

Zvi Faier

A Day Is A Thousand Years



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Human Destiny
And The
Jewish People



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יהיו לרצון אמרי פי
והגיון לבי לפניך...

(תהלים ימ, טו)

May each word be true
at one with the thought
adequate for the task.

The author of this work owes more than gratitude to his teacher, the great Torah luminary Rabbi Aaron Chaim Halevi Zimmerman, who continues to teach, but no longer in person. Within the pages of this book, the reader can explore some of Rabbi Zimmerman's teachings, and perhaps likewise develop more than a sense of gratitude.

DEDICATED TO

My wife Chaya

the truth between us secured all the blessings we share

Our children

Tziporah, Avraham, Shifra Rachel, Nechama, Binyamin

Moshe Michael, Sara Avigail

who go “from strength to strength” and continue with their
families the way of the Torah in the Promised Land

My mother Faiga

who acted for her children as if nothing was impossible

My father Shlomo

who saved us from the Nazis

The men and women

who continue to build the ark that will outlast the violent wave

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Preface

The pages of this work mainly relate, and through ideas in effect re-create, the true story of the Jewish people. Begun by others, it will be continued by others. Telling the story, living it, becoming part of the narrative is a passionate engagement for the Jew in every generation. There is a fresh telling for and by the present generation which also participates in shaping the State of Israel.

While writing in Jerusalem, I felt privileged and protected; the Talmud speaks of Divine Presence attending high effort. Amidst the tension and exhilaration of reaching for the truth, living thought was transformed into texts. On every page, I invite the reader to reverse the process of creation: turn texts into shared living thought.

A Day Is A Thousand Years, p.121

This book unfolds the story and destiny of the Jewish people, the dynamics involved in their interplay with other nations throughout history, and the relevance and significance of these to the understanding and advancement of mankind today. This unfolding requires creating a mode of speech acceptable to all; otherwise, the Jew may find himself speaking to himself alone, unable to advance humanity towards greater mutual understanding.

By means of in-depth, original exposition and analysis of major Judaic concepts contained in Biblical and Rabbinic sources, the author seeks to initiate communication between the Beit Midrash (Torah hall of study) and the enlightened person living today in the twenty-first century, concerning the issue of human destiny and the Jewish people.

Scholars immersed in Torah learning speak a distinct language, mostly incomprehensible to the outsider. This work addresses this “outsider”, illuminating fundamental concepts and ideas of Torah on this subject in lucid, contemporary terms. The “insider” is addressed as well, challenged to regenerate and refresh his understanding of classic texts by reflecting upon them within new contexts of general and scientific perspectives.

One feature of academic writing is the distancing of any personal perspective from what is written, in order that the content be as objective as possible. Too much involvement on the part of the author is considered a liability, resulting in biased research. Zvi Faier, himself familiar with academic writing in the scientific field, rejected this stand.

A Day Is A Thousand Years is an example of a mode of writing that blends philosophical discourse with biographical passages and poetry. The presence of the author, his personality and his experiences permeate throughout the book, intertwining with the concepts and forming a point of reference, within which the concepts are discussed and developed.

This book is characterized by great intellectual scope and freedom, and a profound striving for true understanding. Whereas it is an impassioned hymn of praise to the God of Israel and His Torah, this work is also a plea, directed to reinforcing the sublime in the hearts of all men. The author felt deeply that his ideas have relevance not only for Jews, but for all men and women around the world who cherish and seek truth, compassion and beauty. They are invited to share and explore them.

ooo

During the last years of his life, I sat with my father regularly, discussing his writing and ideas, trying to grasp more fully the depth and significance of what he was saying, (knowing that the time I had to learn from him in person was drawing to a close). It was through these exchanges, as he patiently explained a subtle point or listened intently to any comment or observation which he sometimes would incorporate in the text or use to further develop an idea, that I became intensely conscious of his humility and pure selflessness.

Thus empowered by him, I assumed, together with my mother Chaya, the editing of the manuscript of this book, which is one of two works that were completed towards the end of his life.

Now, twenty months since our father was laid to rest in Jerusalem on the tenth day of Tevet, 5769 (2009), this first work is being presented to the public. It is a moment of great joy, comfort and thanksgiving for our family to see his words live on and inspire the minds and hearts of many. May the G-d of Israel grant that they indeed help mankind and the Jewish people within it advance towards assuming their full stature, as he so much wanted.

Tziporah Lifshitz

Daughter of Zvi Faier, may his memory be blessed
Ma'ale Adumim, Israel, 10 Av 5771 (August 2011)

For a thousand years in Your sight
are as yesterday...

