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SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, THE REVEREND DR. GEOFFREY ~~CHURCHER~~, PROMINENT ~~ENGLISH~~ ~~CHURCHMAN~~, ANNOUNCED THAT HIS COMMITTEE ON A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE WOULD OMIT THE REFERENCE PROPHECYING THAT THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN OF A VIRGIN. "THE HEBREW WORD IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH, STATED THE REVEREND ~~CHURCHER~~, CLEARLY DOES NOT MEAN "VIRGIN", IT MEANS "YOUNG WOMAN", AND CHRISTIANS SHOULD THEREFORE ASSUME THAT JESUS HAD A NATURAL BIRTH". BISHOP PIKE, THE OUT-SPOKEN EPISCOPALIAN BISHOP OF THE CALIFORNIA DIOCESE, HAS HAD THE COURAGE TO ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY THAT HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH. IN AMERICA, THE NEW REVISED STANDARD PROTESTANT VERSION OF THE BIBLE, SUGGESTS THAT JESUS WAS BORN OF A NATURAL BIRTH. TO BE CERTAIN, THIS VIEW, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BEST CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP, IS EXTREMELY UNPOPULAR IN MANY CHRISTIAN QUARTERS. IT IS UNPOPULAR, BECAUSE IT WEAKENS THE STRUCTURE OF ONE OF THE MAIN PILLARS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

IF JESUS IS NOT OF DIVINE BIRTH, THEN THE FACT THAT HE WAS THE DIVINE SON OF GOD, IS OPEN TO SERIOUS DOUBT. MANY CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT ABOUT THIS ALSO. THE GREAT METHODIST BISHOP G. BROMLEY OXNAM HAS BEEN SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE BASIC CHRISTIAN NOTION THAT JESUS WAS DELIBERATELY CRUCIFIED BY GOD IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT BE FORGIVEN FOR THEIR SINS. SAID BISHOP OXNAM, "GOD WOULD HAVE TO BE "A BULLY" TO HAVE ENGINEERED THE CRUCIFIXION AS MOST CHRISTIANS CLAIM. IF JESUS WAS NOT BORN OF A VIRGIN, MIRACULOUSLY, AND, IF HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH DOES NOT SAVE FROM SIN THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM, THEN JESUS BECOMES JUST A HUMAN BEING WHO WAS SOME SORT OF RELIGIOUS TEACHER. THIS VIEW IS STRONGLY HELD BY SUCH CHRISTIANS AS DR. J. W. NIXON, A BAPTIST PROFESSOR AT COLGATE-ROCHESTER DIVINITY SCHOOL. DR. NIXON HAS SAID, "THE FIELD IS OPEN FOR ANYONE AT ANY TIME TO MEAN MORE TO MEN THAN JESUS HAS MEANT".

THERE IS A GROWING OPINION AMONG MANY CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS THAT IF JESUS IS TO BE PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD, HE MUST BE UNDERSTOOD AS A HUMAN BEING, AND AS A JEW SPEAKING IN TERMS OF THE ANCIENT JEWISH TRADITION TO A JEWISH AUDIENCE. THIS VIEW, FOR EXAMPLE, IS FORCEFULLY MADE BY DR. FREDERICK GRANT, PROFESSOR AT THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED, "ANCIENT JUDAISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT".

IN THE FIELD OF SCHOLARSHIP, THE DISCOVERY OF THE SO-CALLED DEAD SEA SCROLLS, WRITTEN BY JEWS WHO LIVED ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO, HAS REVEALED THAT THE ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS OF JESUS AS DESCRIBED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WERE MERELY COMPARABLE WITH THE ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS OF MANY JEWS WHO LIVED IN HIS DAY. DR. H. PHILLIP HYATT, OF THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL AT VANDERBILT, HAS STATED THAT AFTER STUDYING THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS, HE WAS CONVINCED THAT CHRISTIANS NO LONGER COULD TEACH THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SOCIETY WAS OTHER THAN AN EXPRESSION OF JEWISH SOCIETY. DR. HYATT WENT ON TO SAY, "THE DISTINCTION OF CHRISTIANITY LIES SOLELY IN THE DISTINCTION OF THE CHRIST DIED AND RESURRECTED FOR THE SINS OF MAN". BUT THIS SOLE DISTINCTION IS WIPED OUT IN THE OPINION OF MEN LIKE BISHOP OXNAM AND DR. NIXON, METHODIST AND BAPTIST, RESPECTIVELY. THESE CHRISTIANS WOULD SEEM TO HOLD THAT JESUS WAS MERELY A TEACHER OF A SIMPLIFIED FORM OF JUDAISM.

