

man's relation to God expresses itself through a cult. To be sure, Mosaic religion did not have images of YHWH, but this is not owing to a radical rejection of images. The fact is that neither in the Torah nor in the prophets is the matter of representing YHWH a crucial issue. Both the desert calf and the two calves of Jeroboam are considered by their opponents to be fetishes, not images of God. The ban on making idols and other fixtures follows as a separate prohibition from the ban on having other gods. The images are thus not conceived of as representations of other gods, but as objects which in themselves belong to the category 'other gods'; they do not symbolize, they *are* other gods. Israelite religion never knew of nor had to sustain a polemic against representations of YHWH. Intuitively, it rejected representations of God because such images were regarded in paganism as an embodiment of the gods, and as such, objects of a cult. This idea was to Israel the very essence of idolatry; hence from the very onset it rejected without a polemic representation of YHWH. This tacit decision was the crucial moment in the battle against idol-worship.

"But the biblical objection to the employment of figures in the cult is not primary or fundamental. Later zealots objected to every sort of image, but this was evidently not the early position. Israelite religion rejected from the first figures worshipped as gods; it did not forbid cultic figures which were not objects of adoration." *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago, 1960), pp. 236-237.

Buber agrees essentially with Kaufmann, but approaches the problem from a different angle. See Martin Buber, *Moses*, Oxford, East and West Library, 1947, pp. 124-127.

The Hebrew God was originally called a "god of way" differing from all other solar and lunar "gods of way" in Mesopotamia in that He guided only Abraham and his own group and that He was not regularly visible in heaven, but permitted Himself only occasionally to be seen when He willed so. Various natural processes were sometimes seen as a manifestation of this God.

Moses revived this conception of the God, which had been forgotten by the Hebrew tribes in Egypt. "Thus it can be understood that clouds, and smoke, and fire, and all kinds of visual phenomena are interpreted by Moses as visual manifestations from which he has to decide as to the further course through the wilderness. . . . But always, and that is the fundamental characteristic, YHWH remains the invisible One. . . . For this reason He should not be imaged, that is, limited to any one form; nor should He be equated to one or other of the 'figures' in nature; and precisely because He makes use of everything potentially visible in nature. . . . The prohibition of 'images' and 'figures' was absolutely necessary for the establishment of His rule, for the investiture of His absoluteness before all current 'other gods.'

"No later hour in history required this with such force; every later period which combatted images could do nothing more than renew the ancient demand. What was immediately opposed to the founderwill of Moses makes no difference; whether the memories of the great Egyptian sculptures or the clumsy attempts of the people themselves to create, by means of some slight working of wood or stone, a reliable form in which the Divinity could be taken with them. Moses certainly saw himself working a contrary tendency; namely, that natural and powerful tendency which can be found in all religions, from the most crude to the most sublime, to reduce the divinity to a form available for and identifiable by the senses. The fight against this is not a fight against art, which would certainly contrast with the report of Moses' initiative in carving the images of the cherubim; it is a fight to subdue the revolt of fantasy against faith. This conflict is to be found again in more or less clearcut fashion, at the decisive early hours, plastic hours, of every 'founded' religion; that is of every religion born from the meeting of a human person and a mystery. Moses more than anybody who followed him in Israel must have established the principle of the 'imageless cult,' or more correctly of the imageless presence of the Invisible, who permits Himself to be seen."

4. David Kaufmann, *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by M. Brann (Frankfurt am Main, 1908), "Zur Geschichte der Kunst in den Synagogen." Also see his very important

article, "Die Löwen unter der Bundeslade von Ascoli und Pesaro," which appeared in 1897, in the *Erster Jahresbericht der Wiener Gesellschaft für Sammlung und Konser-vierung von Kunst und Historischen Denkmäler des Judentums*.