Psalms 90:4

And it was evening, and it was morning, *yom ehad* –
“the day of the One.”

Rashi commentary on Genesis 1:5

Prologue

An immense parchment entirely covered the earth at a height of what weathermen call the tropopause, just above the atmosphere. On the outer side of the parchment, facing the sun, vivid in letters that reflected the colors of the rainbow, were inscribed the three lines:

That honor may dwell in our land
Kindness and truth have met
Justice and peace have kissed¹

On the inner side of the parchment, in raised letters, there was the legend

The price of honey
and the price of light
are now both beyond my means

said the victim
to the slayer
said the slayer
to the victim

The inscriptions persisted as the parchment unrolled into the future. Sometimes the writing showed more clearly on one side, facing the light, and sometimes on the other side, facing lands of darkness as darkness itself, without any order,² where the light was as darkness and a moving shadow. Then it came to pass that the sons and daughters of man forgot that they spoke in different tongues, and nations everywhere touched. Both sides of the parchment now read, in the same vivid hand:

Kindness and truth have met
Justice and peace have kissed

But it took a thousand years, when it could have taken a day.
Along the edge of the parchment, between the inner and outer
sides (some say where daybreak and rainbows are born), it
said:

For a thousand years in Your sight
are as yesterday
when past
As a watch in the night³
that is impatient for the dawn⁴

Hrubieszow, Poland, late 1939.

A boy, who just turned five, runs across a meadow to safety in the forest.

Ten years later, the State of Israel has come into being.

The boy has survived.

A man whom the boy loves, says in Yiddish, "The Jew dances to a niggun, a melody, which connects heaven and earth. The niggun never ends."

I, who am that boy, am aware that this melody is linked to the pain I feel and the sorrow I cannot dispel, when confronted with distortions of the truth about my people or about the Torah.

This work unfolds as a drama about both the Jewish people, and man in general. As in a symphony where the first few bars anticipate what follows, in the story of the Jewish people, what happens later is anticipated in the initial scenarios. Ideas link heaven and earth, the "earth" in man and the "heaven" in man: order, human creativity and creation by GoD.

Laws anchored in the Torah connect issues of importance pertaining to yesterday, today and tomorrow: the needs of the individual and responsibility for the public good, the Hebrew nation in the land of Israel and in the world, and endeavor and destiny.

The quotes, the reflections, the excursions into scientific paradigms, the verses of Scripture – all these individually serve specific ends, but collectively function as elements in the drama.

The drama confronts the reality of human existence today. There is much love and goodwill in the private domain, but globally, hatred and peril prevail almost everywhere. These pages present necessary guidelines for the future of our planet, as disclosed in the principles and laws of the Torah.

To reach the promised "land of milk and honey," the sons and daughters of my people have trekked through a dark labyrinth of exiles. Lately, the terrain slopes upward, in the direction of the light and the honey. Some promises, it appears, are kept.

Towards the close of the 19th century, a handful of Jews decided to take vigorous action. GoD planted in their hearts the conviction to wait no longer in the Diaspora, and to begin building their future in Zion. These pioneers, who came and

built, and later fought to defend the land, generally put actions ahead of ideas. Many rejected or became indifferent to the beliefs of their forbears. Although unaware, they were faithful to a fundamental teaching of Judaism. That is, in the reality of relationships sustained through participation by man and GoD, Divine intervention in the human sphere is ideally manifested through proper action on the part of man. This is especially characteristic of certain epochs.

The Book of Ezekiel says: "Will your heart endure? Will your hands remain strong in the days in which I make you? I, GoD, have spoken and have acted" (Ezekiel 22:14). The Rashi commentary explains: "which I make you" - I act for you according to your actions.

The *Da'ath Sofrim* commentary elaborates: Two great questions are asked by GoD, who is all-knowing, yet turns away His eyes from man's future to allow freedom of action.

One question says: "Will your heart endure...?" Will Israel's collective heart not suffer shock?

Israel is obliged to serve GoD with all its heart, but will it remain of steadfast faith under the complex conditions of life during the long years of its existence?

The second question says: "Will your hands remain strong?"

Perhaps the heart will remain steadfast, but only to maintain an inactive stance. There is an obligation for the hands, too, to become strong and active in all areas of life!

The text continues: "in the days in which I make you." These are not mere events, but Divine performance. GoD "makes" the people of Israel all the time. "I, GoD, have spoken and have acted." Just as He spoke and acted in the past, so will He speak and act in the future.