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Y*Diviner**Oxford University*



OF COURSE, THE VIEWS OF A FEW COURAGEOUS CHRISTIAN LEADERS CAN NOT ELIMINATE SUDDENLY THE DOGMAS OF FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANITY TAUGHT FOR 2,000 YEARS. TWO WEEKS AGO, THE MIAMI HERALD CARRIED A MAJOR ARTICLE BY THE REVEREND COLE OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN HIALEAH WHO BITTERLY ATTACKED THE CHRISTIAN LIBERALS, AND CONCLUDED, ALONG WITH BILLY GRAHAM, "THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL THAN THAT JUSTIFICATION IS THROUGH GRACE BY FAITH IN CHRIST". THIS IS A WAY OF SAYING, JESUS IS DIVINE: HE DIED FOR OUR SINS: AND WE CANNOT BE SAVED FROM HELL-FIRE EXCEPT BY FAITH IN THIS FACT".

IN SHORT, CHRISTIANS ARE ENGAGED IN A BITTER INTERNAL BATTLE TODAY. THE SCHOLARS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SCIENTIFIC NATURE OF OUR WORLD, WISH TO HARMONIZE CHRISTIANITY WITH A MORE REASONED APPROACH TO RELIGION. THEY WISH TO DO WITH CHRISTIANITY WHAT THE ADVOCATES OF REFORM JUDAISM DID FOR JUDAISM. THE MORE SENSITIVE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AMONG THE CHRISTIANS CAN SEE THAT A RELIGION WHICH TEACHES SALVATION BY FAITH ALONE, AND NOT BY RIGHTEOUS DEEDS, EXERTS NO INFLUENCE UPON THE PRACTICAL FUNCTIONING OF OUR WORLD. THE FUNDAMENTALISTS PREACH OF SALVATION THRU GRACE, WHILE THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD DRIVE TOWARDS A HYDROGEN BOMB WAR AND EXTERMINATION. THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING UPON THE DAILY DEEDS OF CHRISTIANS IS SADLY OBVIOUS TO A GROWING SECTION OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE POINT OF OUR SERMON. SUPPOSE THAT THE MORE COURAGEOUS EXPONENTS OF A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR CHRISTIANITY WERE TO GAIN POWER? SUPPOSE THAT BISHOP PIKE AMONG THE EPISCOLIANS, BISHOP OXNAM AMONG THE METHODISTS, AND DR. NIXON AMONG THE BAPTISTS WERE TO CONVINCING THE MAJORITY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE DENOMINATIONS THAT JESUS WAS BORN NATURALLY, THAT HE WAS NOT DIVINE, AND THAT SALVATION IS NOT THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS, BUT THROUGH FAITH IN WHAT HE TAUGHT, WHICH IS BASICALLY JUDAISM? IN SPITE OF THE PRESENT SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF THIS CHANGE IN CHRISTIAN THINKING, THIS RE-CHANNELING OF CHRISTIAN FAITH MUST BE COUNTED AS A POSSIBILITY. INDEED, DR. GRANT, NOTED BIBLICAL THEOLOGIAN, URGES IN HIS RECENT BOOK THAT CHRISTIANS AND JEWS BEGIN INCLUDING IN THEIR RESPECTIVE RELIGIOUS SERVICES AT LEAST A LITTLE OF THE LITURGY OF THE OTHERS.

SUPPOSE NOW THAT A LARGE SEGMENT OF CHRISTIANS WERE TO COME TO US AND SAY, "WE KNOW NOW THAT WE WERE WRONG, YOU ALONE WERE RIGHT. WE ADMIT OUR ERRORS. WE WANT TO BELIEVE CORRECTLY. TELL US NOW, WHAT IS THE TRUTH OF YOUR TRADITION THAT WE MIGHT UNDERSTAND AND BELIEVE". SUPPOSE A CHRISTIAN CAME TO YOU AND PLEADED FOR YOUR HELP, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR RESPONSE? ARE YOU PREPARED TO TEACH A REDIRECTED CHRISTIAN OF THE DEPTH AND VERACITY OF YOUR FAITH? CAN YOU DEFINE JUDAISM <sup>and do you know wherein it really differs from</sup> CHRISTIANITY? ARE YOU SO LIVING YOUR JUDAISM THAT YOU ARE PREPARED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE TEACHING MAJORITY INSTEAD OF A MEMBER OF AN APOLOGETIC MINORITY?



