

**Session 2 – October 25 (Beth El Library)**

Background on *Jerusalem*. Circumstances in which it was written and its reception.

Discussion of Part 2 of:

Handout - M. Mendelssohn (tr. A. Arkush), Jerusalem or on Religious Power and Judaism (Brandeis 1983) pp. 77 – 139

Optional Reading:

B. Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (Elwes Translation, Dover Reprint 2004)

J. Locke, Letter Concerning Toleration, (Hackett Reprint 1983)

J-J. Rousseau, Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar, (Reprint 2008)

G. E. Lessing, The Education of the Human Race

## SECTION II

THE ESSENTIAL point of this contention—a contention that flatly contradicts an otherwise universally held principle—I already attempted to set forth on a previous occasion. Mr. Dohm's excellent work *On the Civil Improvement of the Jews* led to the inquiry: *To what extent should a naturalized colony be permitted to retain its own jurisdiction in ecclesiastical and civil matters in general and the right of excommunication and expulsion in particular?* Legal power of the church—the right of excommunication—if a colony is to have these, it must have been enfeoffed with them, as it were, by the state or by the mother church. Someone who possesses this right by virtue of the social contract must have ceded or relinquished a part of it to the colony, insofar as it concerns the latter. But what if no one can possess such a right? What if neither the state nor the mother church herself can claim any right to use coercion in religious matters? If according to the principles of sound reason, the divinity of which we must all acknowledge, neither state nor church would be authorized to assume any right in matters of faith other than the right to teach, any power other than the power to persuade, any discipline other than the discipline of reason and principles? If this can be proved and made clear to common sense, no explicit contract, much less usage or prescrip-

tion, will be powerful enough to maintain a right that runs counter to it; all ecclesiastical coercion will be unlawful, all external power in religious matters will be violent usurpation; and if this is so, the mother church may not and cannot bestow a right which does not belong to it, nor give away a power which it unjustly arrogated to itself. It may be that this abuse, through some common prejudice or other, has become so widespread and so deeply rooted in the minds of men that it would not be feasible or advisable to abolish it all at once, without wise preparation. But in that case, it is at least our duty to oppose it from afar, and, first of all, to set up a dam against its further expansion. If we cannot eradicate an evil completely, we must at least cut off its roots.

This was the result of my reflections, and I dared to submit my thoughts to the judgment of the public,\* even though I could not at that time state my reasons as fully as has been done in the preceding section.

I have the good fortune to live in a state in which these ideas of mine are neither new nor particularly striking. The wise monarch by whom it is ruled has, from the beginning of his reign, made it his constant purpose to put mankind in possession of its full rights in matters of faith. He is the first among the monarchs of this century who has never lost sight of the total import of the wise maxim, "*Men were created for each other. Instruct your neighbor, or tolerate him!*"\*\* He certainly left intact, with wise

\* In the Preface to Menasseh ben Israel's *Defense of the Jews*.

\*\* These are the words of my late friend, Mr. Iselin, in one of his last papers in *Ephemerides of Mankind*. The memory of this truly wise man should be unforgettable to every one of his contemporaries who esteems virtue and truth. It is, therefore, all the more incomprehensible to me how I could have overlooked him when mentioning the beneficent men who first sought to propagate the principles of unlimited tolerance in Germany. It was he who taught them to their fullest extent, indeed earlier and in a clearer voice than anyone else in our language. It is with pleasure that I quote here a passage from [his] review of my *Preface to Rabbi Menasseh in Ephemerides* (No. 10, October 1782, p. 429), where this subject is referred to, in order to do justice, after his death, to a man who was so just to everyone in his lifetime: "The editor

moderation, the privileges of external religion he found installed. It will, perhaps, still take centuries of culture and preparation before men understand that privileges on account of religion are neither lawful nor, actually, useful and that it would therefore be a veritable boon totally to abolish all civil discrimination on account of religion. Nevertheless, under the rule of this wise man the nation has become so much accustomed to tolerance and for-

