

Progressive Judaism-Fundamentals (*)

Our place in the world

Judaism is an ancient tradition, but alive, whose contribution to the life of mankind has been immense. Our religious Jewish civilization has been shaped in different ways.

Progressive Judaism is the response that our teachers and our teachings found in the ideas of the modern Western world. This type of cross-influence is not an unprecedented experience in Jewish history. It is a constant and, in each of the eras of history, secured the revitalization of Judaism.

There are many frightening aspects of modern life: the disregard by religion and tradition; the fall of the importance of God and the importance given to humanity. There is still a blind faith in science and scientific knowledge, along with the abuse of technology as an instrument of torture and destruction. We live in a time of excessive materialism, unlimited exploitation of human and natural resources for profit and lifting of self-interest to the main determinant of human relationships.

However, there are many highly positive aspects of modernity whose acceptance would only have positives—his erudition, his concern with the human rights of the individual, its cultural pluralism, their psychological perceptions and progress in many scientific and technological areas that improve the quality of human life. We understand that we have a responsibility in preserving the quality of life on our planet and to accept the discipline implied our partner condition of creator and guardian of creation. Whatever our ambivalence, this is with us and we must recognize that it is our real starting point.

Living in the world

We recognize, therefore, that modernity has brought to the world both positive and negative things. Judaism believes that it is essential to live in the world adopting a stance described as misfit creative. The encounter between Judaism and the world has not always proved positive for Jewish life. But, still, we, Jews, progressives, we do not believe in the possibility of carrying out our obligations as Jews returning back to the world and seeking survival through isolation. We value our difference and our specificity, but do not wish to preserve them separating us from the wider community.

God, Israel and the individual

God makes us demands. The community also has its needs. We recognize the autonomy of the individual as well as the law and the inevitability of that people respond by themselves. A large part of Contemporary Jewish life is represented by the attempt to resolve the interaction and the tensions between God, the community and its teachings, and the individual.

Truth and Pluralism

We understand that the truth, that normally use as a comparison to the divine reality and the divine desire for the world, is multi facet and that no single expression of Judaism or any other religion, is able to embrace the mystery of creative energy and intelligence implied in the universe.

We recognize, therefore, that any form of religion is somewhat tentative. There is a single expression of Judaism is able to accommodate all Jews everywhere and at all

times. We understand that Judaism does not have a monopoly on truth and that this can be found in other religious traditions, or even in teachings and disciplines without any formal religious label. Search religious significance weaved a massive tapestry that contains many yarn colors.

Doubt and certainty

We recognize that a significant level of religious doubt is endemic to modern thought. The quest for religious significance has been continuous since Abraham and Sara began their journey. This emphasis on finding a healthy antidote to the certainty that many generations have proclaimed in relation to truth and a corrective to the plague of fanaticism and fundamentalism that distorts the religious world in our time. We recognize, however, that many Jews are today less safe than their belief in God than many generations that preceded it. Many others have difficulties in prayer, still feel comforted and supported by the Act of praying as a group. Such doubts and skepticism are part of Jewish contemporary reality that we face.

Starting with people where they are

Progressive Judaism has firm principles which are presented in this text, but there is also a firm operating principle equivalent. We started with people wherever they are and we work in partnership with them, encouraging them to a fuller expression and dynamics of their Judaism. We try to include people. We recognize that many factors affect the path of life followed by each individual. We can at least offer to Jews who seek the truth, a Jewish home. Our experience has shown that they bring talents, insights and benefits that can benefit everyone.

Nuances of opinion

Each individual is unique and expressed his faith in singular form. Judaism never imposed a rigid belief to his followers and the wisdom of this approach becomes even clearer. Progressive Judaism, and even Judaism itself, or any religious tradition is a Federation of views, a world rich in insights and nuances. Our commitment is to listen to each other with respect, discarding any selective or limited vision. We recognize the need to be at the same time, more critical of ourselves and more respectful towards Jews of divergent opinions. We take seriously the commandment to take care of souls and well-being oblivious-and not its own welfare and the soul of another.

Commitment

We affirm the Jewish concept of humanity created in the divine image. We are endowed with free will, capable of sublime kindness, but capable also of most terrible evil, deadly, but endowed with a sense of eternity, able to establish a direct and personal relationship with God. Reinforcing respect for Jewish teachings that can be derived from human history-a saga of progress and defeats, of triumphs and tragedies, destined, however, to lead us to an era in which all worship one God and the reign of freedom, justice, love and peace will be permanently established worldwide.

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