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MY HEBREW PROFESSOR IN RABBINICAL SCHOOL, DR. SIMON HALKIN, ONCE TOLD US THAT HE WAS WALKING THROUGH THE MALL OF THE SCHOOL WHEN A CHRISTIAN CAUGHT HIM BY THE LAPEL, AND LOOKING UP INTO HIS EYES SAID EARNESTLY, "ARE YOU READY TO COME WITH US? WE CANNOT GO UNLESS YOU COME WITH US. ARE YOU READY?" IT IS PART OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING THAT THE MESSIAH WILL NOT RETURN UNTIL THE JEWS HAVE ACCEPTED JESUS. SO, THE TASK OF CHRISTIANITY IS NOT COMPLETE UNTIL JEWS HAVE ACCEPTED HIS DIVINITY. SUPPOSE NOW THAT A CHRISTIAN SHOULD GRAB HOLD OF YOUR LAPEL AND SAY, "I AM READY TO COME WITH YOU. PLEASE SHOW ME THE WAY". WHAT IS THE WAY THAT YOU WOULD SHOW? DO YOU KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT YOUR RELIGION TO TEACH IT WITH ENTHUSIASM AND PERSUASIVENESS? IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THE WORST TRAGEDY THAT COULD BEFALL MODERN JEWRY IS THAT THE CHRISTIANS SHOULD YIELD TO US. IF A CHRISTIAN CAME TO THE AVERAGE JEW TO SEEK HIS WISDOM, THE CHRISTIAN WOULD FIRST BECOME AWARE THAT THE HERO WAS NOT A HERO AT ALL, BUT ONE MASQUERADING AS AN ADHERENT OF THE TRUE FAITH. MORE AND MORE CHRISTIANS ARE POINTING TO JUDAISM AS THE BASIS OF THE TRUE RELIGION, BUT ARE JEWS POINTING TO IT ALSO?

#### MOST OF US ARE JEWS FOR NEGATIVE REASONS

AFTER AN INTER-FAITH LUNCHEON HERE AT BETH AM, IN WHICH I EXPLAINED SOME OF THE PRINCIPLES OF JUDAISM, A CHRISTIAN WOMAN CAME UP TO ME AND SAID, "RABBI, THERE ARE MANY REFORM JEWS BORN INTO CHRISTIANITY WHO ATTEND MY CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY". SHE MEANT, OF COURSE, THAT MANY PEOPLE BORN INTO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, REALLY DON'T ACCEPT THE DOGMAS OF THEIR CHURCH, AND REALLY BELIEVE AS WE JEWS TEACH. I FELT LIKE ANSWERING THIS WOMAN, "YOU KNOW, THERE ARE MANY WHO CALL THEMSELVES JEWS, WHO ARE MEMBERS OF MY CONGREGATION, WHO ARE NOT REALLY JEWS". I AM AFRAID THAT WE MUST FACE THE FACT THAT A LARGE PROPORTION OF AMERICAN JEWS STAY TOGETHER MORE FOR NEGATIVE REASONS THAN FOR REASONS OF FAITH. MOST OF US ARE NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE JEWS, WE ARE TOGETHER BECAUSE WE REFUSE TO SURRENDER TO THE MAJORITY, BUT NOT BECAUSE WE REALLY BELIEVE OURSELVES TO HAVE HOLD OF SOMETHING DYNAMIC AND VITAL.

MANY JEWS WILL SEND LARGE SUMS OF MONEY TO THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE TO OPPOSE THE ANTI-SEMITES, BUT THEY WILL NOT BUY A JEWISH BOOK TO LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT JUDAISM. WHAT BOOK ABOUT JUDAISM HAVE YOU READ <sup>LATELY?</sup> CHRISTIANS HAVE ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT THE PROPAGATION OF THEIR FAITH, THEY WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND A PURELY DEFENSIVE ASSOCIATION WITH JEWRY. WHEN CHRISTIANS SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH SCHOOL ON SUNDAY, THEY COME ALONG WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND GO THEMSELVES TO THE CHAPEL SERVICE, OR TO THE ADULT CHURCH SCHOOL. WE HERE IN BETH AM, HAVE INSTITUTED A SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS FOR ADULTS, AND WHILE THE TURNOUT IS ENCOURAGING, IT REPRESENTS 10% OF THE POTENTIAL. CHRISTIAN PARENTS DO NOT CONSIDER THEMSELVES MERELY AS CHAUFFEURS FOR THEIR CHILDREN; THEY THINK OF THEMSELVES AS STUDENTS <sup>AS</sup>SO. SUPPOSE NOW THEY SHOULD COME TO OUR JEWISH CHAUFFEURS AND SAY, "WE ARE READY NOW TO ADOPT YOUR RELIGION. TEACH US THE CORRECT RELIGION." HOW AWKWARD WOULD BE THE STAMMERED RESPONSE OF THE CHAUFFEUR. THE CHAUFFEUR WOULD BE THINKING, "WHAT HAS JUDAISM TO DO WITH ME. THAT'S FOR MY CHILDREN." THE CHRISTIAN WOULD BE ENTITLED TO REPLY, "IF JUDAISM MEANS NOTHING FOR YOU AS AN ADULT, WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER IT AN ADULT RELIGION?"