of *Ephemerides of Mankind* agrees entirely also with what Mr. Mendelssohn says about the legislative rights of the authorities concerning the opinions held by the citizens and about the agreements which individuals may enter into among themselves with regard to such opinions. And he adopted this way of thinking not only since Mr. Dohm and Mr. Lessing wrote, but he already professed it more than thirty years ago. By the same token, he also acknowledged long ago that what one calls religious tolerance is not a favor, but a duty on the part of the government. No one could have expressed himself more clearly than he did when he wrote in the following manner (*Dreams of a Friend of Mankind*, Vol. II, pp. 12 and 13): "If, therefore, one or more religions are introduced into his states, a wise and just sovereign will not permit himself to infringe upon their rights to the advantage of his own. Every church, every association, which has divine worship for its aim is a society to which the sovereign owes protection and justice. To deny this to them, even for the sake of favoring the best religion, would be contrary to the spirit of true piety."

"With respect to civil rights, the members of all religions are equal, with the sole exception of those whose opinions run counter to the principles of human and civil duties. Such a religion cannot lay claim to any rights in the state. Those who have the misfortune of being attached to it can expect tolerance only as long as they do not disturb the social order by unjust and harmful acts. If they perform such acts, they must be punished, *not for their opinions but for their deeds*." What is said, however, in the preceding passage (p. 423) concerning some erroneous opinion about middlemen in commerce—an opinion allegedly ascribed by me, without justification, to the editor of *Ephemerides*—stands in need of correction. It was not Mr. Iselin, but another, otherwise judicious, writer who had published a paper in *Ephemerides*, in which he asserted the harmfulness of middlemen, a view that was, in fact, refuted by the editor [Mr. Iselin].

The remarks made in the same article against my coreligionists, I pass over in silence. This is not the place to defend the latter, and I leave this business to Mr. Dohm, who can do it with less partiality. Besides, one quite easily forgives the prejudice of a citizen of Basel against a people which he could have had an opportunity of knowing only from its vagrant section or from the *Observations d'un Alsacien*.

bearance in matters of faith that coercion, excommunication and the right of expulsion have, at least, ceased to be popular concepts.

But what must bring true joy to the heart of every honest man is the earnestness and the zeal with which several worthy members of the local clergy endeavor to spread these principles of reason, or rather of the true fear of God, among the people. Indeed, some of them have not hesitated to give full approval to the arguments advanced by me against the universally adored idol of ecclesiastical law and to applaud their conclusions in public. How lofty must be the notions these men have of their vocation if they show such readiness to disregard all secondary considerations! What noble confidence they must place in the power of truth, if they dare to set it squarely on its own pedestal, without any other prop! Even though otherwise we should differ ever so much in our principles, I could not help but express my wholehearted admiration and respect for them on account of these sublime convictions.

Some other readers and reviewers behaved quite strangely in this matter. They did not indeed dispute my arguments but, on the contrary, allowed them to stand. No one attempted to show the slightest connection between doctrinal opinions and rights. No one discovered a flaw in the conclusion that my assent or failure to assent to certain *eternal truths* gives me no right over things, no authority to dispose of goods and minds according to my own pleasure. Yet, nevertheless, they were startled by the immediate conclusions of my arguments as if by an unexpected apparition. What? So there is no ecclesiastical law at all? So everything that so many authors and, perhaps, we ourselves, have written, read, heard and argued about ecclesiastical law is devoid of any foundation? This, it seemed to them, was going too far; but there must be some hidden flaw in the conclusion, if the result is not necessarily to be true.

In the *Göttingische Anzeigen*, the reviewer quotes my assertion that there exists no right to persons and things which is connected with doctrinal opinions, and that all the contracts and agreements

in the world cannot make such a right possible; and he then adds, "all this is new and harsh. First principles are negated, and all dispute comes to an end."

Indeed, it is a question of first principles which one refuses to recognize. But should there be an end to all dispute on account of this? Must one never doubt principles? If so, men of the Pythagorean school could dispute forever how their teacher happened to come by his golden hip, and no one would dare to ask: Did Pythagoras actually have a golden hip?

