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Introduction by N. N. Glatzer

ON JEWISH LEARNING

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG

edited by N. N. Glatzer

The University of Wisconsin Press

The University of Wisconsin Press
1930 Monroe Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53711

www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/

3 Henrietta Street
London WC2E 8LU, England

5 4 3 2

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Rosenzweig, Franz, 1886–1929.
[Für jüdischen Entziehung. English]
On Jewish learning / Franz Rosensweig ; edited by N. N. Glatzer.
pp. cm.— (Modern Jewish philosophy and religion)
Originally published: New York : Schocken Books, 1955. With new material.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-299-18234-7
1. Jews— Education— Germany.
I. Glatzer, Nahum Norbert, 1903– II. Title. III. Series.
LC746.G4 R6213 2002
296.6'8— dc21 2002022767

Published by arrangement with Schocken Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

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THE BUILDERS:

Concerning the Law

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children! (ISAIAH, 54: 13). Do not read 'banayikh', thy children, but 'bonayikh', thy builders.

To Martin Buber

Dear Friend:

When reading your Lectures about Judaism,[1] covering a whole decade and now contained in a little volume, I am amazed to see to what degree you have become the representative speaker and the advocate of our generations, mine as well as the one after me. We may have forgotten this at times, in the heat of the battle into which your thoughts dragged us when reading your Lectures for the first time; now that we re-read them with calm, and yet not too objectively but with, so to say, autobiographical excitement, we see clearly that it was our own words to which you were the first to give expression.

The preface shows that you had the same experience: When you collected the eight Lectures you were seized by feelings of autobiographical retrospect; not in the sense of a merely historical review—for this neither you nor the Lectures are prepared. But in the sense of an

examination of your own past in the light of the present and the future. You know how closely connected I feel to the writer of that preface. When I read it for the first time, a few months ago, I had accepted your assurance that the present state of your knowledge, from which you had looked back on the road of the past, had meant for you clarification, not conversion. Now, when I read these words again, and go over your lectures once more, I understand how you, and only you, can say that. For a word does not remain its speaker's possession; he to whom it is addressed, he who hears it, or acquires it by chance—they all get a share of it; the word's fate, while in their possession, is more fate-ful than what its original speaker experienced when first uttering it. And the words of the preface must convey conversion, and not only clarification, to those who read or hear the Lectures. For you they meant only clarification, for you have remained the same; but your words have really gone through the experience of a change of heart: they have been changed.

Now that your words have stepped into the clarity of the immediate speech; now that you do not have to conjure the Spirit any more, when you wish to call by name the One Who is Spirit, but only insofar as He "is," and Who wants to be named the way He can be addressed—for "as His name, so is His praise"—you speak now to other hearers, even though they are the same as the ones who listened to you before. For if your new words are to be understood, other chords must vibrate in the souls of your listeners. And only he can become your listener who like yourself can commit himself to an unmediated relationship to things. New listeners, however, always imply new demands; thus a teacher himself is changed by what

he teaches his students; or, at least he must be prepared to have his words changed, if not himself.

You know the problem I have at heart. Your eight lectures touch on it over and over, and the eighth[2] finally moves it into the foreground. In the earlier lectures, the problem of Jewish law and practice is broached really only for the sake of completeness. In the final two we feel that it has gained in urgency; if not for yourself, then certainly for your audience. Ultimately it joins with its twin problem, Jewish teachings; and the question: "What shall we do?" attaches to both a very real and immediate interest. But while the problem of teachings has heretofore gone through a visible development which has posed the question fully ripened at the precise moment of the answer, the question of the Law would seem in 1919 to be formulated much as it was in 1909. Because of the contrast, I make bold once again to present for revision the old solution. And even if here and now you can clarify the problem in theory only—that too will be of value. For that matter, what I myself have to say about it is not based on the experience of having reached the goal but on that of seeking and being on the way.

The development that, to my mind, your conception of the teachings has undergone, unfolds in what you call "invisible Judaism." Originally this is treated as a solid concept; something like prophecy versus legalism, or hasidism versus rabbinic opposition. In subsequent lectures, however—or am I mistaken?—it comes to resemble an intricate river system, in which the waters above ground seem everywhere to accompany those in subterranean depths. But in the final lecture, in the blazing light of the question that converts the problem into something

actual, the picture changes; the visible streams and those underground are no longer distinguishable from one another, and whether those deeper tides are ever reached depends only on the hand that dips down to take. For you have formulated the goals of our Jewish learning in such a way that nothing Jewish may be excluded as alien. The distinctions between "essential" and "nonessential" which were forced upon us throughout the nineteenth century no longer hold. Now we must learn to recognize the hidden essence in the "nonessential"; and to accept the "essential" as we face it in the realities of Jewish life, where it turns out to be of the same shape as the "nonessential": indeed, often deriving its shape from the latter.

Apparently then, the essential and the nonessential merge so wholly in this learning that the recurring "this too!" dissolves all those inner differences which liberalism insisted on championing, and previous to liberalism, the ethical and philosophical movements of earlier centuries.

But now you point to a new principle of selection, through which the vast subject matter of learning [*Lernstoff*] you unfurl can again become a *teaching* [*Lehre*], a principle more trustworthy than anyone has attempted to set up. You introduce the concept of inner power. For inner power is what you demand when you ask him who learns to stake his whole being for the learning, to make himself a link in the chain of tradition and thus become a chooser, not through his will but through his ability. We accept as teaching what enters us from out of the accumulated knowledge of the centuries in its apparent and, above all, in its real contradictions. We do not know in advance what is and is not Jewish teaching;

when someone tries to tell us, we turn away in unbelief and anger. We discern in the story of Hillel and the heathen,[3] quoted *ad nauseam*, the smiling mockery of the sage, and it is not to his first words that we adhere, but to his final word: go and learn.

But in this wise, the teaching ceases to be something that can be learned, something "knowable" in the sense that it is an already existing "something," some definite subject matter. The subject matter must indeed be learned and known, and in a far wider sense than either the representatives of "Judaism on one foot" or those of traditional erudition and learning ever demanded. For now the outside books,"[4] the books from beyond the pale, and the "women's books" that were considered beneath the dignity of that classical form of learning, are both included in the subject matter to be learned, included as equals. But all this that can and should be known is not really knowledge! All this that can and should be taught is not teaching! Teaching begins where the subject matter ceases to be subject matter and changes into inner power . . .

The *way* to the teaching leads through what is "knowable"; at least that is the high road, the sole road one can in good faith recommend to every questioner; in good faith and even in the well-founded hope that he will find it. But the teaching itself is not knowable. It is always something that is in the future, and he who asks for it today in his very question may offer a partial answer to be given someone else tomorrow, and certainly affords the larger part of the answer to be given today to the questioner himself.

