

# DISCOVERING JUDAISM

A Poem by Rabbi M. Schulweis (z"l)

Page | 1

We have asked  
What you see in Judaism.  
What in classes of instruction and in experience  
    has attracted you to this people  
    and this faith?  
You have instructed us.  
I have been drawn to Judaism for many reasons.  
And in no order of importance.  
    I discovered the celebration of inquiry, the dignity of the question  
    the sadness over the fourth son  
    who does not even know how to ask.

I found in Judaism the liberating absence of dogma,  
    apodictic authoritarian responses,  
    answers that will tolerate no question.  
I am moved by the humility of the religious leaders  
    who for all their erudition lay no claim to infallibility  
    but know that they, like all who walk the face of the earth,  
    are errant souls.

No saints, unblemished, perfect, but even as our patriarchs and priests  
    flawed and fallible  
    struggling spirits.

In Judaism I found the enlarging embrace of inclusion.  
No faith, no race, no ethnicity excluded from the circle of salvation.  
No alien kept outside the circle, consigned to hell and perdition.  
Not souls, but lives are we mandated to save.

I am drawn to the faith that does not see sin inherited,  
    an original stain on the heart of the newborn  
    indelible sin that may not be erased by repentance, repayment, repair.

Injuries there are, not visited by ancestors upon our innocence  
but done to others and to ourselves  
would be healed and made whole  
injuries for which I bear responsibility  
the capability to repair.

I am attracted to the inextricable bond between belief and behavior.  
Faith demonstrated  
not with the declarations of my mouth  
but with my arms and legs.  
Believing and behaving the twin duties of the heart.

In Judaism I find the focus on family,  
the matrix of human relationships  
*mishpachah* around which the community revolves.  
Choosing faith I chose family  
And in its history and literature I find my family album.

I find in Judaism my own inner self.  
My choice of Judaism is not burial of my past  
but recovery of some hidden treasures within.  
I have long felt its vague presence but never seen its face.  
At long last, I have found the mirror that reflects the veiled,  
concealed soul.