Every game has its laws, every contest its rules, according to which the umpire decides. If you want to win the stake or carry away the prize, you must submit to the principles. But whoever wishes to reflect on the theory of games may certainly examine the fundamentals. Just as in a court of law. A criminal court judge who had to try a murderer induced him to confess his crime. But the wicked fellow maintained that he knew no reason why it should not be just as permissible to murder a man as to kill an animal, for his own advantage. To this fiend the judge could justly reply: "You deny the basic principles, lad! With you all dispute is at an end. But you will at least comprehend that we, too, are permitted, for our own advantage, to rid the earth of such a monster." Yet the priest charged with preparing him for death ought not to have answered him in this manner. He was obligated to engage him in discussion about the principles themselves and to remove his doubts, if he entertained them in earnest. It is no different in the arts and sciences. Each one of them presupposes certain fundamental concepts, of which it gives no further account. Nevertheless, there is not a single point in the entire sum of human knowledge that is to be placed beyond question, not one iota that may not be subjected to investigation. If my doubt lies beyond the limits of *this* tribunal, I must be referred to another. Somewhere I must be heard and directed along the right path.

The case which the reviewer cites as an example, in order to refute me, completely misses the mark. "Let us," he says, "apply

them (the denied principles) to a particular case. The Jewish community in Berlin appoints a person who is to circumcise its male children according to the laws of its religion. This person receives, by agreement, certain rights to such and such an income, to a particular rank in the community, etc. After a while, he has doubts concerning the doctrine or law of circumcision; he refuses to fulfill the contract. Does he still retain the rights he acquired by contract? The same applies everywhere."

And in what sense "everywhere"? I will admit the possibility of the case which, it is to be hoped, will never occur.\* What is this example—adduced as it is ad hominem—supposed to prove? Surely not that, according to reason, rights over persons and goods are connected with doctrinal opinions, and are based on them? Or that positive laws and contracts can render such a right possible? According to the reviewer's own statement, it is chiefly a question of these two points, neither of which is found in the case he invented. For the circumciser would enjoy his income and rank not because he approves of the doctrinal opinion, but because of the operation he performs in place of the fathers of the families. Now, if his conscience prevents him from continuing this labor, he will, of course, have to give up the reward previously stipulated. But what does this have in common with the privileges granted to a person because he assents to one or another doctrine or because he accepts or rejects this or that eternal truth?

The only case which might bear some resemblance to this fictitious example is the one in which the state employs and remunerates teachers who are supposed to propagate certain doctrines in

\* Among the Jews, one receives neither a remuneration nor a specific rank in the community for the office of circumcision. On the contrary, whoever possesses the [requisite] skill performs this meritorious act with pleasure. Indeed, the father, who, properly speaking, is obliged to perform the duty of circumcising his son, usually has to choose among several competitors who apply for it. The only reward which the circumciser can expect for his performance consists in his being seated at the head of the table at the festive meal following the circumcision, and in his saying the blessing after the meal—According to my seemingly new and harsh theory, all religious offices ought to be filled in like manner.

such and such a manner, but who later feel conscience-bound to depart from the doctrines prescribed to them. In the preceding section I dealt at length with this case which so often has occasioned loud and heated disputes, and I sought to discuss it in accordance with my principles. But it seems to me to accord just as little with the paradigm mentioned. One may recall the distinction I made between actions which are demanded as actions and those that merely signify convictions. A foreskin is cut off: the circumciser may think and believe whatever he pleases of the practice itself, just as a creditor who obtained satisfaction through the courts is repaid, no matter what the debtor may think of his obligation to pay. But how can one apply the same standard to a teacher of religious truths, whose teachings can certainly bring but small profit if mind and heart do not agree with them, if they do not flow from inner conviction? In the passage cited I already indicated that I would not dare to prescribe to a hard-pressed teacher who finds himself in such a predicament how to behave as an honest man, or to reproach him if he acted otherwise, and that, in my opinion, everything depends on the time, the circumstances, and the state in which he finds himself. Who can in this matter adversely judge the conscientiousness of his neighbor? Who can force him to use a criterion which he may not consider appropriate for such a critical decision?