Earlier centuries had already reduced the teachings to

a genteel poverty, to a few fundamental concepts; it remained for the nineteenth to pursue this as a consistent method, with the utmost seriousness. You have liberated the teaching from this circumscribed sphere and, in so doing, removed us from the imminent danger of making our spiritual Judaism depend on whether or not it was possible for us to be followers of Kant.

And so it is all the more curious that after liberating us and pointing the way to a new teaching, your answer to the other side of the question, the question concerning the Law: "What are we to do?"—that your answer should leave this Law in the shackles put upon it—as well as upon the teachings—by the nineteenth century. For is it really Jewish law with which you try to come to terms? and, not succeeding, on which you turn your back only to tell yourself and us who look to you for answer that our sole task must be to take cognizance of the Law with reverence—a reverence which can effect no practical difference in our lives or to our persons? Is that really Jewish law, the law of millennia, studied and lived, analyzed and rhapsodized, the law of everyday and of the day of death, petty and yet sublime, sober and yet woven in legend; a law which knows both the fire of the Sabbath candle and that of the martyr's stake? The law Akiba[5] planted and fenced in, and Aher[6] trampled under, the cradle Spinoza hailed from, the ladder on which the Baal Shem[7] ascended, the law that always rises beyond itself, that can never be reached—and yet has always the possibility of becoming Jewish life, of being expressed in Jewish faces? Is the Law you speak of not rather the Law of the Western orthodoxy of the past century?

Here too, to be sure, the limiting process of reducing

to formulas was not initiated in the nineteenth century. Just as the formulas into which the liberalism of the reformers wanted to crowd the Jewish spirit can be traced back to a long time of antecedents, so too can one trace back the reasons that S. R. Hirsch[8] gives to his *Yisroel-Mensch* for keeping the Law. But no one before Hirsch and his followers ever seriously attempted to construct Jewish life on the narrow base of these reasons. For did any Jew prior to this really think—without having the question put to him—that he was keeping the Law, and the Law him, only because God imposed it upon Israel at Sinai? Actually faced by the question, he might have thought of such an answer; and the philosophers to whom the question has been put because they were supposedly "professional" thinkers, have always been fond of giving this very reply.

From Mendelssohn on, our entire people has subjected itself to the torture of this embarrassing questioning; the Jewishness of every individual has squirmed on the needle point of a "why." Certainly, it was high time for an architect to come and convert this foundation into a wall behind which the people, pressed with questions, could seek shelter. But for those living without questions, this reason for keeping the Law was only one among others and probably not the most cogent. No doubt the Torah, both written and oral was given Moses on Sinai but was it not created before the creation of the world?[9] Written against a background of shining fire in letters of somber flame? And was not the world created for its sake? And did not Adam's son Seth found the first House of Study for the teaching of the Torah? And did not the patriarchs keep the Law for half a millennium before

Sinai? And—when it was finally given on Sinai—was it not given in all the seventy languages spoken in the world? It has 613 commandments, a number which, to begin with, mocks all endeavor to count what is countless, but a number which is in itself (plus the two commandments heard directly from the lips of the Almighty) represents the numerical value of the word Torah and the sum of the days of the year and the joints in the body of man. Did not these 613 commandments of the Torah include everything that the scrutiny and penetration of later scholars, who "put to shame" our teacher Moses himself, discovered in the crownlets and tips of the letters? And everything that the industrious student could ever hope to discover there, in all future time? The Torah, which God himself learns day after day!

And can we really fancy that Israel kept this Law, this Torah, only because of the one "fact which excluded the possibility of delusions," that the six hundred thousand heard the voice of God on Sinai?[10] This "fact" certainly does play a part, but no greater part than all we have mentioned before, and all that our ancestors perceived in every "today" of the Torah: that the souls of all generations to come stood on Sinai along with those six hundred thousand, and heard what they heard. For a Jewish consciousness that does not question and is not questioned, all this is as important as the "fact," and that "fact" no whit more important than these other considerations.

The "only" of orthodoxy should no more frighten us away from the Law than the "only" of liberalism, once you had taught us to see, could block our way to the *teaching*. Judaism includes these "onlies," but not in the sense of "onlies." The problem of the Law cannot be dis-

patched by merely affirming or denying the pseudo-historical theory of its origin, or the pseudo-juristic theory of its power to obligate, theories which Hirsch's orthodoxy made the foundation of a rigid and narrow structure, unbeautiful despite its magnificence. Similarly as with teaching which cannot be dispatched by affirming or denying the pseudological theory of the unity of God of the pseudo-ethical theory of the love of one's neighbor, with which Geiger's[11] liberalism painted the façade of the new business or apartment house of emancipated Jewry. These are pseudo-historical, pseudo-juristic, pseudo-logical, pseudo-ethical motives: for a miracle does not constitute history, a people is not a juridical fact, martyrdom is not an arithmetical problem, and love is not social. We can reach both the teachings and the Law only by realizing that we are still on the first lap of the way, and by taking every step upon it, ourselves. But what is this way to the Law?

What was it in the case of the teachings? It was a way that led through the entire realm of the knowable, but really *through* it; a way that was not content to touch upon a few heights which yielded a fine view, but struggled along where former eras had not thought it even worth while to blaze a trail and yet would not give him who had traveled its whole length the right to say that he had now arrived at the goal. Even such a one could say no more than that he had gone the whole way but that even for him the goal lay a step beyond—in pathlessness. Then why call it a way—a path? Does a path—any path—lead to pathlessness? What advantage has he who has gone the way over him who right at the outset ventured the leap, which must come in the end in any

case? A very small advantage, which most people do not consider worth so much trouble, but which, we believe, justifies the utmost trouble; for only this laborious and aimless detour through knowable Judaism gives us the certainty that the ultimate leap, from that which we know to that which we need to know at any price, the leap to the teachings, leads to *Jewish* teachings.

Other nations do not feel this kind of need. When a member of one of the nations teaches, he is teaching out from amongst his people and toward his people, even if he has learned nothing. All he teaches becomes the possession of his people. For the nations have a face still in the making—each its own. None of them knows at birth just what it is to be; their faces are not molded while they are still in nature's lap.

But our people, the only one that did not originate from the womb of nature that bears nations, but—and this is unheard of!—was led forth "a nation from the midst of another nation" (Deuteronomy 4:34)—our people was decreed a different fate. Its very birth became the great moment of its life, its mere being already harbored its destiny. Even "before it was formed," it was "known," like Jeremiah its prophet. And so only he who remembers this determining origin can belong to it; while he who no longer can or will utter the new word he has to say "in the name of the original speaker," who refuses to be a link in the golden chain, no longer belongs to his people. And that is why this people must learn what is knowable as a condition for learning what is unknown, for making it his own.

