

## **The Ethical courage to be a Jew<sup>1</sup>**

Judaism bears witness to the power of the idea as against the power of mere numbers and of outward success; it stands for the enduring protest of those who seek to be true to their own selves—to those who claim to be different...This attitude is itself a constant lesson to the peoples of the world—to all who have ears to hear.

*The mere fact of Judaism's existence shows that it is impossible to conquer the spirit, and that the spirit can make men invincible. It requires religious courage...to belong to a minority...especially among majorities which so often allow might to triumph over right. It requires ethical courage to be a Jew, when worldly comforts, honors, and prizes often lure the Jew over to the other side.*

Jews have very frequently had to fight a battle between ideas and interests—a battle between belief and un-belief. It is the uniqueness of the Jewish spirit to be rooted in conscience and in the fear of God; not merely to know—but to know the good. Therefore—it possesses the capacity of not allowing itself to be conquered by time; it has the strength of resistance against all powers and multitudes—against all who seek only to rule and to oppress.

*Therefore, Judaism keeps on seeking, never thinking that it has reached the end and the conclusion; it is always demanding, without rest or easy contentedness. It implies a persistent quest for knowledge for the sake of the commandment, a never-tiring will for the ideal, a demand to sacrifice constantly and never to give up.*

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Baeck