However, this investigation does not lie entirely in my path, and has little in common with the two questions on which everything depends, and which I shall repeat here once more:

1. Are there, according to the laws of reason, rights over persons and things that are connected with doctrinal opinions, and are acquired by giving assent to them?

2. Can contracts and agreements produce *perfect* rights, engender compulsory duties, where, in the absence of any contract, imperfect rights and duties are not already in existence?

One of these propositions must be shown to follow from natural law, if I am to be found guilty of error. The fact that one finds my assertion new and harsh is of no consequence, as long as

it does not contradict the truth. I still do not know of any author who has touched upon these questions and examined them as they apply to ecclesiastical power and the right of excommunication. They all start from the point of view that there is a *jus circa sacra*; only everyone fashions it in his own way, and enfeoffs with it sometimes an invisible person, sometimes this or that visible person. Even Hobbes, who ventured to move in this respect farther than anyone else from the established concepts, could not completely disengage himself from this idea. He concedes such a right, and only searches for the person to whom it may be entrusted with the least harm. All believe that the meteor is visible and only strive to fix its altitude by different systems. It would not be an unheard-of occurrence if an unprejudiced person, looking straight at the place in the sky where it was supposed to appear, were to convince himself, with the aid of much weaker capacities, of the truth that no such meteor could be seen.

I come now to a far more important objection that has been raised against me, and which has chiefly caused me to write this work. Once more, without refuting my arguments, one has opposed to them the sacred authority of the Mosaic religion which I profess. What are the laws of Moses but a system of religious government, of the power and right of religion? "Reason may agree," says an anonymous author\* in reference to this subject, "that all ecclesiastical law and the power of an ecclesiastical court by which opinions are enforced or constrained is absurd; that no case can be conceived in which such a law is well-founded; and that art can create nothing for which nature has not produced the seed. But as reasonable as everything you say on this subject may be," he apostrophizes me, "it directly contradicts the faith of your fathers in the strict sense, and the principles of the [Jewish] church, which are not simply assumed by the commentators, but are expressly laid down in the Books of Moses themselves. According to common sense, there can be no worship

\* *The Searching for Light and Right in a Letter to Mr. M. Mendelssohn*, Berlin, 1782.

without conviction, and every act of worship resulting from coercion ceases to be one. The observance of divine commandments from fear of the punishment attached to them is slavery, which, according to purified concepts, can never be pleasing to God. Yet it is true that Moses connects coercion and positive punishment with the nonobservance of duties related to the worship of God. His statutory ecclesiastical law decrees the punishment of stoning and death for the sabbath-breaker, the blasphemer of the divine name, and others who depart from his laws." "The whole ecclesiastical system of Moses," he says elsewhere, "did not consist only of teaching and instruction in duties but was at the same time connected with the strictest ecclesiastical laws. The arm of the church was provided with the sword of the curse. Cursed be he, it is written, who does not obey all the words of this law to do them, etc. And this curse was in the hands of the first ministers of the church." "Ecclesiastical law armed with power has always been one of the principal cornerstones of the Jewish religion itself, and a primary article in the credal system of your fathers. How, then, can you, my dear Mr. Mendelssohn, remain an adherent of the faith of your fathers and shake the entire structure by removing its cornerstones, when you contest the ecclesiastical law that has been given through Moses and purports to be founded on divine revelation?"

This objection cuts me to the heart. I must admit that the notions given here of Judaism, except for some indiscretion in the terms used, are taken to be correct even by many of my coreligionists. Now if this were the truth, and I were convinced of it, I would, indeed, shamefully retract my propositions and bring reason into captivity under the yoke of—but no! Why should I dissimulate? Authority can humble but not instruct; it can suppress reason but not put it in fetters. Were it true that the word of God so manifestly contradicted my reason, the most I could do would be to impose silence upon my reason. But my unrefuted arguments would, nevertheless, reappear in the most secret recesses of my heart, be transformed into disquieting doubts, and the

doubts would resolve themselves into childlike prayers, into fervent supplications for illumination. I would call out with the Psalmist:

*Lord, send me Thy light, Thy truth,  
that they may guide and bring me  
unto Thy holy mountain, unto Thy dwelling place!*

It is, in any event, harsh and offensive to impute to me—as do the anonymous *Searcher for Light and Right* and Mr. Mörschel, the non-anonymous author of a postscript to the work of the “Searcher”—the odious intention of overthrowing the religion I profess and of renouncing it surreptitiously, as it were, though not expressly. Imputative inferences like these ought to be banished forever from the intercourse of learned men. Not everyone who holds a certain opinion is prepared to accept, at the same time, all the consequences flowing from it, even if they are ever so correctly deduced. Imputations of this kind are hateful and lead only to bitterness and strife, by which truth rarely gains anything.