All this holds also for the Law, for doing. Except that what is doable and even what is not doable yet must be

done nonetheless, cannot be known like knowledge, but can only be done. But if, for the time being, we set aside this grave difference, the picture is the same. There the way led through all that is knowable; here it leads through all that is doable. And the sphere of "what can be done" extends far beyond the sphere of the duties assumed by orthodoxy. As in the *teaching*, the rigid difference between the essential and the non-essential, as outlined by liberalism, should no longer exist, so in the sphere of what can be done the difference between the forbidden and the permissible, as worked out, not without precedent, yet now for the first time with so much consequence and efficiency by Western European orthodoxy of the 19th century, must cease to exist. The separation of the forbidden from the permissible had instituted a Jewish sphere within one's life; whatever remained outside of this sphere, whatever was extra-Jewish, was released, or, in legal terms, was made "permissible";[12] whatever remained within constituted the Jewish sphere with its commandments and prohibitions. The method of basing "allowances" on the text of the law permitted an extension of the realm of the permissible as long as the norms valid for the inner sphere were observed; this procedure, recognized through the ages as legitimate, had only in modern times been made into a system. Only in earlier periods where the security of Jewish life had been at stake, had that boundary been recognized and its temporary extension been accepted as its necessary complement. Only in modern times, when Jewish survival was considered perpetually at stake, was this treatment of the law given a permanent status. The future must no longer recognize that boundary, that method, nor even the general distinction described above. As in the sphere of the Law, there should be nothing *a priori* "permissible." Exactly those things, generally rendered permissible by orthodoxy, must be given a Jewish form. Outside of the Jewish sphere is the domain that should be formed by the "custom," i.e., by a positive principle, instead of merely the negative concept of "permissible." Where Judaism was alive, this had always been true; but whereas previously this fact had been treated with criticism or with slight irony, it will in the future have to be treated with seriousness. Not one sphere of life ought to be surrendered. To give one example for each of the two possibilities I have in mind: for those who eat Jewish dishes all the traditional customs of the menu as handed down from mother to daughter must be as irreplaceable as the separation of meat and milk; and he who refrains from opening a business letter on the Sabbath must not read it even if somebody else has opened it for him. Everywhere the custom and the original intention of the law must have the same rank of inviolability as the law itself.

Even what is within that sphere of demarcations, within that inner realm of Judaism, will be influenced by the fact that it is no longer separated from the realm of the merely "permissible." By contrast to the "permissible" it was essentially a sphere dominated by the term "forbidden." Even the positive commandment had somehow received a negative character. The classical Hebrew term for fulfilling one's duty, an expression which may be rendered by "discharging one's obligation," had a fateful implication, which it could not have where leaving the

sphere of one obligation meant entering the sphere of another—an implication which, however, it had to adopt when all around the province of the Jewish duty lay the domain of a Jewishly formless "permissible." As in the sphere of *teaching* where, after the non-essential has become essential, the essential itself receives some of the characteristics of the non-essential; so in the sphere of the Law, after customs have clothed themselves with the dignity of law, the law will share the positive character of the custom. Not the negative but the positive will be dominant in the Law. Even the prohibitions may now reveal their positive character. One refrains from working on the Sabbath because of the positive commandment concerning rest; when refraining from eating forbidden food one experiences the joy of being able to be Jewish even in the every-day and generally human aspects of one's material existence. Even an act of refraining becomes a positive act.

Thus the demarcation line is broken: the two worlds, the one of the Jewishly forbidden and the one of the "permissible" extra-Jewish, flow into one another. The parallel arrangement of Jewish and extra-Jewish deeds disappears; in both spheres we meet naturally grown freedom. The sphere of possible activity, of the do-able, has become one. Herein is contained the form which (even in its injunctions) allows an experience of freedom. But freedom, in this sphere, even when it appears playful and unconcerned, must lead to form and to a Thou shalt! In this united sphere of the do-able lies, for instance, the legal exclusion of the woman from the religious congregation; but also in it lies with equal force her ruling rank in the home, given to her by age-old custom, and

acknowledged by the husband on Friday evening in the biblical song of the Woman of Valour.[13] In this sphere lies the prohibition of images, again not realized according to what is being uprooted, but according to what is being planted and cared for: the sense of the incomparableness of the One, and not less the infinite and infinitely many-sided raiment of melodies which the course of the centuries has woven around the Invisible and His service. In it lies the rigid seclusion from the nations, which the Law enforces to the very details of every-day life, but again not realized in the manner of external isolation but, rather, in that of an internal union; and yet the historical law of assimilation lies in it as well, with none among the nations subjected to it so actively and so passively as the messianic people. Both aspects impose on us equal responsibility, restraining our energies, releasing new energies. The field of action is one.

And again we have to realize that with this unifying and broadening of the Jewishly do-able, nothing has really been done. Whatever can and must be done is not yet deed, whatever can and must be commanded is not yet commandment. Law [*Gesetz*] must again become commandment [*Gebot*] which seeks to be transformed into deed at the very moment it is heard. It must regain that living reality [*Heutigkeit*] in which all great Jewish periods have sensed the guarantee for its eternity. Like *teaching*, it must consciously start where its content stops being content and becomes inner power, our own inner power. Inner power which in turn is added to the substance of the law. For even if one should wish to do "everything" possible, he would still not fulfill the Law—he would not fulfill it in a way by which law would

become commandment; a commandment which he must fulfil, simply because he cannot allow it to remain unfulfilled, as it was once expressed in Akiba's famous parable of the fishes. Thus what counts here, too, is not our will but our ability to act. Here too the decisive thing is the selection which our ability—without regard to our will—makes out of the wealth of the possible deeds. Since this selection does not depend on the will but on our ability, it is a very personal one; for while a general law can address itself with its demands to the will, ability carries in itself its own law; there is only my, your, his ability and, built on them, ours; not everybody's. Therefore, whether much is done, or little, or maybe nothing at all, is immaterial in the face of the one and unavoidable demand; that whatever is being done, shall come from that inner power. As the knowledge of everything knowable is not yet wisdom, so the doing of everything do-able is not yet deed. The deed is created at the boundary of the merely do-able, where the voice of the commandment causes the spark to leap from "I must" to "I can." The Law is built on such commandments, and only on them.

