A blessing is the active favor of God toward a man or a nation. A curse is the opposite of a blessing. A curse is the active disfavor of God toward a man or a nation.

Are you a Jew? Do you have any regard for this man Moses, the leader and deliverer of your people? Then hear him. Do not cast his words out of your heart or out of your mind. Do not let Satan tell you that it shall not happen exactly as Moses said. Do not think you shall ever escape the curse which Moses himself pronounced upon Jews who disassociate themselves from the purpose for which God made them.

Moses declared to the people of Israel that "all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, IF you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground. . . . Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and in all that you undertake; and he will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you. The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of you . . . and you shall lend to many nations but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; and you shall tend upward only, and not downward; if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, being careful to do them, and if you do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

"But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God . . . then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. . . . The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and frustration, in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your doings, because you have forsaken me.

“ . . . The Lord will smite you. . . . The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies . . . and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways; and you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually. . . .” Deuteronomy 28:2–29.

The blessings that God has promised to send upon Jews who obey His voice are spiritual and material, individual as well as national. Anyone who has an acquaintance with Jewish history can see how exactly the words of Moses have proved true. At times when it has seemed not to be so, when it has seemed that Jews have prospered and enjoyed liberty, without serving their God above all else, the curse has rushed suddenly upon them in full measure, as Moses said it would. There has been, there can be, no escaping from it.

For the Jews it is either a blessing above that received by all the peoples of the earth, or it is a cursing above that experienced by the peoples of the earth. The Jews must make the choice between the blessing and the curse.

Moses promised “a blessing *if* you obey.” Moses said, “But *if* you will not obey . . . all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.”

Therefore listen to Moses and hear what he says. Believe it and obey it.

“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God *require* of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and serve the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul. To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command you this day for your good.” Deuteronomy 10:12–13.

That, and that alone, is what it really means to be a Jew, to be chosen by God. If you do not want to be a Jew in that sense, *then you do not want to be a Jew*, for it is what God intended in causing you to be born a Jew—nothing less, and nothing else.

If you persist in that quarrel, advising God that He was wrong in calling apart the Jews as a people for His own possession and telling Him that *you* personally want out of it, then you push away the blessing and draw down on yourself the curse pronounced by Moses.

You have not wanted to be a Jew, except in certain secondary respects, and by that refusal you make yourself worse than a Gentile in God’s sight.

You can never escape the fact of your birth as a Jew. You cannot

change it. Having been born a Jew *you* are under a direct commission from God to fulfill the role of a Jew, and that is to choose to be chosen. It is to love God, to walk in His ways, to serve Him with all your heart. If, born to be a Jew, you do not do so, then you are one of those Jews of whom Moses said that they have “turned aside out of the way.”

More hangs on your refusal to be a Jew than your own destiny. If a certain city were threatened by floods and you were appointed the watchman of the dikes and if you refused to carry out your function and got busy at something else, it is true that you would be drowned when the flood came, but it is also true that many others would die by your dereliction.

The Jews' refusal to be the Jews as God intended has cost the world more than can be reckoned. It has cost the world a demonstration of the power and the love of God upon His chosen people.

Even those Jews who, in their refusal to belong to God, have devoted themselves to good works, have cheated the world out of the best good they might have done for it. For those good works, as magnificent as many of them are, are not the answer. Some Jews—they are not many in number but they are immense in their influence and in impact upon human affairs—have, in their refusal to belong to God, introduced evil into human affairs on a scale to match that of the blessings they could have brought had they been obedient to God.

In choosing them to be His spokesmen and prophets to mankind God wrote into the nature of the Jews a certain gauge that makes them influential. Wherever they are, the Jews have an influence upon the culture of a society, and in many of the vital sectors of its life, out of proportion to their numbers. In the United States Jews are influential and powerful in music and letters, publishing and the news media, finance, education, merchandising, manufacturing, the motion pictures, and in many other public sectors. They have not exercised their influence on behalf of that for which it is primarily intended, to make the love and power of the God of Israel known to the world.