Indeed, the Searcher goes so far as to address me in the following manner: “Is it possible that the remarkable step you have now taken could actually be a step toward the fulfillment of the wishes which Lavater formerly addressed to you? After that appeal, you must undoubtedly have reflected further on the subject of Christianity and, with the impartiality of an incorruptible searcher after truth, weighed more exactly the value of the Christian systems of religion which lie before your eyes in manifold forms and modifications. Perhaps you have now come closer to the faith of the Christians, having torn yourself from the servitude of iron churchly bonds, and having commenced teaching the liberal system of a more rational worship of God, which constitutes the true character of the Christian religion, thanks to which we have escaped coercion and burdensome ceremonies, and thanks to which we no longer link the true worship of God either to Samaria or Jerusalem, but see the essence of religion, in the words of our

teacher, wherever the true adorers of God pray in spirit and in truth.”

This suggestion is advanced with sufficient solemnity and pathos. But, my dear sir, shall I take this step without first delibrating whether it will indeed extricate me from the confusion in which you think I find myself? If it be true that the cornerstones of my house are dislodged, and the structure threatens to collapse, do I act wisely if I remove my belongings from the lower to the upper floor for safety? Am I more secure there? Now Christianity, as you know, is built upon Judaism, and if the latter falls, it must necessarily collapse with it into *one* heap of ruins. You say that my conclusions undermine the foundation of Judaism, and you offer me the safety of your upper floor; must I not suppose that you mock me? Surely, the Christian who is in earnest about *light and truth* will not challenge the Jew to a fight when there seems to be a contradiction between truth and truth, between Scripture and reason. He will rather join him in an effort to discover the groundlessness of the contradiction. For this is their common concern. Whatever else they have to settle between themselves may be postponed to a later time. For the present, they must join forces to avert the danger, and either discover the paralogism or show that it is only a seeming contradiction that has frightened them.

I could, in this way, avoid the trap, without engaging in any further discussion with the Searcher. But what advantage would I derive from such a subterfuge? His associate, Mr. Mörschel, without knowing me personally, has seen all too deeply into my game. As he avers, he “discovered in the rebuked preface slight indications which lead him to conclude that I am as far removed from the religion into which I was born as from the one which he received from his fathers.” To substantiate his assumption, after referring to p. IV, 1. 21 (where I mention together, in one line, pagans, Jews, Moslems, and adherents of natural religion, and ask for tolerance for all of them), p. V, 1. 8 (in which I speak again of tolerance for naturalists), and finally p. XXXVII, 1. 13

(where I speak of *eternal truths* which religion should teach), he literally quotes the following passage: "Reason's house of worship needs no locked doors. It does not have to guard anything inside, nor does it have to prevent anyone from entering. Whoever wishes to be a quiet observer, or to participate, is most welcome to the devout in his hour of edification." One sees that, in Mr. Mörschel's opinion, no adherent of revelation would plead so openly for toleration of naturalists, or speak so loudly of *eternal truths* which religion should teach, and that a true Christian or Jew should hesitate before he calls his house of prayer "reason's house of devotion."