The growth of the Law is thus entrusted once again to our loving care. Nobody should be allowed to tell us what belongs to its spheres, as nobody was allowed to tell us what belonged to the sphere of teaching. We should not even wish to know that beforehand, even if we could. Neither our wish nor our knowledge should anticipate that choice. We may know beforehand the sphere of the do-able; we may wish beforehand that our deed shall find its place within that sphere; but whether it will actually find it there does not depend on our knowledge or wish, however much we assign them direction and

location in the sphere. There is no other guarantee for our deed being Jewish, whether it will be found to lie within or beyond the precincts of the do-able. In the latter case the boundaries will be extended by them. In either case, however, it will be today's living law, as well as The Law. For this is what we felt was lacking in the law presented to us by its new observers: that the old law was not at the same time the new. This lack of actuality, of living reality, was recognized when the line of demarcation I mentioned made today's life "permissible." Thereby the law had been denied actuality. Moses' bold words, spoken to the generation who had not experienced the event of Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:3), "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day,"—those words (the paradox of which was keenly felt by ancient commentators) had fallen into oblivion. It is upon us to accept the challenge of this boldness. The inner line of demarcation has become blurred, and there must be an outer one, for not every deed which fails to find its place in the law known to us broadens its boundaries, as not every piece of our knowledge becomes a part of the *teaching*. But we cannot know whether it will not happen after all. We do not know the boundary, and we do not know how far the pegs of the tent of the Torah may be extended, nor which one of our deeds is destined to accomplish such widening. We may be sure that they are being extended through us; for could anything be allowed to remain outside permanently? If such were possible the boundary would assume a character it should not have; as rigid and as fixed as the distinction between the forbidden and the permissible, which had been discarded.

All of a sudden it would have turned again into an inner boundary, and our deeds would have been deprived of a most noble heritage: that, in the words of the Talmud, we have only to be sons, in order to become builders.

But does not this talmudic word with which we conclude every study meeting put to us the hardest question? Yes, to us, especially to us. For if we are not still sons, can we become sons again? Is not this the most pronounced difference between teaching and law: that we may well return to the former, for it is only the return of the consciousness, only the contemplation of one's self, but we cannot return to the latter, for it cannot be done in consciousness alone, but must be accomplished in the deed, and the deed cannot stand a return, it must always go forward; if it looks backwards, it does not experience deepening, as it is in the case of knowledge, but becomes a romantic enthusiasm or, to express it less courteously, a lie. It would even be the most dangerous of all lies—a lie in deed! A lie spoken can easily be repaired: you can take it back; but you cannot take back a deed. I do not wish to make this question appear less serious; it stood behind everything I have said so far. I do not believe in the harmlessness of a return in the case of consciousness. A mental pestilence like romanticism is not abolished by destroying its breeding ground. A lie spoken is as little revocable as a lie done. The road of the thought can as little turn back as the road of the deed. The thought, too, has to follow the law of progress. In the life of the spirit it is an exception if it is able to look back without harm, at the moment when it may even be wholesome for it to do so. Contemplation of

one's self may lead to intellectual suicide. When is the return wholesome and when is it dangerous?

The life of the spirit runs its steady course, and in this process it discharges dead matter; only at this price is rejuvenation granted to it; every birth implies a death. This dead matter may be carried in the stream for a long time; only by accident may it be swept to the banks. Now, since not all the waves in the stream of the spirit move with the same speed—for some are well in advance while others are behind—it is in the interest of the whole if those in front stop from time to time and, looking back, wait for those left behind. The same applies to the self-contemplation of the individual and the cultural group. The danger of looking back is, however, that, although one waits for both, one fails to distinguish between the dead waste in the stream and those whose slower speed is due to their proximity to the source. Consequently that dead mass, believed alive, causes the stream to become stagnant. Therefore it is of the utmost importance for the spirit—both in the *vita contemplativa* as in the *vita activa*—whether it has the calm instinct to distinguish between those masses which are dead and those which are alive. The artificial rejuvenation of outmoded political institutions is not more dangerous than the rejuvenation of a dead faith. An example of the former are the midsummer night dreams of Frederic William IV concerning the German States, by comparison with the reconstitution in nineteenth century Europe of the court of assizes as it had been preserved in England. An example of the latter are the attempts in our own days to recreate in German nationalistic circles a belief in Woden by comparison with the renaissance of the world

of fairy tales and folk legends in the nineteenth century.

Thus the danger for knowledge is no less than for doing; but the prospects too are the same. They lie in what I have just called the instinct for the difference between life and death. This instinct may err, but its errors are rarely ever fatal for the nations of the world, because in their history turning back is hardly ever of vital importance. With our people things are different. For our life does not run in one steady course like theirs. Our independence from history or, to put it positively, our eternity, gives simultaneity to all moments of our history. Turning back, recapturing what has remained behind, is here a permanent and life necessity. For we must be able to *live* in our eternity. The protecting wall of the instincts, sufficient for the nations of the world, who are endangered only occasionally, does not suffice for us. We need stronger safeguards than our instincts. These safeguards stem from what we found before to be ultimately decisive: the measure of our ability to act. Referring oneself to such a court of appeal is not flippancy, it is extremely serious when re-interpreting Israel's free acceptance of God's word "under" Mount Sinai into a compelled acceptance, compelled by—God. "He lifted up the mountain like a basket, until they accepted," the Sages say.[14] We may do what is in our power to remove obstacles; we can and should make free our ability and power to act. But the last choice is not within our will; it is entrusted to our ability.

It is true that ability means: not to be able to do otherwise—to be obliged to act. In our case, it is not up to an instinct, choosing by trial and error, to fight against the dangers of a return: our whole being is involved in it.

For this is what the appeal to ability means. As our whole being is at every moment placed before the task of returning home, not only certain layers and domains of being, as with the other nations; so also must the acceptance of the task be made by our whole being, not only certain moments of history, as with the nations of the world. A decision based on ability cannot err, since it is not choosing, but listening and therefore only accepting. For this reason no one can take another person to task, though he can and should teach him; because only *I* know what *I* can do; only my own ear can hear the voice of my own being which I have to reckon with. And perhaps another's non-ability does more for the upbuilding of both teaching and law than my own ability. We only know that we all have potential abilities to act. For what may be a hard task for the other nations, that is to turn back in the onrushing stream of life—because they consider themselves united by time and space and only on festive days and in hours of destiny do they feel as members in a chain of generations—this is just the very basis of our communal and individual life: the feeling of being our fathers' children, our grandchildren's ancestors. Therefore we may rightly expect to find ourselves again, at some time, somehow, in our fathers' every word and deed; and also that our own words and deeds will have some meaning for our grandchildren. For we are, as Scripture puts it, "children"; we are, as tradition reads it, "Builders."