It is a high and wonderful calling to be born a Jew and to be chosen to serve God on the earth. If you do not eagerly cooperate with that, if you choose to serve some lesser god than God, or some lesser cause, however good, you will be held accountable for your own refusal to be a Jew and for having, by that choice, denied a knowledge of God to other men in their lifetimes.

It is no small thing for a Jew to refuse to be a Jew. It is to receive

a commission from God and then to tear it up and throw it aside as a thing of no value.

What you need is to see how altogether desirable and pleasant it is to be a Jew in the sense that God intended you to be, and how wearying and treacherous and precarious it is for you to decide that, if being a Jew requires you to love and serve God with all your heart, then you do not choose to be a Jew.

You need to see that the blessing of being a Jew is infinitely more desirable and good than the curse of being a Jew who has "turned aside out of the way." The blessing is the active favor of God upon you, upon your ends, upon your life. The blessing leads to eternal life, the cursing leads to eternal hell.

If you are building the tent or palace of your life, even if you are building up an empire on the earth, apart from God's design, it will all be smashed from you at the end. The curse of Moses will descend upon it all finally and you will be found to have built up what you were not meant to build up and to have failed to build what you were born to build.

There are thousands of young Jews today who are giving themselves to various causes, political and social causes of several kinds, some good, some bad, some destructive. If as few as ten young Jews of high school or college age were to decide now to serve no lesser cause but God, if they would act on that decision just as radically, just as wholeheartedly as they do in joining up with causes, if they would ask Him to take over their lives and lead them step by step and make them a blessing, in ten years it would make a difference in American society. God would use them, as He wants to do, not merely as doers of good works, but as prophets and messengers to the people.

Do you object to what God requires of you as a Jew? You are a piece of clay arguing with the potter over why He has made you what you are. You argue that you do not want to be used by Him for the purpose of His original design.

"Nay but, O man, who are you who replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, to make of the same lump one vessel for honor, and another for dishonor?" (Romans 9:20,21.) It would be a good thing for you to remember that no man has ever won an argument with God.

If He wants to make you, a Jew, a pitcher with which to pour out waters to the thirsty, why would you not be willing to be used by Him that way?

The intention of God in calling the Jews to obey Him and to receive His blessing is that the whole world might see, merely by looking at the Jews, that it is good to serve the God of Israel.

Instead, for a very long time, the Jews have given the world an entirely different kind of demonstration, and one that God did not want them to give it. They have demonstrated the *curse*, when they ought to have demonstrated the *blessing*.

They have shown to the world that which does not help the world—a spectacle of a people, called to be blessed and to be a blessing, who have turned aside out of the way and brought a curse upon themselves that has made their history perilous.

They have removed themselves as a people from the covenant-blessing pronounced by Moses and have placed themselves instead under the covenant-curse pronounced by Moses.

They have not shown the world what it is to be chosen and blessed of God, and that is a terrible dereliction, a terrible deprivation to non-Jews. It is so great a failure to fulfill the mission to which they are called that the world now reels and suffers under it.

Tradition and Truth in Conflict

There is no want of religion in the world today, but there is a tremendous lack of spiritual reality. The world is full of religion and religious practices. Religious objects, religious rites, religious rote, and religious relics abound. The Bible speaks of those who “have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof,” and it counsels: “from such turn away.”

Religion, more often than not, is the *form* of godliness without the content and without the power. It is truly “the opiate of the masses” because it does not liberate them, does not bring them into a living relationship to God. It succeeds only in keeping them in a kind of dull stupor, not free but hung up on rigmarole. I do not blame young people for not wanting any of it. It is dry as sawdust. You can fill up on it without getting any sustenance out of it.

There is an important, not easily understood, distinction between religion and God. You can have religion, you can have quite a lot of it, without knowing God. Satan does not hate religion; he has invented most of it and has foisted it on the masses to give them the semblance of godliness without the internal reality of godliness. The essence of the religious delusion into which millions of humans have fallen is that by practicing the *form* of godliness, to a lesser or greater degree, they obtain standing with God.