I certainly do not know what could have led him to these ideas; yet they contain the entire ground of his assumption and induce him, as he says, not to invite me "to profess the religion he professes or to refute it if I am unable to join it, but to entreat me, in the name of all who have the cause of truth at heart, to express myself clearly and distinctly with respect to what must always be the most important thing for man." His intention, he assures me, is certainly not to convert me; nor does he wish to be the cause of objections against the religion from which he expects contentment in this life and unlimited felicity thereafter. Nevertheless, he would very much like—What do I know of what the dear man does not want and nevertheless still wants? In the first place, therefore, in order to calm the kindhearted author of this letter [let me state]: I have never publicly contested the Christian religion, nor shall I ever engage in dispute with its true adherents. And lest one should again accuse me of having wished by this declaration to intimate, as it were, that I have in my hands triumphant weapons with which to combat this faith, if I were so inclined; that the Jews possess secret information, hidden documents which throw a different light on the facts than the one in which the Christians present them or other such pretenses, the likes of which one considered us capable of inventing or actually imputed to us—in order to remove any suspicion of this kind once and for all, I hereby testify before the eyes of the public that I

at least have *nothing new* to advance against the faith of the Christians; that, as far as I know, we are not acquainted with any other accounts of the historical facts, and can present no other documents than those which are universally known; that I, therefore, for my part, have nothing to advance that has not already been stated and repeated countless times by Jews and naturalists, and to which the opposite party has not replied time and again. It seems to me that in the course of so many centuries, and particularly in our own, which is so fond of writing, enough has been said and resaid in this matter. Since the parties have nothing new to adduce, it is high time to close the books. Let him who has eyes see, let him who has reason examine, and live according to his conviction. What is the use of champions standing by the roadside and offering battle to every passerby? Too much talk about a matter does not render it any clearer, but rather obscures whatever faint light of truth there is. Take any proposition you please and talk, write or argue about it—for or against it, often and long enough—and you can be sure that it will continue to lose more and more of whatever clearness it may once have possessed. Too much detail obstructs the view of the whole. Mr. Mörschel has, therefore, nothing to fear. Through me he shall certainly not become the cause of objections against a religion from which so many of my fellow men expect contentment in this life and unlimited felicity thereafter.

I must, however, also do justice to his searching eye. What he saw was, in part, not wrong. It is true that *I recognize no eternal truths other than those that are not merely comprehensible to human reason but can also be demonstrated and verified by human powers*. Yet Mr. Mörschel is misled by an incorrect conception of Judaism when he supposes that I cannot maintain this without departing from the religion of my fathers. On the contrary, I consider this an essential point of the Jewish religion and believe that this doctrine constitutes a characteristic difference between it and the Christian one. To say it briefly: I believe that Judaism knows of no revealed religion in the sense in which



Christians understand this term. The Israelites possess a divine *legislation*—laws, commandments, ordinances, rules of life, instruction in the will of God as to how they should conduct themselves in order to attain temporal and eternal felicity. Propositions and prescriptions of this kind were revealed to them by Moses in a miraculous and supernatural manner, but no doctrinal opinions, no saving truths, no universal propositions of reason. These the Eternal reveals to us and to all other men, at all times, through *nature* and *thing*, but never through *word* and *script*.

I fear that this may be astonishing, and again seem new and harsh to some readers. Invariably, little attention has been paid to this difference; one has taken *supernatural legislation* for a *supernatural revelation of religion*, and spoken of Judaism as if it were simply an earlier revelation of religious propositions and doctrines necessary for man's salvation. I shall, therefore, have to explain myself more fully. In order to avoid being misunderstood, I must ascend to prior [fundamental] ideas so that my reader and I will set out from the same position and be able to proceed at the same pace.

One calls eternal truths those propositions which are not subject to time and remain the same in all eternity. They are either *necessary*, in themselves *immutable*, or *contingent*; that is, their permanence is based either on their *essence*—they are true in this and no other way because they are *conceivable* in this and no other way—or on their *reality*: they are universally true, they exist in this and no other way because they became *real* in this and no other way; because of all the possible [truths] of their kind they are the *best*, in this and no other way. In other words, necessary as well as contingent truths flow from a common source, the source of all truth: the former from the *intellect*, the latter from the *will of God*. The propositions of necessary truths are true because God *represents them to himself* in this and no other way; the contingent, because God approved them and considered them to be in conformity with his wisdom in this and no other way. Examples of the first kind are the propositions of pure mathe-

matics and of the art of logic; examples of the second are the general propositions of physics and psychology, the laws of nature, according to which this universe, the world of bodies and the world of spirits, is governed. The former are immutable even for the Omnipotent, because God himself cannot render his infinite intellect changeable; the latter, however, are subject to the will of God and are immutable only insofar as it pleases his holy will, that is, insofar as they are in accord with his intentions. His omnipotence can introduce other laws in their place and can, as often as it may be useful, allow exceptions to occur.