I have said what I wanted to say. Did I say it to you? Certainly so, insofar as my words refer to your lecture, and insofar as that lecture induced me to express things I would otherwise have only expressed after a full life's

experience. I could not believe that you, who have shown us again the one path to the Torah, should be unable to see what moves us as well today along the other path. I could do no more than show you what we experience. Therefore I may well hope that my words will be accepted by you with an open eye, for they are rather addressed to your eye than to your ear.

Something else weighs heavily upon me. I did not speak for myself alone; that would have been arrogant, and not in accordance with what I had to say. But I cannot tell you the names of the "We" from whose mouths I spoke. Not a few people I know are included, and possibly more whom I do not know. But hardly any of them would agree with everything I said here. Nevertheless I speak for them too. For my words open up a dialogue which I hope will be carried on with deeds and with the conduct of life rather than with words. And I hope that this dialogue shall not come to rest any more among those whom I have included in "We." Then my words which have only opened the dialogue may well die away in theirs. The first word was only spoken for the sake of the last. And this premature "We" shall at one time be silent in the last one.

APPENDICES

Berlin." But there must be a Jewish theological department within the German *universitas literarum* (and of course within all others too)—then the Rathenaus cannot disregard it any more. Walter Rathenau has *not* overcome Judaism as a religion, he only thinks he has. To make this impossible or at least extremely hard, is not the task of individual scholars, but only the visible existence of an "ism." At present the Rathenaus are as naive as children; *then* they will at least know what they are doing. And fifty per cent of the time they will do it anyhow. But fifty other per cent they will not, and my hope is in these. There is doubtless an element of smuggling in this: I would like to bring in Judaism through the backdoor of "general education," the kind of education the Rathenaus want so much. The German Jew will have to be ashamed of knowing as little as most of them do now. Some beginnings of these feelings of shame can already be seen, at least in some of the younger people. Buber's monthly *Der Jude* has a big part in this, I think. He too is smuggling. The cover address is: To the Intellectuals. But inside speaks Rabbi Martin Solomonides.[5]

I had more on my mind, but this letter does not seem to acquire a shape anyhow. I am writing under terrible conditions, on the knee—this takes the blame for my handwriting and the lack of cohesion of this letter. And, alas! the furlough is still in my bones; I am not set for war yet—if I am ever.

Thank you anyhow for your nice letter, and do not take offense with this ugly one from

Yours,

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG.

REVELATION AND LAW

Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig

Martin Buber to Franz Rosenzweig

Heppenheim, September 28, 1922

Dear Dr. Rosenzweig:

How could you assume that I treat you with "expressive silence"—a means of communication which, incidentally, I am neither willing nor able to employ—? I am sure you realized, after the first half hour of your visit to my home at Heppenheim that I talked to you in a way I wished I could talk to all human beings—a Messianic wish indeed: in that world people take things in good grace, and if they refrain from talking, they do so either because they *wish* to be silent or because they *cannot* talk. The reason for my not answering your letter of last Friday is that, at this stage of our talk, I might have been able to go on talking, but I was unable to write. The problem coud no longer be discussed objectively; the question had become a personal one, and, referring to your example of the Pantheon,[1] I would have had to tell

you about the internal and even external history of my own youth, for instance, how once on a Day of Atonement I caused annoyance (in a liberal synagogue) by following the tradition of bending my knee and prostrating myself while reciting the words, "We bend our knee and prostrate ourselves" . . .

Martin Buber to Franz Rosenzweig

Heppenheim, October 1, 1922
(Eve of the Day of Atonement)

But I must still tell you something serious: that in spite of everything, I feel in my innermost heart that today is the Eve of Yom Kippur. This may be so because (if I may add an autobiographical note) between my thirteenth and fourteenth year (when I was fourteen I stopped putting on my Tefillin) I experienced this day with a force unequalled by any other experience since. And do you think that I was a "child" at that time? Maybe less so than now, and this in a poignant sense; at that time I took Space and Time seriously; I did not hold back as I do now. And then, when the sleepless night was heavy upon me and very real, my body, already reacting to the fast, became as important to me as an animal marked for sacrifice. This is what formed me: the night, and the following morning, and the Day itself, with all its hours, not omitting a single moment. So you see I had not originally been exposed to "liberal" influences in my religious education.

The annoyance mentioned previously occurred in the Temple (sic!) in Lemberg, where I went only when my father wished to lure me away from my grandfather who liked to take me to a small hasidic *Klaus*. He, an "enlightened" Jew, a Maskil, liked to pray among the Hasidim and used a prayer book full of mystical directions.

All this is not only past but present, and yet I am the way I am: with much imperfection, yet nothing is felt to be missing any more. May your good heart understand me!

May you be sealed for a good life.

Yours,

MARTIN BUBER.

Martin Buber to Franz Rosenzweig

Heppenheim, June 24, 1924

Dear Friend:

I hear that at first you had agreed to have *The Builders* published but then had reconsidered. I would like to recommend to you that you have it printed, no matter how it had originally been announced. I would prefer to have that epistle published by itself. If I am able to write an answer, it will contain nothing in disagreement with its details. I agree to everything that follows from the letter's premises, but not to those premises themselves. It is my faith that prevents me from doing this. You know, my dear, that I do not use this word lightly, and yet here it is quite appropriate. I do not believe that *revelation* is ever a formulation of law. It is only through man in his self-contradiction that revelation becomes legislation. This is the fact of man. I cannot admit the law transformed by man into the realm of my will, if I am to hold myself ready as well for the unmediated word of God directed to a specific hour of life.

It is part of my being that I cannot accept both [the

Law and the word of God] together and I cannot imagine that this position will ever change for me. Other people may have a different attitude. This, though appearing incomprehensible to me, nevertheless I respect. But I cannot approach the fact of the Law, nor even its concept except from the point of view of my faith. As a matter of fact, it was during the past week that I have most urgently experienced (an experience that even penetrated my dreams) that this is impossible, even "scientifically" impossible.

Should my reply to your letter contain therefore all this and other disquieting matters related to it upon which I have not touched here? I cannot count on the present-day reader—the public being so deplorably casual as to vouchsafe without obligation anything and everything they read or hear. In a reply I would have to stake my very being. Such a personal commitment, though perhaps in store for me later, would require a more thorough bath of purification than I am capable of at this moment.

Cordially yours,

MARTIN BUBER.

Franz Rosenzweig to Martin Buber

June 29, 1924

Dear Friend:

Please bring along *The Builders* this coming Wednesday, so that I shall be able to read it again, since I do not remember the details too well.