MY MESSAGE TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE JUDOPHILE DELINQUENTS IS THAT THIS ROSH HASHANAH OUGHT TO BE A TIME IN WHICH YOU DEDICATE YOURSELVES TO LEARNING SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR FAITH, IF YOU TAKE IT AT ALL SERIOUSLY. THE REMAINING SERMONS OF THIS HOLIDAY PERIOD SHALL BE PRIMARILY TEACHING SERMONS DESIGNED TO GIVE YOU AN UNDERSTANDING OF JUDAISM WHICH WILL SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR A CONTINUING COURSE OF STUDY. IF THINKING CHRISTIANS ARE COMING TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE RIGHT AND THAT THEY ARE WRONG, WE OUGHT TO KNOW WHAT WE HAVE THAT IS RIGHT.

WE CAN ONLY BEGIN TO ADDRESS OURSELVES TO THIS QUESTION TONIGHT. WE HAVE TIME FOR JUST A BARE APPROACH TO THE SUBJECT. FIRST, WE HAVE TO DISCARD THE NOTION THAT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM ARE SIMPLE. ON THE CONTRARY, THE DIFFERENCES ARE EXTRAORDINARILY COMPLEX. OUR OBJECTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH OF JESUS IS BASED ON OUR CONVICTION THAT THE BIRTH OF EVERY CHILD IS A MIRACLE! OUR OBJECTION TO THE THOUGHT THAT JESUS WAS UNIQUELY DIVINE LIES IN OUR FAITH THAT THERE IS A DIVINE UNIQUENESS IN EACH HUMAN BEING. FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO SEE THAT BY MAKING ONE MAN DIVINE, AND BY MAKING SALVATION POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH HIM, THEY HAVE NARROWED DOWN THE CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH THE DIVINE SPIRIT COMES INTO THE WORLD. JUDAISM HOLDS THAT EACH MAN IS MADE "IN THE IMAGE OF GOD" AND EACH MAN HAS THIS WONDROUS LINK TO THE CREATIVE SPIRIT. IN THIS SENSE, CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN A PARTICULARISTIC RELIGION, RESTRICTING THE AREA FOR CONTACT WITH THE DIVINE TO THE DEEDS AND BEING OF ONE MAN. JUDAISM, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS BEEN A UNIVERSALISTIC RELIGION, ENCOURAGING ALL MEN TO DEVELOP THE POWERS FOR GROWTH WITHIN THEMSELVES.

OUR OBJECTION, AS REFORM JEWS, TO THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SALVATION, IS NOT LIMITED TO THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS IN THAT DOCTRINE. SINCE WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN A PHYSICAL HEAVEN OR HELL, SINCE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MEN ARE BORN IN ORIGINAL SIN, SINCE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT GOD IS WAITING FOR HIS OPPORTUNITY TO ROAST THE SINNERS IN HELL, SINCE WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEVIL, SINCE THE WHOLE NOTION OF THE PRIESTLY FORGIVENESS OF SINS HAS LONG BEEN DISCARDED BY JUDAISM, WE HAVE OPPOSED THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SALVATION WHETHER IT INVOLVED JESUS OR NOT.