It is not to be urged that young Jews become exceedingly religious and return to all the venerable traditions from which so many Jews have wandered, by choice or by chance. Fidelity to a tradition, even a tradition of very long standing, and loving God with all one's heart are not the same thing. They may stand in direct conflict. The Spirit of God and the words of the prophets are always at variance with the pretensions of religion. The prophet Jeremiah was among many prophets of the Lord whose unpopularity with the religious establishment rose sharply because they proclaimed the message given to them by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It was rarely an easy or pleasant vocation to be a prophet of the Lord in Israel. Very often the priests, with their vested interests in the status quo, scorned the messages sent to Israel by God through the lips of His prophets.

If a man determines that he is going to keep the law and the customs and the traditions to show God that he loves Him—that is one thing. It is an elaborate and conscious self-effort.

But if a man loves God with all his heart, he *will* keep His commandments, not as a matter of rule or rote or even conscientious subscription, but as the virtually effortless outcome of that love!

To be born a Jew is to be called by God to be a Jew, but to be born a Jew does not, by itself, give a person standing before God as a Jew. It is when the natural fact of Jewish birth is joined to the spiritual reality of Jewish faith in God that a person becomes a real Jew. There is a natural part to being a Jew and there is a spiritual part to being a Jew, and it takes the two in union to make a Jew a Jew.

A man may be born of the royal line, born to be a king, but if he refuses to take the crown and the scepter he will not become a king, though he was born to it. He will be only *a man who should have been a king* but who has devoted himself to some diminished purpose. It is the greatness of a man to rise to the highest calling that comes to him in life and fill it. God, Creator of the universe,

has made no mistake in ordaining and calling a people called the Jews to belong to Him, to be His messengers and light-givers to the world. You will make no mistake in answering that call as it is, out to the full scope of God's intention.

If you are a young Jew who has not yet committed his life to some other purpose, you are especially free to do that. You can begin now to answer the call of God just by telling Him that you want to do so. You will feel that you are not able, and that is right. But are you willing? If you are willing, *God will make you able*. Moses himself did not feel able or equal to God's call, but he was willing.

God called Moses to be His spokesman to the whole Jewish people and to the whole court of Egypt. Moses immediately realized that he didn't have what it takes to be that. "Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?'" (Exodus 3:11.) "Moses said to the Lord, 'Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either heretofore or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.'" Exodus 4:10.

But God said to Moses, "Now therefore go, and *I will be with your mouth* and teach you what you shall speak." (Exodus 4:12.) That made the whole difference. You may realize by now that you are too weak to overcome your sins and failings. Why not give God a chance to overcome them in you? You may feel that you are unworthy or unable to be what God wants you to be. In yourself, you are. But God is able to make up the whole difference between what you are not and what He intends you to be as a Jew.

The calling of God is *all* that counts. With the calling come His provisions for absolutely everything you need to fulfill it. "I will be with your mouth."

It wasn't who Moses was that mattered. It was Who was with Moses that really counted.

Moses could never have got the people of Israel out of Egypt without the supernatural power of God. He could never have got the people of Israel across the Red Sea without the supernatural intervention of God. Just by being willing to obey God, Moses brought the power of God visibly into action in human affairs. That is what the Jews are meant to do. Just by being willing to answer God's call, you as a Jew will bring the power of God into action in human conditions that are now in wretched disorder. You will be blessed by God, and you will be a blessing.

I cannot tell you that it will be easy, because I know that it will not be. It was not easy for David, for Jeremiah, for Moses, for

Jacob, for Joseph, for Ruth. But I can tell you that it will be wonderful.

To get a grasp of what the Bible teaches about the distinction between a man who is a Jew in name and a man who is a real Jew, look at the accounts of Abraham and Moses in the Torah.

It all began with Abraham, this matter of being a Jew. So if you want a good idea of what it means to be a Jew spiritually, start with the patriarch Abraham.

