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A BELIEVING  
HUMANISM:

*My Testament, 1902-1965*

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## THE THIRD LEG OF THE TABLE

WHEN Rabbi Yeheskel Landau came to Prague, he spoke to his congregation Sabbath after Sabbath of nothing else except the bitter need of the destitute in the city. One had expected to hear from his mouth profound meanings of interpretations and subtle meanings of disputations, but he only thought of reminding them of the wretched who spread out unrelieved, unnoticed, in this lane and its surroundings. "Help! Go there even today in the evening and help!" thus he called ever again. But the people took it for a sermon and were vexed that it was so insipid and flat.

Then on a busy market day something wonderful took place. Right through the middle of the tumult came the rabbi and remained standing in the center of the thickest swarm as though he had wares to offer for sale and only waited for a favorable moment to commend them to the crowd. Those who recognized him passed the incomprehensible fact on to others; from everywhere traders and buyers crowded to that place; they stared at him, but no one dared to question him. Finally there broke from the lips of one who imagined himself intimate with him, "What is our rabbi doing here?"

At once Rabbi Yeheskel began:

"If a table has three legs and a piece is broken off of one of the three legs, what does one do? One supports the leg as well as one can, and the table stands. But now if still another of the three legs breaks in two, there is no longer a support. What does one do then? One shortens the third leg too, and the table stands again.

"Our sages say: 'The world stands on three things: on the

teaching, on the service, and on the deeds of love.' When the holiness is destroyed, then the leg of the service breaks. Then our sages support it by saying: 'Service with the heart, that is what is meant by prayer.' But now when the acts of love disappear and the second leg suffers injury, how shall the world still endure? Therefore, I have left the house of teaching and have come to the market place. We must shorten the leg of the teaching in order that the table of the world may again stand firm."