Regarding the designated future, the prophet says, "I, God, will hasten it in its time" (Isaiah 60:22).

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi noted a contradiction: It is written, "I will hasten it," and it is written, "in its time."

His explanation: If they merit, "I will hasten it"; but if they do not merit, redemption will arrive "in its time."

Babylonian Talmud (BT) *Sanhedrin* 98a

Rabbi Hiya Rava and Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta were walking in the Valley of Arbel at dawn, as the morning star was rising. Rabbi Hiya exclaimed: "Thus will be the redemption of Israel: little by little, glimmering and advancing ever higher with increasing light."

Jerusalem Talmud (JT) Berachot 1,1

In his comprehensive and authoritative work, *Torah and Existence*, Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman combined rigorous argument and mastery of the objective categories of Torah thought and law, to set forth a clear comprehension of the present-day return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. He identified the establishment of the State of Israel as the initial stage of physical redemption – that Jews in the land of Israel are no longer ruled by non-Jews. This has taken place “in its time.”

The onset of spiritual redemption, however, is not yet clearly in evidence. The rate of progress towards the promised full redemption for humanity depends on the rate of moral and ethical progress on the part of man. In this comprehension of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi’s teaching, mankind is not to wait passively for the “coming of the Messiah.” Man must act to “bring the Messiah” as quickly as possible.

The following is a summary of what Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman taught and wrote about the cited passage from the Jerusalem Talmud:

The passage is very perplexing. What did Rabbi Hiya add by comparing the redemption to the dawning of the morning light? In order to explain that the “complete redemption” (geula shleima) would come in stages, why did he require this comparison, as if without it the statement would not be clear enough?

This text emphasizes that the process of redemption “in its time” is determined through providence in a universal law of history; that once the redemption of the Community of Israel in the land of Israel begins, it must continue until the redemption is complete – the redemption is an irreversible process. As the spreading of the morning light across the sky follows a natural, physical law, and the process is irreversible, so when the dawn

of the redemption comes, it will continue constantly, little by little, advancing more and more. Sometimes the process of the onset of redemption may appear in eclipse, just as the morning light is sometimes darkened by clouds. However, its general inner system progresses according to irreversible laws.

ooo

The instruction “Choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19) affirms the primacy of human life in the sight of GoD. By the Word of GoD to man, concern for the life of the person as soul-via-body existence is stipulated as a primary obligation, a meta-law.

“On the Sabbath ... you shall not perform any work” (Exodus 20:10). On the Sabbath, all work is permitted to save lives.

In his discourses, Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman related many times to the above obligation, clarifying that it applies solely to situations where individuals are endangered. It does not apply to matters of state and the Jewish nation as a collective existence. In wars to save the nation, there is always danger to human life. We find that King David went to war by consent of the Sanhedrin – and there were many casualties. Hence Torah law based on the foregoing does not validate giving away territories in the land of Israel in order to avoid loss of life.

ooo

This book took more than twenty years to complete. Its genesis, I now realize, took place earlier – in the aftermath of the Six Day War. It came as a sustained lyric statement, like one breath; the words echoed the wounds of millennia suffered by my people, and the incredible hope which healed them, and now seem about to heal them permanently.

That for me, in those days living in North America, the words would form themselves only in my mother tongue, Yiddish, is revealing, since English was by then, and had been for years, the tongue of my scientific and my daily life. For over forty years, my periodic attempts at a satisfactory translation to the text below had not borne fruit.

דאָס פּאַלק וועקט זיך אויף פון א שרעקליכן חלום
פון גלות און טרויער און נאכט
און שטרעמט היינט פאראייניקט צום כותל מערבי
באגייסטערט, פארבענקט און פארשמאכט.

די תקופה פון וואנדערונג שטארבט און פארגייט
פון קיינעם באדויערט פון קיינס באגלייט
מיר קלאמערן זיך אין דער עלנטער וואנט
מיט ליפן און אויגן און גבורה'שער האנט.

עס רייסן זיך אידן פון גלות'ן ווייט
פון גוישע הערשער צו ווערן באפרייט ;
עס דראפען זיך פינגער אין אייזערנער נעץ,
אין פינסטערער תפיסה פון רויטן געזעץ.

פארשטיקטע געוואלדן אנטלויפן פון דאָרט
צום כותל מערבי צום הייליקן אָרט ;
זיי וויקלען זיך איין אין טליתים ווי מיר
און ווערן געטרייסט פון א גאולה באריר.

עס לעבן אויף ביינער צעקלאפטע פון צאָרן
וואָס ווארטן אויף בשורות שוין יאָרן און יאָרן,
עס טרוימען הרוגים על קידוש השם
צו הערן דעם צווי צו קומען אהיים.