A man named Terah had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran had a son named Lot. The family lived in a city called Ur situated on the Euphrates. Abram married a woman named Sarai, but she was barren and gave him no child. Terah moved from Ur to a place outside the city, and most of the family went with him. Terah died there.

When Abram was seventy-five years old, God spoke to him. This was the beginning of God's supernatural revelation of Himself and of His character to the human race. The message to Abram was very clear and very simple but it was vast in its extent: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."

Look at it closely. There were certain things that Abram was told to do, and there were certain things God promised to do as Abram walked in obedience to Him.

The things that God told Abram to do were things that he could do, even if they were not easy things to do.

The things that God promised to do for Abram were the things that he could not do.

The first words that God spoke to Abram were:

"Go from your country
and from your kindred
and from your father's house
to a land that I will show you."

Genesis 12:1

The first thing God told Abram to do was to *give up everything* he had in the world. Leave it all!

Abram was to make an absolutely fresh start in God. From that day on, everything that Abram had would come straight from God. From that day on, Abram would know that everything came from God.

The call of God is total. To be free to obey God and to become wholly God's man, Abram had to leave his home, his family, his friends, his job, his city, and go out to a place he did not know with nothing but the promise of God to lean on. But if the call of God is total, so are the provisions of God.

As a candidate to become the father of a great nation, Abram was not a very impressive specimen. He was old and had no children. His wife was barren. He was a bad choice from the standpoint of natural prospects, but he was an excellent choice from the standpoint of supernatural prospects. If God did not do it, it would not be done.

Since God chose Abram as a man *through whom to show His power*, it was far better that it be that way. No one would ever think that Abram had done it by himself.

The Jews are a small people among earth's multitudes. The purpose of God in calling the Jews has always been that He might make an open display of Himself and of His power through them. Their weakness and smallness has never been a block to that; it is the best possible aid to it. But their unwillingness and disobedience blocks it entirely.

Nearly everyone who receives and obeys the call of God finds that it gives offense to those who are closest to him and most concerned for his welfare, because it is supernatural rather than natural and it is therefore unaccountable. There is no explaining it in natural terms, and it is not wise to try.

Let a young person prepare himself by natural means for a sensible occupation—lawyer, physician, banker, broker, engineer, teacher, whatever—and the people who are closest to him will be pleased. But let him say, "I am called to be a man of God and do the will of God, whatever that may be," and almost the first question he will be asked is, "And what is the salary for *that*?"

It would not have been wise for Abram to have said to the people around him, "Here I am childless and old, and now I am going to leave my home and work here and go out to some other place and God is going to make a great nation out of me and make my name a blessing to all the peoples of the earth." They would not have been able to understand.

I have rarely known a young person to pursue what he reasonably understands to be the will of God for his life without catching

static, and plenty of it, from those nearest to him. They try to figure out in natural terms what is supernatural in origin, and it won't work.

A declared intention to trust the invisible God can set up in relatives the most agonizing apprehensions about the probable welfare of the one they love. I know a young man, now several years out of college, who decided at graduation to follow God with all his heart. His father said to him, "Son, when you come to the time when you have to go out on the street to beg for food, let me know."

He told his father, "Look, Dad, the God I am serving led two and a half million Jews through the wilderness for forty years, and He fed them during that time. That would be about seven and a half million meals a day. Multiply that by 365 for one year, and then multiply that by 40 for the entire time. They never planted or harvested a crop. I believe that the God Who took care of the Jews can take care of me. I am just one person."

This young man has never had a single paycheck since graduation, has never done anything for the sake of obtaining money, and yet he has had plenty to eat, plenty of clothes and comfortable shelter, and today he manages affairs that are probably four times larger than anything he would have had to manage had he set out to make himself a fortune.

In telling Abram to give up everything, God did not intend to make Abram a pauper. He intended to make him a wealthy man, but He intended to make it plain that everything came from Him.