In your recent letter there was a sentence which has frightened me again and again: it is the one in which

you state that between yourself and "other people" there is a partition which makes their position inconceivable, although you respect it. This seems untenable. Such a respect has its place in life which always means separation; but in the realm of faith it is impossible, since faith must always be able to bind together, all separations and everything hard to understand is so only temporarily and cannot call for lasting respect. I deeply respect your different way of life; but you must not respect my different faith; that would stand in the way of the ultimate goal, which must be: the union of all minds in spite of the existent difference in the way of life.

And, besides—do we really differ in faith? Even for him who observes the Law, revelation is not what you call law-giving. "On this day"[2]—that is his theory of experience as well as yours. He as well as you deems it unfortunate that the commandment issued "on that day" should give rise to the old law. We do not consciously accept the fact that every commandment can become law, but that the law can always be changed back into a commandment, a fact which you know so well . . . As far as faith is concerned, the difference between us is a small one, nothing inconceivable.

Martin Buber to Franz Rosenzweig

Heppenheim, July 1, 1924

Dear Friend:

I welcome what you say about "respect." What I meant was: to "respect" something we cannot yet comprehend. I am willing, however, to change "respect" to "accept." However, as I said, I cannot comprehend it yet (as, in

the sphere of greater vastness and awe, I cannot comprehend the belief in God's own son, with due consideration for the difference!)

But this matter itself is more difficult than you think: for, you fail to consider, I believe, that it is the fact of man that brings about transformation from revelation to what you call commandment [*Gebot*]. Permit me to express this so dryly, without adding anything . . .

Martin Buber to Franz Rosenzweig

Heppenheim, July 5, 1924

Dear Friend:

Of course I misunderstood you, of course I cannot draw a dividing line between revelation and the command to Abraham "Get thee out" (Genesis 12:1); nor between revelation and "I am the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:2); but I must draw it between revelation and "Thou shalt have no other gods" (Verse 3). I do know that he who explained his position with the words, "I stood between the Lord and you" (Deuteronomy 5:5) could, after having said, "I am the Lord thy God," continue only with, "Thou shalt have no other gods." But the fact that they and I had to be told this, and justifyingly told, from this idea I have to be redeemed. It is this fact which explains why I cannot accept the laws and the statutes blindly, but I must ask myself again and again: Is this particular law addressed to me and rightly so? So that at one time I may include myself in this Israel which is addressed, but at times, many times, I cannot. And if there is anything that I can call without reservation a *Mitzvah* within my own sphere, it is just this that I act as I do.

I cannot go on with this communication, incomplete

though it is. Your good heart will complete it so that it will yield an adequate meaning.

Cordially yours,

MARTIN BUBER.

Martin Buber to Franz Rosenzweig

Heppenheim, July 13, 1924.

Dear Friend:

No, it is not clear to me. I told you that for me, though man is a law-receiver, God is not a law-giver, and therefore the Law has no universal validity for me, but only a personal one. I accept, therefore, only what I think is being spoken to me (e.g., the older I become, and the more I realize the restlessness of my soul, the more I accept for myself the Day of Rest). *The Builders* want to make me accept the Law as something universal, the way I accept Teaching as something to be learned in its totality. The analogy you suggest does not exist. You will realize indirectly that this is so when you consider that we can atone for what we have done, but not for what one has experienced. This indicates that the deed differs not only quantitatively from experience, but qualitatively. You will realize this *directly* as well when you consider how different the two are in relation to the fact which concerns us here, the fact of the imperative, not the philosophical, but the divine and the human one, for I am responsible for what I do or leave undone in a different way than for what I learn or leave unlearned. Therefore the division between revelation and teaching (human teaching) is for me neither a thorn nor a trial, but that between revelation and law (human law) is both . . .

Franz Rosenzweig to Martin Buber

July 16, 1924

It is true that there is no analogy between learning and doing, but there is an analogy between thinking and doing. You can really "repent" for your thoughts. The great turn in my own life occurred in the realms of thoughts, although deeds depended on the thoughts too. What so far had been permitted or even commanded was not allowed any more. But this was only the consequence. And looking back later, I was not so much frightened by the deeds, which, after all, had only been consequences, but by the whole world of ideas in which I had lived, a kind of Barthianism,[3] as I must have told you.

That the separation of revelation and teaching is for you also a thorn and a trial, this you will readily admit when in speaking of teaching you do not think of petty Midrashim, but of the Christian dogma. Yes, we are responsible, not for what we learn or fail to learn, but for what we think or fail to think.

For me, too, God is not a Law-giver. But He commands. It is only by the manner of his observance that man in his inertia changes the commandments into Law, a legal system with paragraphs, without the realization that "I am the Lord,"[4] without "fear and trembling,"[5] without the awareness that the man stands under God's commandment. Could this, then, be the difference between us? Possibly, but not necessarily. If, e.g., F.Ch. Rang's political views would change from a matter of conscience to a petty organization, I would accept that as a confirmation of the rule that a commandment changes into a law and I would say with the Greeks: "It is not God's fault."

But if the "On this day" becomes a Shulhan Arukh[6] then I turn a bit pantheistic and believe that it does concern God. Because He has sold Himself to us with his Torah. But in the end we share even this faith.

I hope that in London[7] you will not only enjoy success in our cause, but also the beautiful city itself. Both of us envy you.

Cordially yours,

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG.

Martin Buber to Franz Rosenzweig

Heppenheim, June 3, 1925

Dear Friend:

For me the one question which is sounded in my soul from abyss to abyss is: Is the Law God's Law? The other answer to this question is not mere silence. If, however, the answer were "Yes," I would not meditate on whether the Law is a force making for the wholeness of life, for such would then be immaterial. On the other hand, no other "Yes" can replace the missing affirmation. This missing "Yes" is not quietly absent: its absence is noted with terror.

Franz Rosenzweig to Martin Buber

June 5, 1925

Dear Friend:

The question concerning the Law, as well as the one concerning God Himself, should not be treated in the "third person." I, too, do not know whether the Law "is" God's law. I know that as little, and even less than I know that God "is." Knowledge or ignorance is not valid

when an experience has been made. As far as you have made the experience that the Law is not God's law—and it is this experience on which your sentence is based—that is a valid one, as valid as an atheism based on an experience that God does not exist: whereas he who does not know that God exists, or whether God exists, must not frighten us.

Thus revelation is certainly not Law-giving. It is only this: Revelation. The primary content of revelation is revelation itself. "He came down" [on Sinai]—this already concludes the revelation; "He spoke" is the beginning of interpretation, and certainly "I am." But where does this "interpretation" stop being legitimate? I would never dare to state this in a general sentence; here commences the right of experience to give testimony, positive and negative.