5. Ibid.
6. Kaufmann, *Die Haggadah von Sarajevo*, edited by D. H. Müller and J. V. Schlosser (Wien, 1898), "Zur Geschichte der Jüdischen Handschrift Illustration"; *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. III, "Die Bilderzyklen im duetschem Typus der alten Haggadah Illustration" and "Beitrage zur Jüdischen Archäologie."
7. "The Italian Synagogue of Padua contains such an abundance of magnificent silver work that its description and reproduction would justify a special undertaking." "Etwas von Jüdischer Kunst, Aus der Pariser Weltausstellung," *Israelitische Wochenschriften*, Jahrgang 9, 1878.
8. Kaufmann, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. III, "Beitrage zur Jüdischen Archäologie."
9. Löw, *Graphische Requisiten und Erzeugnisse bei den Juden* (Leipzig, 1870).
10. Geiger points out that the trust Halakhah has in the community is unconditional.
11. C. Roth, *Ha'omanut Ha'yehudit Massadah* (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 19. Samuel Krauss, *Synagogale Altertümer* (Vienna, 1922), p. 348.
12. S. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. II (Philadelphia, 1952), p. 13.
13. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
14. E. E. Urbach, *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. IX, Nos. 3 and 4 (Jerusalem, 1959), "The Rabbinical Laws of Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in the Light of Archeological and Historical Facts." In this paragraph his account is closely followed. Urbach cites Talmud Yoma 69 and Sanhedrin 64 as well as the apocryphal Book of Judith for the weakening of idolatry: "For there has not arisen in our generation, nor is there today, a tribe, a family, a clan or a city that worships idols made by human hands as there was once in olden times" (Judith 8:8).
15. There was a widespread feeling that idolatry did not constitute a danger to the people, since it was so obviously false. A pagan gave expression to this view in a discussion with R. Akibah. "You know in your heart as I know in mine that there is nothing real in idolatry" (Avodah Zarah 55a). Urbach, loc. cit.
16. "The Jewish craftsmen based the defense of their professional activities on the well-known fact that the Gentiles themselves considered the idols to have no efficacy. Their arguments were acceptable to the authors of the Agadah and Halakhah, who expressed them in their own peculiar way. Recounting a conversation between Moses and God after the incident of the golden calf, the Tanna Rabbi Nehemia puts the following words into the mouth of the collocuters: (Moses) said: Lord of the universe they have provided assistance for You, how can You be angry with them? This calf which You have made will be Your assistant. You will make the sun rise and it the moon, You the stars and it the constellations, You will make the dew fall and it the wind blow, You will bring down rain and it will cause plants to grow. The Holy blessed be He answered: Moses can you be as misguided as they?! See, it is worthless! Moses retorted: Then why are you angry with your children?" *Exodus Rabbah* 43:6, quoted from Urbach, loc. cit.
17. Rachel Wischnitzer, "Judaism and Art," *The Jews, Their History, Religion and Culture*, edited by J. Finkelstein (Philadelphia, 1949). Bevan comments on the attitude of Maimonides: "This reason is plainly an afterthought, in order to provide a justification for a feeling which has originally been created by the prohibition, authoritative in early generations, and which remained instinctive in the Jewish community, when the condemnation could no longer be based on the original ground. Some other ground had to be found for it. The new ground is really absurd. Ordinary psychology would tell us that a detail of decoration repeatedly before the eyes of the worshippers would become unnoticeable with familiarity." E. Bevan, *Holy Images*, London, 1940, p. 63.

18. Löw, *Graphische Requisiten und Erzeugnisse bei den Juden* (Leipzig, 1870), p. 33. Löw presents many other examples of conflicting attitudes.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Franz Landsberger, *Einführung in die Jüdische Kunst* (Berlin, 1935), p. 34. Cf. Cecil Roth, *The History of the Jews in Italy* (Philadelphia, 1946), p. 391.
22. Alfred Grotte, *Der Morgen*, Berlin, Jahrgang 4, No. 2, June, 1928, "Die Kunst im Judentum und das 2. mosaische Gebot."
23. "Rabbi Dober Minkes of Zitomir tells us: Many pious men from the synagogue in which I pray asked me to explain whence the permission derives to paint, in the synagogues of the big cities, paintings of animals and birds in low relief and high relief around the Holy Ark. Doubtlessly, it was done according to the wishes of the great scholars of the past who were (holy) like the angels (*ראשונים כמלאכים*). There are also synagogues which have all their walls covered with paintings of birds, animals, and the zodiac. It is also an everyday occurrence for them to embroider the *Parokhet* for Sabbath and festivals and the Torah covers with silk, gold and silver threads, and all kinds of designs of animals, and birds, lions, and eagles. It would seem that they transgress the commandment prohibiting images and pictures and that they may open themselves to suspicion of idolatry. And how do they bow down to the Holy Ark? And how do they kiss such a *Parokhet*? Might one not surmise that they bow down and kiss an image? And if, God forbid, this would be prohibited, the great ones of our own generation and of former generations, who did not do things according to their own understanding but followed their teachers, would not have allowed this. Doubtlessly it is a *mitzvah* to do paintings and decorations to elevate the synagogue (*מקדש מעט*), and there is no fear that they act according to alien custom." Quoted from Yizchak Z. Kahana, "The Art of the Synagogue in the Literature of the Halakhah," *The Synagogue*, edited by Mordechai Hacohen (Jerusalem, 1955), in Hebrew.
24. "The auditory sphere may claim an exceptional position in the development of the superego of the individual. In the building of that new agency of the superego, certain experiences and impressions are necessary. Purely optical impressions without words by themselves would be insufficient for the establishment of ethical judgments. For the preliminary stages of superego formation, language audibly perceived is indispensable. The nucleus of the superego is to be found in the human auditory sphere." Theodore Reik, *Mystery on the Mountain* (New York, 1959), p. 168.
25. Talmud, Megillah 32a, quoted from Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Ancient Israel* (Norton, 1949), p. 83. A rabbi of the third century demanded that the ears of those listening to secular music should be cut off.
26. Grätz, *Die Konstruktion der Jüdischen Geschichte* (Berlin, 1936), pp. 13–14.
27. Hermann Cohen, *Die Religion der Vernunft* (Köln, 1959), second edition, pp. 61–63.
 "The contrast between the One God and the many gods is not confined to the difference in numbers. It expresses itself in the difference between an unperceivable idea and a perceptible image. And the immediate response of reason to the concept of the One God is confirmed in this antagonism to the image. Every image is a reflection of something. Of what primal image can the image of God be a reflection?
 "Is there then such a thing as a primal image of God in an image? The images of God must be images of something else to which they assign the significance of a god. Here again, there arises the contradiction between the single being of God and all the alleged beings. The images of God cannot be reflections of God, they can only be reflections of objects of nature.
 "Thus, of necessity, there arises within prophetic monotheism the opposition to art, which is the primal activity of the human spirit, namely the creation of images which are reflections of natural objects filling the universe. This is the process of art among all peoples. Let us ask ourselves how we can understand the anomaly which exists between the monotheistic spirit and all human consciousness at this turning point of culture.