THE CHRISTIANS TEACH THROUGH THE DOCTRINE OF VICARIOUS ATONEMENT, THAT THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS ATONED FOR THE SINS OF ALL MEN WHO WILL BELIEVE IN THIS COSMIC MIRACLE. AS JEWS, WE OPPOSE THIS DOCTRINE, NOT MERELY BECAUSE OF THE ROLE OF JESUS WITHIN IT, BUT BECAUSE WE FEEL THAT A MAN IS FORGIVEN FOR HIS SINS ONLY BY HIS OWN CORRECTIVE DEEDS, ONLY BY HIS OWN REDEMPTIVE ACTIONS. HERE AGAIN, WE HAVE TAUGHT THAT A MAN "SAVES" HIMSELF NOT BY PROJECTING HIS SINS ON TO ANOTHER PERSON, BUT BY CONFRONTING HIS OWN EVIL, AND BY REVERSING HIS FIELD, BY ADMITTING HIS ERRORS AND LIVING OUT HIS OWN SALVATION. THE WHOLE EMPHASIS IN JUDAISM IS ON THE ABILITY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO LIFT HIMSELF, AND THIS WE SAY IS THE ESSENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS PROCESS, THE PROCESS OF LIFTING ONESELF, OF GROWING INTO ONE'S GREATER SELF.



THIS POINT IS MADE CRYSTAL CLEAR IN A STORY TOLD ABOUT THE HASIDIC RABBI ZUSYA. RABBI ZUSYA TOLD HIS DISCIPLES THAT HE WAS AFRAID TO DIE. HE SAID THAT HE WAS AFRAID OF WHAT THE HEAVENLY TRIBUNAL WOULD ASK HIM IN JUDGING HIM. ONE OF THE DISCIPLES SAID, "MASTER, ARE YOU AFRAID THAT THEY WILL ASK YOU - 'WERE YOU LIKE MOSES'?" "NO", REPLIED RABBI ZUSYA, "I AM AFRAID THAT THEY WILL ASK ME IF I WAS LIKE RABBI ZUSYA"! THE BASIC QUESTION JUDAISM TEACHES IS, ARE YOU LIKE YOURSELF! DO YOU ATTEMPT TO REALIZE THE GREAT POTENTIAL THAT IS WITHIN YOU? ARE YOU LIKE THE REAL YOU OR DO YOU ACCEPT A SMALL DEFINITION OF YOURSELF AND LIVE IN THE BASEMENT OF YOUR BEING?

CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN A RELIGION TEACHING SALVATION THROUGH FAITH. JUDAISM HAS TAUGHT SALVATION THROUGH THE DEED. WE HAVE ALWAYS TAUGHT THAT WE CAN REACH NO HIGHER THAN WHEN WE STOOP TO HELP OUR FELLOW MAN. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO VIEWS IS A MATTER OF TOTAL PERSPECTIVE WHICH PERMEATES INTO EVERY DETAIL OF THE TWO RELIGIONS. CHRISTIANITY CAN OMIT ALL REFERENCE TO JESUS AND TO THE SAVING GRACE OF THE CRUCIFIXION, AND STILL NOT BECOME JUDAISM. TO DO THIS, CHRISTIANITY WOULD HAVE TO TURN ITS FACE FROM THE "WORLD TO COME" TO THIS WORLD. IT WOULD HAVE TO BECOME CONCERNED PRIMARILY NOT WITH MAN'S SINFULNESS, BUT WITH HIS POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT. TO BECOME LIKE JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY WOULD HAVE TO INSIST NOT ON THE PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD TO COME, BUT ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THIS WORLD INTO THE "WORLD TO COME."

TO BECOME ONE WITH JUDAISM, FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANITY MUST NOT ONLY LAY ASIDE THE DOGMAS CONCERNING THE DIVINE JESUS, IT MUST ALSO ADDRESS ITSELF TO THE REGENERATION OF THIS WORLD BY MEN CAPABLE OF LIFTING THEMSELVES. IN THE TRADITIONAL PRAYER, KNOWN AS THE AHLAYNU, WHICH WE IN REFORM JUDAISM CALL THE ADORATION, THE JEW IS REMINDED THAT HIS FOREMOST TASK IS

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TO TRANSFORM HIMSELF AND THE COMMUNITY ALONG THE LINES OF THE IDEAL PATTERN THAT WE CALL THE - "THE KINGDOM OF GOD". THE FURTHER OUR WORLD SEEMS TO STRAY FROM THIS IDEAL, THE MORE COMPELLING IS THE CALL FOR THE REALIZATION OF THIS GOAL. THIS IS THE PERSPECTIVE OF OUR ACTIVISTIC FAITH. FROM THIS STARTING POINT, WE BEGIN OUR STUDY OF JUDAISM SO THAT WE WILL KNOW HOW TO TEACH OTHERS WHO COME TO US TO LEARN THE WISDOM OF OUR FATHERS.