Besides these eternal truths, there are also *temporal, historical truths*; things which occurred once and may never occur again; propositions which have become true at one point in time and space through a confluence of causes and effects, and which, therefore, can only be conceived as true in respect to that point in time and space. Of this kind are all the truths of history, taken in its broadest sense; things of remote ages, which once took place, and are reported to us, but which we ourselves can never observe.

Just as these classes of propositions and truths differ by nature, so, too, do they differ in respect to their means of persuasion, or in the manner in which men convince themselves and others of them. The doctrines of the first kind, or the necessary truths, are founded upon *reason*, that is, on an immutable coherence and essential connection of ideas, according to which they either presuppose or exclude one another. All mathematical and logical proofs are of this kind. They all show the possibility or impossibility of thinking certain ideas in association with others. Whoever wishes to instruct his fellow man in them must not commend them to his belief, but should force them, as it were, upon his reason. He should not cite authorities and invoke the credibility of men who maintained exactly the same thing, but dissect the ideas into their essential elements and present them to his pupil, one by one, until his internal sense perceives their junctures and connections. The instructions which we may give others is, in Socrates'

apt phrase, but a kind of midwifery. We cannot put anything into their minds which is not actually contained there already; yet we can facilitate the effort it would cost to bring to light what was hidden, that is, to render the unperceived perceptible and evident.

Besides reason, the truths of the second class require *observation* as well. If we wish to know what laws the Creator has prescribed for his creation, and according to what general rules the changes in it take place, we must experience, observe, and test individual cases; that is, we must, in the first place, make use of the evidence of the senses; and next, determine by means of reason what many particular cases have in common. Here, we shall indeed be obliged to accept many things, on faith and authority, from others. Our life span is not sufficient for us to experience everything ourselves; and we must, in many cases, rely on credible fellow men; we must assume that their observations and the experiments they profess to have made are correct. But we trust them only insofar as we know and are convinced that the objects themselves still exist, and that the experiments and observations may be repeated and tested by ourselves or by others who have the opportunity and the ability to do so. Indeed, if the result is important and has a considerable influence on our own felicity, or on that of others, we are far less satisfied with the report of the most credible witnesses, who tell us of the observations and experiments; but we seek an opportunity to repeat them ourselves, and to become convinced of them by their own evidence. Thus, the Siamese, for instance, may by all means trust the reports of the Europeans that in their part of the world water becomes solid and bears heavy burdens at certain times. They may accept this on faith, and, at all events, present it in their physics text books as an established fact, on the assumption that the observation can always be repeated and verified. But should there be any danger of lives being lost, should they have to entrust themselves or their kith and kin to this solidified element, they would be far less satisfied with the testimony of others, they would seek to convince themselves of its truth by various experiences, observations, and experiments of their own.

Historical truths, however—those passages which, as it were, occur but once in the book of nature—must be explained by themselves, or remain incomprehensible; that is, they can only be perceived, by means of the senses, by those who were present at the time and place of their occurrence in nature. Everyone else must accept them on authority and testimony. Furthermore, those who live at another time must rely altogether on the credibility of the testimony, for the thing attested no longer exists. The object itself and the direct observation of it, to which they may wish to appeal, are no longer to be found in nature. The senses cannot convince them of the truth. In historical matters, the authority and credibility of the narrator constitute the only evidence. Without testimony we cannot be convinced of any historical truth. Without authority, the truth of history vanishes along with the event itself.