Abram went out as God told him, but he did not quite perfectly obey God's three-part commission:

"Go from your country, AND your kindred, AND your father's house to the land that I will show you." Instead, Abram allowed his nephew Lot to go along with him.

It did not work out well. Abram went out in a spiritual response to the word of God. Lot went out in a natural desire to be with his uncle. Trouble arose because of this breach of obedience, and God had to work it around later for Lot and Abram to separate from each other. Genesis 13:11.

Abram went out in naked faith in the living God. When Abram's caravan had come to Canaan (the land later to be known as Israel), "Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' So he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him." Genesis 12:6,7.

It was Abram's part to go, to leave home and kin behind, and journey into the land of Canaan. He alone could do that. It was God's part to bless him, to make his name great and to make of him a great nation. God alone could do that.

As soon as Abram arrived in the land, God appeared to him supernaturally and told him that He would give that land to his progeny. That is why the Jews are in that land today. It was only a few words that God spoke to Abram, but now they are as fresh in God's purpose as if spoken this morning, and God is still working them out in history.

Abram's acts of simple and trusting obedience to the word of God, his willingness to do what God said, provided the earthly basis for God's acts in history through Israel and the Jews. If Abram had refused to go in sheer and naked faith, there would have been no such basis. Not until you as a Jew obey God in sheer and naked faith will you give Him a basis on which to manifest Himself in your life.

Abram the Gentile became Abraham the Jew because he believed God and dared to take Him at His word.

When the Lord reaffirmed the promises, given first to Abraham, to his son Isaac, God said: "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give to your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves,

BECAUSE ABRAHAM OBEYED MY VOICE
AND KEPT MY CHARGE,
MY COMMANDMENTS,
MY STATUTES,
AND MY LAWS."

Genesis 26:1-5.

Take careful note of that. It is God's statement on the life of Abraham. Yet it is a curious and significant statement in one respect.

Abraham lived several hundred years before the Law and the statutes and commandments were given to Moses—yet he kept them!

If you can discover the means by which Abraham kept them long

before they were given, you will get hold of an understanding of what keeping the Law is and what it is not.

What it is not, is human diligence and human effort conscripted to a total attempt night and day to abide by more than six hundred commandments and statutes. Orthodoxy attempts that, more or less, but it cannot succeed at it. The hill is far too steep and the power of human nature falters and fails somewhere short of the top.

We have God's own testimony that Abraham kept the Law in a way that was wholly pleasing to God, so we cannot doubt that he did. It will not do to say that Abraham kept the commandments that had been made known during his lifetime and was not under obligation to keep the others.

If God had said only that "Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge" that could reasonably be argued. But God adds to that the great fact that Abraham also kept His *commandments*, and His *statutes*, and His *laws*. The statement is triply reinforced—beyond the fact that Abraham obeyed God's voice and kept His charge—to make it plain that Abraham kept the whole range of God's Law.

By what means did Abraham contrive to keep commandments, statutes, and laws that were not given until several hundred years later? He kept them in the only way God has ever intended them to be kept—not by rote, but out of the heart.

He did not even have to know them to keep them. But he had to know God to keep them.

To use a rude illustration, if the driver of an automobile is convinced of the necessity of safety on the highways, his driving will be strictly lawful, without any strict effort at law keeping.

His demeanor behind the wheel, deeply informed by his desire for safety for everybody, will be lawful and courteous naturally. It will not be necessary to mark the upper speed limits for him along every couple of miles of roadway. Wherever he is, he will find and adjust continually to safety's speed, not because the speed limit is legislated and posted, but because it is his nature to do so.

For such a driver you don't need the law. He keeps it anyway. The law is in him.

The *only way* a man may keep the law and please God in doing so is out of the heart.

To keep the law by effort is a hard yoke, which few are willing to try to bear. To keep the law as an expression of the inner nature is no burden; it is a delight.