Or could it be that revelation must never become legislation? Because then the original self-interpretation of revelation would have to give way to human interpretation? This I would admit, just as I am convinced that revelation cannot be identified with a human person. But, in spite of this my conviction, as I concede to a Christian a historic and personal right to prove an exception, so I believe in the right of the Law to prove its character as an exception against all other types of law. This is the point where the question put forward in *The Builders* claims to be an answer to your question. A question thus becomes an answer to a question! This may not satisfy the first inquirer, but it makes it difficult for him to give an answer based on his life "today" because it opens up for him a view of tomorrow. This must be your position as regards *The Builders*.

THE COMMANDMENTS:

Divine or Human?

A Letter[1]

I was startled by Nahum Glatzer's words that only the election of the people of Israel has divine origin, but all the details of the Law came from man alone. I should have formulated this—and have actually done so to myself—in very much the same way, but when one hears one's own ideas uttered by someone else, they suddenly become problematic. Can we really draw so rigid a boundary between what is divine and what is human? We must keep in mind the obvious fact that a Law as a whole, is the prerequisite for being chosen, the law whereby divine election is turned into human electing, and the passive state of a people being chosen and set apart is changed into the activity on the people's side of doing the deed which sets it apart. The only matter of doubt is whether or to what degree this Law originating in Israel's election coincides with the traditional Jewish law. But here our doubt must be genuine doubt, which

willingly listens to reason and is as willing to be swayed to a "yes" as to a "no."

In my thinking about this, another differentiation occurred to me: the differentiation between what can be *stated* about God and what can be *experienced* about God. What can be stated objectively is only the very general formula "God exists." Experience, however, goes much further. What we can thus state—or even prove—about God is related to our possible "experience" in the same way that the empty announcement that two persons have married, or the showing of the marriage certificate, is related to the daily and hourly reality of this marriage. The reality cannot be communicated to a third person; it is no one's concern and yet it is the only thing that counts, and the objective statement of the fact of marriage would be meaningless without this most private, incommunicable reality. And so even the bare fact of marriage does not become real save where it leaves the sphere of what can be objectively stated and enters the secret pale of the festive days and anniversaries of private life.

It is exactly the same with what man experiences about God: it is incommunicable, and he who speaks of it makes himself ridiculous. Modesty must veil this aloneness-together. Yet everyone knows that though unutterable it is not a self-delusion (which a third person might well think it! It is your own fault if you run within striking distance of the psychologist's knife! Why did you blab?). Here, too, it is man's own experience—utterly inexpressible—that is the fulfillment and realization of utterable truth. All that is needed is—to undergo this experience.

And now I suggest that the matter of the details of the Law is analogous to the wealth of experiences, of which

only that experience holds which is in the act of being undergone, and holds only for him who is undergoing it. Here too there is no rigid boundary in the relationship between God and man. Here too the only boundary lies between what can and what cannot be expressed. What can be expressed, what can be formulated in terms of theology, so that a Christian too could understand it as an "article of faith," is the connection between election and the Law. But an outsider, no matter how willing and sympathetic, can never be made to accept a single commandment as a "religious" demand. We wholly realize that general theological connection only when we cause it to come alive by fulfilling individual commandments, and transpose it from the objectivity of a theological truth to the "Thou" of the benediction: when he who is called to the reading of the Torah unites, in his benediction before and after the reading, thanks for the "national" election from among the peoples of the earth with thanks for the "religious" election to eternal life.

Here too the incomprehensibility from the viewpoint of religion, of the individual commandment does not constitute incomprehensibility per se. Just as a student of William James knows how to put every "religious experience" into the correct cubbyhole of the psychology of religion, and a Freudian student can analyze the experience into its elements of the old yet ever new story, so a student of Wellhausen[2] will trace every commandment back to its human, folkloristic origin, and a student of Max Weber[3] derive it from the special structure of a people. Psychological analysis finds the solution to all enigmas in self-delusion, and historical sociology finds it in mass delusion. The Law is not understood as a com-

mandment addressed by God to the people but as a soliloquy of the people. We know it differently, not always and not in all things, but again and again. For we know it only when—we *do*.

What do we know when we do? Certainly not that all of these historical and sociological explanations are false. But in the light of the doing, of the right doing in which we experience the reality of the Law, the explanations are of superficial and subsidiary importance. And, in the doing there is even less room for the converse wisdom (which in hours of weakness and emptiness we gladly clutch at for comfort), that these historical and sociological explanations may be true, and that Law is important because it alone guarantees the unity of the people in space and through time. Such timid insight lies behind and beneath the moment of doing in which we experience just this moment; it is this experience of the theo-human reality of the commandment that permits us to pray: "Blessed art Thou . . ."

In this immediacy we may not "express" God [*Gott aussprechen*], but rather address God [*Gott ansprechen*] in the individual commandment. For whoever seeks to express him will discover that he who cannot be expressed will become he who cannot be found. Only in the commandment can the voice of him who commands be heard. No matter how well the written word may fit in with our own thoughts, it cannot give us the faith that creation is completed, to the degree that we experience this by keeping the Sabbath, and inaugurating it with, "And the heaven and the earth were completed." Not that doing necessarily results in hearing and understanding. But one hears differently when one hears in the doing. All the

days of the year Balaam's talking ass may be a mere fairy tale, but not on the Sabbath wherein this portion is read in the synagogue, when it speaks to me out of the open Torah. But if not a fairy tale, what then? I cannot say right now; if I should think about it today, when it is past, and try to say what it is, I should probably only utter the platitude that it is a fairy tale. But on that day, in that very hour, it is—well, certainly not a fairy tale, but that which is communicated to me provided I am able to fulfill the command of the hour, namely, to open my ears.

What can be expressed marks the beginning of our way. This is peculiar to our situation, which we must not ignore but see as clearly as possible. The situation of the Jew who never left the fold is different. Jacob Rosenheim[4] once told a young man who confessed to him that he believed in nothing but loved every single commandment: "You need have no misgivings in keeping them all. But, for the time being, do not let yourself be called to the reading of the Torah." So far as we are concerned, just this *mitzvah* which leads from what can to what cannot be expressed is nearest our hearts, while many of the others are alien to us. Our way has led back to the whole, but we are still seeking the individual parts.

Thus, I do not think the boundary between the divine and the human is that between the whole and the parts, but that between something whose origin we recognize with a recognition which can be expressed, communicated, and formulated, and something else whose origin we also recognize and recognize just as clearly, but with a recognition which cannot be expressed and communicated. I should not venture to dub "human" any commandment

whatsoever, just because it has not yet been vouchsafed me to say over it: "Blessed art *Thou.*" Nor can I imagine the divine nature of the whole (which I, like you, believe in) in any other sense than of Rabbi Nobel's powerful five-minute sermon on God's appearing before Abraham's tent: "And *God* appeared to Abraham . . . and he lifted his eyes . . . and behold: three *men.*"

Greeting to all four of you from your old friend who is very happy to see the signs of fresh life in the Lehrhaus.