"The question does not only concern the original tendency of monotheism, but also the anomaly of historical influence. No people in the history of the world, not even the most developed, ever withdrew from it. How can we grasp the fact that the prophets resisted the glorious creations, the magic art of Babylon and Egypt, and mockingly derided it? In all other instances, art is a universal tendency of man, and stands in effective reciprocal relationship to poetry. How could the monotheistic spirit develop its might in poetry while maintaining a resistance toward the plastic arts?"

"We cannot solve this question here fully. Only when we discuss the monotheistic concept of man, can we attempt to do so. Here, our question concerns only the single God who represents the only Being. Therefore, no image of Him is allowed. It would have to be a primal image; furthermore, *the* primal image; therefore, an image which must be a reflection of something.

"The gods must be destroyed because they are not beings but images. To serve such gods is to serve images. The service of God is, however, the service of the true Being. The fight against the gods is, therefore, a fight against appearance, the fight of primal Being against images which have no being.

"Thus the Decalogue progresses from the prohibition against other gods to the prohibition against images. And this prohibition does not confine itself to the sentence: 'Thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them,' nor to: 'Thou shalt not have other gods before Me,' but the attack on art becomes a direct one: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.'

"Polytheism is attacked at its roots, and these are not seen in the immediate sanctification of natural phenomena, but only in the worship of that which man's mind produces with man's hands. Only through art can that 'which is in heaven above, or that which is in the earth beneath, or that which is in the water under the earth,' become a misleading primal image. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image,' means: the picture must be a reflection of God. However, there is no image. He is at most but a primal image of the spirit, of the love, of reason, but not an object of representation" (pp. 61-63).

"It is a futile objection that the one who worships the image does not mean the image, but only the object it represents. This objection betrays a misunderstanding of true monotheism. Since it differentiates itself from all image worship, the single God cannot be thought of as an object in a picture. Even if worshippers of images mean only the object represented in the image, monotheism teaches that God is not an object who can be imagined. *AND IT IS THE PROOF OF THE REAL GOD THAT THERE CAN BE NO IMAGE OF HIM.* He can come into consciousness through reflection only as primal image, as primal thought, and primal Being" (p. 66).

28. "In the ancient world there were on the evidence of Pliny more gods than human beings, or as Rabbi Isaac put it: If they wrote down the names of every single one of their idols, all the hides in the world would not suffice them." E. E. Urbach, loc. cit.
29. Bevan, *Holy Images*, p. 13.
30. Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Introduction. (The English translation omits the introduction.)
31. Ibid. See also Hermann Cohen, *Die Religion der Vernunft*, ed. cit., p. 43.
 "Plastic art becomes the analogy to nature. Poetry, on the contrary, becomes the primal language of literature and, through its forms, makes the spiritual thought more inward, as plastic art could never do."
32. Quoted from Wischnitzer, *The Messianic Theme in the Paintings of the Dura Synagogue* (Chicago, 1948), p. 9.
33. Quoted from Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, II, p. 284.
34. Ibid.
35. See also Nazir, 2b.
36. Megillah, 27a.