It is not necessary to promulgate a long series of hard and

exacting rules for a mother regarding the care of her baby: "Do not drop the infant, do not strike him, do not gag him, do not go off and leave him for the weekend, be sure to give him milk at regular intervals, change him, keep him in an atmosphere where the temperature does not go below 22 degrees or over 91 degrees," and so on. A mother does these things primarily because *the law of infant care is written within her nature.*

She does better than any seventy-five of the best rules you can think up. She loves the baby!

It is not necessary to tell the man who loves God with all his heart to be careful not to go out and murder or rob his neighbor. Because of his love for God, he will not do any harm to his neighbor, but he will do good to him. Why, then, was the law given? Was it to make men good? No!

The law was given to show men that they are bad and that they need a new heart and a new spirit within if they are ever to live lawfully in God's eyes and please Him.

Tradition and interpretation have added much to the law that does not reside either in God's Word or in His intention. Abraham kept the law in its purity, as God intended it to be kept, as you must keep it. But Abraham's keeping of the law, on which God put the seal of His approval, would not pass a close orthodox scrutiny today.

Abraham was ninety-nine years old, twenty-four years had passed since he had entered Canaan at the word of God, but still he had no son by Sarah. He must have wondered at times when God would fulfill His promise. There was no evidence at all in nature that it would or could come to pass.

Then one day "the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day." Genesis 18:1.

"He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him." The Lord and two angels had come to him. Abraham ran to meet them, "bowed himself to the earth and said, 'My Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that, you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.'"

One might wonder if the Jewish tradition of hospitality had its beginning here, and in the Biblical injunctions to treat strangers and sojourners well.

The heavenly visitors told Abraham, "Do as you have said." Abraham's hospitality went well beyond the morsel of bread of which he had spoken.

"Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it and make cakes.' And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate." Genesis 18:2-8.

It is fully evident that Abraham did not keep a kosher kitchen. Abraham, the man who pleased God, served a meal of "curds, and *milk, and the meat of the calf*" and he set it before the Lord! He served the milk and the meat to God, Who had come and appeared to him with two angels, and *they ate it*.

Here is where tradition and truth clash hard, and one or the other must give way.

Three times the Bible says plainly, "You shall not seethe [boil] a kid in his mother's milk." (Exodus 23:19 and 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21.) That is the word of God.

To build that up into a system for the absolute separation of kitchens and utensils, keeping meat and dairy products apart, is to go way beyond the word of God. Abraham kept the law and the statutes of God in serving cakes and curds, milk and meat to his visitors.

His visitors said to Abraham, "Where is Sarah your wife?" He said, "She is in the tent."

"The Lord said, 'I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife will have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him." Genesis 18:9,10.

Genesis 21:1-4 says: "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age. . . . Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him."

The three visitors, as I have noted, were the Lord with two angels. They appeared to Abraham as "three men." Their next destination was the evil city of Sodom. Abraham accompanied them on their way toward Sodom, but the angels went on ahead. Genesis 18:22 says, "So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the Lord."

Abraham began to plead with the Lord to spare the city of Sodom from destruction if He found as many as ten righteous men in it.

When the angels arrived at the city to be destroyed they found Lot there. Genesis 19:1 says, "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom." There is a contrast here between the man who goes out in God's will and the man who goes out in self-will. Abraham's journey had brought him into the presence of God; Lot's journey had brought him to the most dangerous place on earth.

God's standard is perfection: A man who keeps the Law would be a perfect man. Earlier in the same year in which the Lord and the angels appeared to Abraham and promised him a son by Sarah, the Lord alone appeared to him. Genesis 17 says, "And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be you perfect.'

"... And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying ... 'Neither shall your name be Abram any more, but your name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made you. ...'" Genesis 17:1-4.

It is a wonderful fact that Abraham kept the law, without knowing the law. The commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances of God were shown by him, not in writing, but in the way he lived.

"Walk before me and be you perfect," was God's word to Abraham. No man can ever do that on his own native resources. It would ordain a terrific and unceasing struggle against his own inward nature. What he needs is *a new inward nature*.

