

## THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS ARE`SIGNS FOR THE SONS [3].

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Jews have always been named the children of Abraham, so they must have inherited from him a special or determining characteristic which distinguishes them from all other nations or creeds. It has been suggested that it is the characteristic of being 'mei eiver', from the other side or 'beyond.' Avraham rejects the idolatry of the people of Ur so he is haivri. Yosef protests his innocence by saying he was an Ivri and therefore could not possibly be guilty of the crime ascribed to him. Moshe announces the command for the Exodus in the Name of the G-d of the Ivrim, intrinsically special to them. Yonah claims that the storm is only caused by his responsibility as an ivri. The entire civilized world accepted Caligula's claim to divinity and his horse to the priesthood, except Israel. Throughout history, the Jews as Jews, have always been opposing idolatry, sexual abuse, economic oppression and every form of injustice or callousness. That is what is meant by the statement, " Ivri Anochi".

Think of what is considered great, powerful and worthy of royalty in many cultures and belief systems; Alexander the Great, Alfred the great, Peter the great etc. Even people of the spirit are great inventors, great poets or great philosophers. Our roles models, however, are different. Avraham Avinu speaks of himself as dust and ashes, David the founder of our royal dynasty considers himself merely a lowly worm,

while the Master of our prophets asked 'what are we?' This is not nihilism nor is it anarchy nor is it mere modesty but rather a truthful and unbiased view of a reality that can be elevated and molded into an image like Hashem.

We know, for instance, that there is a sexual drive and need in humans but we have been taught that this can and needs to be transformed by proper marriage and legal restraints. However, sometimes, the Torah goes beyond the socially acceptable or the legal norms of a particular society or period. In the same way we know that there are drives and needs for personal property but we also have the knowledge that these may and must be transformed by business morality and by charity. It means that we know that there is a hunger for political, social and economic power but also that these must and can be elevated to serve society. Throughout history people have constantly tried to achieve these aims through education, voluntary associations, state imposed policy or a combination of some of them.

We often tend to overlook the great social successes which humanity has achieved over the centuries from the Cavemen to modernity. Despite these, we are still far from the societies described by Israel's prophet. Perhaps it is a simplification to write that the reason for the failure of all these attempts is that they tried to eradicate the Divine from their lives. In contrast, however, our way seeks to transform all the drives and hungers into kidushin, a state of holiness. There is no place here for attempts to eradicate the drives and

hungers which Hashem instilled in humanity for its benefit. So there are no hermits nor monasteries in Judaism. There are, however, families, communities, tribes and even political entities like states and kingdoms. Within these various forms of social organization, ordinary men, women and children can live complete and fulfilled lives which reflect a kingdom of priests.