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG.

NOTES

It Is Time: Concerning the Study of Judaism

[*Zeit ists. Kleinere Schriften,* pp. 56-78]

1 According to the German school system valid at the time of the conception of this essay, all children spent the first four years in the Basic School (*Grundschule*). Then they either entered the People's School (*Volksschule*), which offered a general curriculum of four years, or a High School, which led to graduation at the age of fifteen or, for those who wanted to go to college, at the age of eighteen. There were two types of high schools: those concentrating on science and modern languages, and those emphasizing classical languages. In either case the teaching of the first of the two obligatory languages was commenced at the age of ten, i.e., first year of high school. (Translator's note.)

2 *Amidah*: Central prayer recited standing in silent devotion.

3 *Maoz Tzur*: A popular Hanukkah song.

4 "Our Father, our King," a prayer for the Days of Repentence.

5 Talmudic tractate dealing with ethics and the study of the Torah.

6 In Germany, as in other European countries, schools were in session on Saturdays.

7 In German schools, each period consisted of 45 minutes of instruction and 15 minutes of recess.

8 See note 1.

9 Philo (1st cent.), Jewish-Hellenist philosopher in Alexandria.

10 Saadia (10th cent.), religious philosopher in Babylonia.
11 Solomon Ibn Gabirol (11th cent.), Hebrew poet and philosopher in Spain.
12 Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th cent.), poet and Bible commentator in Spain.
13 Judah ha-Levi (11th-12th cent.), classical Hebrew poet.
14 Moses Maimonides (12th cent.), classical Jewish philosopher.
15 Levi ben Gershon (14th cent.), religious philosopher.
16 Joseph Albo (14th-15th cent.), religious philosopher in Spain.
17 Joseph Karo (16th cent.), author of a code of Jewish law (*Shulhan Arukh*).
18 Moses Isserles (16th cent.), wrote glosses to the *Shulhan Arukh*.
19 Leopold Zunz (19th cent.), founder of the "Science of Judaism."
20 Presentation of Judaism by Judah ha-Levi.
21 "Dogmas," by Joseph Albo.
22 Principal philosophical work by Maimonides.
23 System of Jewish ethics, by Bahya Ibn Pakuda, 11th cent.
24 Foremost work of Jewish mysticism; 13th cent.
25 Isaac Luria (16th cent.), leader of Safed Kabbalistic movement.
26 In high schools in Germany, only minor subjects were taught in the afternoon periods.
27 Leopold Zunz.
28 Halakhah: Jewish law.
29 Aggadah, or Haggadah: Extra-legal, ethical, theological, poetic parts of Jewish teachings.
30 This would be equivalent to about $2,500 under present living conditions.

Towards a Rennaissance of Jewish Learning

[*Bildung und kein Ende. Kleinere Schriften*, pp. 79-93]

1 Max Brod (b. 1884), novelist, Jewish thinker and editor of Kafka's works.
2 Torah combined with "general culture"; educational principle of neo-orthodoxy in Germany.

The Builders: Concerning the Law

[*Die Bauleute. Kleinere Schriften*, pp. 107-113]

1 Buber, *Reden über des Judentum*, ("Lectures on Judaism"), Frankfort 1923.
2 *Herut*: a lecture on youth and religion.
3 A heathen asked Hillel (1st cent.) to explain to him the entire Torah while he was standing on one foot. Hillel answered: "Do not unto your neighbor what you would not have him do unto you; this is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary; go and learn."
4 Originally pertaining to Apocrypha, which were not to be read by a Jew.
5 Talmudic master; 2nd cent.
6 A heretic; contemporary of Rabbi Akiba.
7 Founder of hasidism; 18th cent.
8 Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), founder of neo-orthodoxy in Germany.
9 Here and in the following passages, Rosensweig refers to concepts of Jewish tradition as contained in the Talmud and the Midrash.
10 A concept of medieval Jewish philosophers.
11 Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), leader of Jewish religious liberalism in Germany.
12 "Permissible" is here used by Rosensweig to cover that which is excluded from the sphere molded by the Jewish law.
13 Proverbs 31:10-31.
14 Talmud, Shabbat 88a.

Upon Opening the Jüdisches Lehrhaus

[*Kleinere Schriften*, pp. 94-99]

1 Nehemiah A. Nobel (1871-1922), leading rabbi in Frankfort.
2 The Torah scrolls that are read in synagogues are written in long-hand on parchment scrolls.
3 Apocrypha, "books outside the biblical canon." Here applied to all literature.
4 "Disciples of the wise"; religious scholars.
5 The courses were divided into three parts: classical, historical, and modern Judaism.

More Judaism

[*Briefe*, pp. 275-276; 283-286]

1 Hermann Badt (1887-1945), high government official; friend of Rosenzweig.
2 A liberal, non-Zionist organization of German Jews mainly for the protection of Jewish rights.
3 "To the Baptized Jews."
4 Assimilated German-Jewish family of industrialists. Walter Rathenau (1867-1922) was a German foreign minister.
5 This refers to Martin Buber's grandfather, Solomon Buber, a noted Hebrew scholar.

Revelation and Law

1 Rosenzweig had used the Pantheon to explain the difference between the outer and the inner aspect of the Law (i.e., whether it is only studied, or also put into practice).
2 Exodus 19:1 with reference to Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai. The classical commentators take "this day" to mean: "The words of the Torah shall always be new to you as if the Torah were given—today."
3 This refers to the theology of Karl Barth.
4 A common conclusion of commandments in the biblical text.
5 In the mystical tradition a Jew is bidden to fulfill a commandment "with fear and trembling."
6 Code of Jewish Law.
7 Buber went to London to negotiate a plan for University and higher popular education in Palestine.

The Commandments: Divine or Human?

[*Briefe*, pp. 518-521]

1 In this letter (November 1924) Rosenzweig reacts to a report on discussions of Judaism at the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus. The letter was addressed to the "speakers in the Lehrhaus," Martin Goldner, Nahum Glatzer, Hans Epstein and Lotte Fürth.
2 Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), German Protestant theologian and Bible critic; he demonstrated an evolution within the original sources of the biblical writings.
3 Max Weber (1864-1920), German sociologist; founder of the so-called "sociology of religion."
4 Jacob Rosenheim (b. 1871), leader of separatist orthodox Judaism (Agudath Yisrael).