It is absolutely necessary—indeed, God requires—that a man have a thoroughgoing inward transformation as the first means of getting right with God and living in a way that is truly pleasing to Him. A man must have a new nature within if he is ever to live lawfully in God's eyes.

A man receives that new nature when he is given a new heart, a new spirit, when he is circumcised in his heart. He is then born again. The new spirit that comes into a man is of God, and that spirit is able to keep the law because *its nature is to do so*. When that happens, the great struggle against sin, the great struggle to measure up to the law ceases. The new spirit that God implants within the man is of God and the man therefore keeps the law of God. That is the inner secret of Abraham's godly life.

Do you know how Abraham was made righteous in the eyes of God? Immediately following God's promise to Abraham that he

should have descendants as the stars for number, the Torah says Abraham “believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

By faith in God and in the word of God, Abraham was made righteous. A man can do no greater thing than to believe God, to obey Him, to trust Him actively, to love Him. To do anything less denies God the primary place at the center of human life that He rightly claims as Lord and Creator of the universe.

The New Testament upholds the divine authorship and the perfection of the Mosaic Law in every respect. “Think not,” said Jesus, “that I am come to destroy the law, but to *fulfill* it.” The work of Jesus was to make available to all the inhabitants of the earth, including its preponderance of Gentiles, that inward transformation by which they are enabled to keep the Law in the way that Abraham did—not by rote and rigor and sweat and memorization—but by believing God, by exercising faith in Him, by receiving Him, by loving Him supremely.

Paul, the master teacher of the early Christians, gave us a tremendous clue when he wrote:

“We know that *the law is spiritual*, but *I am carnal*, sold under sin.”

Romans 7:14.

It is impossible for a natural man to keep the spiritual Law! Only a spiritual man can keep the spiritual Law. And he does not do it by any tremendous effort of his will, by any mighty cranking up of his own flawed and insufficient nature.

There are two entirely different natures here. The Law of God is heavenly, spiritual, perfect. The fallen nature of man is earthly, carnal, “sold under sin.” The two do not match.

It is no use exhorting a Model A Ford to fly. See it roaring down the runway, coming as fast as it can, in a great rush toward the takeoff, its hood rattling. It will not get far off the ground! If it is ever going to fly it will have to be taken into the workshop and be made over into an airplane and given wings. It simply is not in the nature of Model A Fords to fly. And it simply is not in the nature of natural men, no matter how hard they may try, to keep the spiritual Law. When a man has a new heart and a new spirit within him, his new heart and new nature matches the spiritual Law and keeps it for him. For the first time a man finds within him that which is adequate to meeting the challenge of the spiritual Law.

How clearly I recall the unending struggle in which I once engaged against certain sins of which I morally disapproved but which I found my strongest efforts inadequate to overcome, ex-

cept on a hit-or-miss, now-you-win, now-you-lose, basis. I was the victim of my fallen nature and I could not get permanently up above it. It was not because I did not try. I tried hard, but I could not make it.

All that stopped the day I was born again. Suddenly I found there was no more battle—but there was victory! And it was effortless, unfailing victory.

I could not *get* up above it by trying, but now I *was* up above it. My human nature could never keep the moral law, because it was impossible to it. But my new spiritual nature kept it for me.

That is not very flattering to a man, to be sure. It robs him of a certain false sense of heroism in the struggle. But it works! I far prefer effortless and continual victory over sin to great effort and stumbling defeat.

What God desires of Israel is not slavish conformity or great rigors of soul but ardent heart's love and devotion to Him. The large distinction between the most arduous religious devotions and practices of God's people, the Jews, and the kind of service that God really wants of them is made clear in Chapter 58 of Isaiah:

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. ‘Why have we fasted,’ [they ask] ‘and thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and thou takest no knowledge of it?’

“Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with the fist of wickedness. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

“Is it such a fast that I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord?

“Is not this the fast that I choose:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the thongs of the yoke,
To let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?