נאָך דורות פון ווארטן און ריינעם בטחון,
אין טעג פון ניסיון, די טעג פון נצחון,
צעברעכט זיך דער טויער פון שווייגען אין בריאה :
מען הייסט זיי שוין אָנהויבן זייער נסיעה.

עס ברומען די פעלקער און קריצן די ציין
און קאָנען אין גאנצן אזוינס נישט פארשטיין :
עס ברענט זיי דאָס ליכט וואָס באלויכט אונזער וועג
פון דעם ים התיכון ביז צום עכבה ברעג.
מיט שקר אין מויל און רציחה אין פנים
שפריצן מיט גיפטקע טענות די שונאים
און ווילן אוועקרייסן הייליקע ערטער
פון אידישע הענט מיטן כח פון ווערטער.

זיי פייניקן אמת און לייקענען גאָט,
זיין יושר, זיין תורה און גאולה געבאָט :

און מיינען נאָך ווידער צו נעמען נקמה
פאר אונזער נצחון, פאר אונזער נחמה.

מען לערנט היינט אָבער שוין פירוש המילות
אין אלע די אחרית-הימים מגילות --
דעם אמת'ן טייטש פון דער אלטער נבואה
וואָס ליגט איינגעהילט אין א געטליכער שבועה.

דערהערט מען דעם קלאנג פון א געטליך באפעל
וואָס הייסט שוין בן דוד אריבער די שוועל
און לערנען די פעלקער וואָס קריצן די ציין
די טעג פון נצחון נאָך בעסער פארשטיין.

I invite the reader to share these lines, which finally found adequate translation* and elaboration as the pages of this book.

*This poem was translated into English by Esther Cameron. It appears in the Appendix.

Part One

Facing The Darkness

Seeing The Light

Chapter 1

Towards The Promised Planet

The Present And The Future

There is hatred and peril almost everywhere. The mind weeps with contradictions. As in ancient times, the deluge seems inevitable; and many fear a deluge of “fire” from weapons of mass destruction. Iran threatens to destroy the State of Israel by developing nuclear warheads for its missiles.

Possibly as an indication for the future, the Talmud conveys that the generation of Noah was skeptical about the Deluge. They apparently ridiculed the imminence of any deluge – there would be neither water nor fire.¹

However, “Noah found favor in the sight of GoD” (Genesis 6:8). Today, fine men and women continue to build the ark, in the belief that it will outlast the violent wave. Man can choose to implement the civilizing guidelines for our planet disclosed in the principles and laws of the Torah. “He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel” (Psalms 147:19). The present tense is significant. Proper implementation of the Torah can transform today’s “global village” into what we may refer to as the Promised Planet.

The Ark of the Law and the ark of Noah are not unrelated, and Torah sages can be “your” best “builders.”² This implication about Torah sages is based on Isaiah 54, one of the “consolation” chapters. It refers to the future redemption of Israel, and invokes GoD’s promise to Noah not to revisit the Deluge.

After the Israelites received the Torah, GoD said: "Return to your tents" (Deuteronomy 5:2). They were reminded of their obligations on earth. It is not enough to proclaim heavenly ideas. The call: "Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!" can become the roll and the rhythm in the roar of the mob for the indiscriminate swing of the guillotine. For peace to prevail between one nation and another, first there must be peace between one tent and another.³ But to have peace between one tent and another, there must be peace within each tent. Kindness, justice and truth are to guide every man and woman inside every home where new generations are called into existence to enter the Promised Land.

The Jewish people is well represented by the commandment that Jews in every generation must see themselves as personally recapitulating all the past history of their people. This makes fulfillment possible – today in their ancient homeland.

ooo

He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes (hukim) and His judgments (mishpatim) to Israel.

He has not done so for any nation; they have not been informed of the judgments (Psalms 147:20).

In the book *Esh Kodesh* by Rabbi Klonimus Kalamish, written in the Warsaw ghetto (1940-42) where he perished, the author expounds:

The verse says that the nations were not informed of the "judgments (mishpatim);" why does it not say, as well, that they were not informed of the statutes (hukim)? The answer is that mishpatim refer to laws of the Torah that concur with human reason; they are "rational;" for instance, laws prohibiting theft, murder. Many hukim elude rational explanation.

Now one may imagine that every "rational" matter is what it is solely as it appears to human reason. The truth is, however, that every man's reason follows the man's very being. Even as regards [the prohibitions of] robbery and murder, which were always considered rational commandments, in the category of mishpatim, we behold at this time nations who invent rationales for the necessity of robbing everyone of their wealth, as well as murdering people.