As often, therefore, as it accords with the intentions of God that men be convinced of any particular truth, his wisdom grants them the most appropriate means of arriving at it. In the case of a necessary truth, it grants them the requisite degree of reason. If a law of nature is to be made known to them, it gives them the spirit of observation; and if a historical truth is to be preserved for posterity, it confirms its historical certainty and places the narrator's credibility beyond all doubt. It seems to me that only where historical truths are concerned does it befit the supreme wisdom to instruct men in a human manner, that is, through words and writing, and to cause extraordinary things and miracles to occur in nature, whenever this is required to confirm authority and credibility. Eternal truths, on the other hand, insofar as they are useful for men's salvation and felicity, are taught by God in a manner more appropriate to the Deity; not by sounds or written characters, which are comprehensible here and there, to this or that individual, but through creation itself, and its internal relations, which are legible and comprehensible to all men. Nor does He confirm them by miracles, which effect only historical belief; but He awakens the mind, which He has created, and gives it an opportunity to observe the relations of things, to observe itself,

and to become convinced of the truths which it is destined to understand here below.

I therefore do not believe that the powers of human reason are insufficient to persuade men of the eternal truths which are indispensable to human felicity, and that God had to reveal them in a supernatural manner. Those who hold this view detract from the omnipotence or the goodness of God, on the one hand, what they believe they are adding to his goodness on the other. He was, in their opinion, good enough to reveal to men those truths on which their felicity depends, but not omnipotent, or not good enough to grant them the powers to discover these truths themselves. Moreover, by this assertion one makes the necessity of a supernatural revelation more universal than revelation itself. If, therefore, mankind must be corrupt and miserable without revelation, why has the far greater part of mankind lived without *true revelation*, from time immemorial? Why must the two Indies wait until it pleases the Europeans to send them a few comforters to bring them a message without which they can, according to this opinion, live neither virtuously nor happily? To bring them a message which, in their circumstances and state of knowledge, they can neither rightly comprehend nor properly utilize?

According to the concepts of true Judaism, all the inhabitants of the earth are destined to felicity; and the means of attaining it are as widespread as mankind itself, as charitably dispensed as the means of warding off hunger and other natural needs. Here men are left to brute nature, which inwardly feels its powers and uses them, without being able to express itself in words and speech except in the most defective manner and, as it were, stammeringly. In another place, they are aided by science and art, shining brightly through words, images, and metaphors, by which the perceptions of the inner sense are transformed into a clear knowledge of signs and established as such. As often as it was useful, Providence caused wise men to arise in every nation on earth, and granted them the gift of looking with a clearer eye into themselves as well as all around them to contemplate God's works and

communicate their knowledge to others. But not at all times is this necessary or useful. Very often, as the Psalmist says, *the babbling of children and infants will suffice to confound the enemy*. The man who lives simply has not yet devised the objections which so greatly confuse the sophist. For him the word *nature*, the mere sound, has not yet become a being that seeks to supplant the Deity. He still knows but little of the difference between direct and indirect causality; and he hears and sees instead the all-vivifying power of the Deity everywhere—in every sunrise, in every rain that falls, in every flower that blossoms and in every lamb that grazes in the meadow and rejoices in its own existence. This mode of conceiving things has in it something defective, but it leads directly to the recognition of an invisible, omnipotent being, to whom we owe all the good which we enjoy. But as soon as an Epicurus or a Lucretius, a Helvétius or a Hume criticizes the inadequacy of this mode of conceiving things and (which is to be charged to human weakness) strays too far in the other direction, and wants to carry on a deceptive game with the word *nature*, Providence again raises up other men among the people who separate prejudice from truth, correct the exaggerations on both sides, and show that truth can endure even if prejudice is rejected. At bottom, the material is always the same,—there endowed with all the raw but vigorous juices which nature gives it, here with the refined good taste of art, easier to digest, but only for the weak. On balance, men's doings and the morality of their conduct can perhaps expect just as good results from the crude mode of conceiving things as from these refined and purified concepts. Many a people is destined by Providence to wander through this cycle of ideas, indeed, sometimes it must wander through it more than once; but the quantity and weight of its morality may, perhaps, remain, on balance, about the same during all these various epochs.

I, for my part, cannot conceive of the education of the human race as my late friend Lessing imagined it under the influence of I-don't-know-which historian of mankind. One pictures the collective entity of the human race as an individual person and believes