Accordingly, following Maimonides in Shemone Prakim, citing the Sages, one will not necessarily say: I do not want to rob and murder. One whose soul (being) is debased will also want to rob and murder, notwithstanding that these are "rational" commandments. For every man's way is upright in his own eyes; and only one whose being is good understands that it is forbidden to rob.

So it is, that when an Israelite man comes closer to the Holy One and to the Torah, he understands that the hukim, as well, are necessary. It is so not because of sundry reasons, of one sort or another; rather, the very being of the person simply understands, even as he understands his own self.

Hence it says, "His statutes and His judgments (mishpatim) to Israel." But "He has not done so for any nation," who has not accepted the Torah; "they have not been informed."

ooo

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might, nor the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glories, glory in this, that he is enlightened and knows Me. For I GoD perform kindness, justice and righteousness" (Jeremiah 9:22-23). When a man is "enlightened and knows Me," then that man is to glory in his wisdom, his might and his riches.⁴ Otherwise – distortion and abuse are inevitable.⁵

ooo

Boundaries Are For Crossing

The impulse to overflow one's present territory – physical, biological, or mental – is a strong force in man. Whether in the end one creates or destroys, "man is born to toil" (Job 5:7) towards the conquest of new horizons. Once a child becomes thoroughly acquainted with its habitat, it can be expected to meander beyond the confines of the familiar location in search of new space to explore. Adults exhibit this syndrome on a larger, sometimes more desperate, scale. Some launch wars of conquest, even if they must pay with their lives. Others traverse deserts, descend into the depths of the ocean, the earth, or the

atom; they scale mountains. Many, not content with the factual environment, engage in patterns of idol worship, activities often linked to pseudo-facts or to arbitrary interpretations of commonplace phenomena. Some advance science and the arts.

The overflowing that characterizes human nature brings to mind, perhaps beyond mere analogy, what science has discovered about the behavior of quantum systems. A particle supposedly confined within a region of finite dimensions and finite forces, will “tunnel” into the walls that confine it. The smaller the region of its initial confinement, the greater will be the extent of the “tunneling.” That is to say, it is more probable that the particle is also to be found a greater distance beyond the normally (“classically”) defined initial region of its confinement.

Quantum physics views certain basic entities in a dual fashion. For one, what we call a particle is actually a more complicated entity. A particle can also be observed to behave like an extended wave. A new word had to be invented to describe this duality – “wavicle.” Human beings might be described as “things,” but this description would be incomplete if they are beings who also reach out – physically, mentally and emotionally. The psalmist’s question, “What is man?” is significantly followed by the response: “You have made him little less than *Elo-him*” – a legislator of power – “given him dominion over the works of Your hands” (Psalms 8:5-7).

With reference to GoD, the Name *Elo-him* pertains to GoD as the creator of laws: in the creation chapter (Genesis 1) only this Name appears. A human judge is also referred to as *elohim* (Exodus 22:7). The administrator of laws exercises power; in its broadest meaning (law in nature as well): “The law (*ha-din*) shall pierce the mountain!”⁶

Man is dual; man functions within boundaries yet reaches beyond the constraints of matter, biology and the known. Both – the existence of boundaries and the need to surpass boundaries – are in harmony with human nature. But what is one *to do* with the impulse for adventure? In the quest for a workable solution, we might ponder the implications of the promised Promised Land, with well-set borders, where everyone would dwell “under his vine and under his fig tree” (Micah 4:4). “He makes your borders peaceful; and satisfies you with the cream

of wheat" (Psalms 147:14).

The promise does not contradict man's impulse to overflow. Inviolable borders sustain individuality; and firm boundaries make for neighbors co-existing peacefully. This indicates, therefore, that human "tunneling" – the predilection to expand – can be directed towards overcoming walls and barriers other than the fences which properly separate one man's domain from that of his neighbor.

This holds true for nations as well. The Book of Deuteronomy says: "The Most High ... will set stable boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel" (32:8). The solution of the problem of nations living within uncontested borders is linked to the solution of the same problem for the twelve tribes of the Israelite nation. Consideration of the particular overlaps consideration of the universal issues of mankind.

The future tense here projects a vision which can be superimposed on the vision in Ezekiel 48, regarding the borders of the tribes, the boundaries of Jerusalem, and including a reference to the renewed Temple.

In relation to the Promised Land, the promise anticipates a situation of borders uncontested from within: the children of Israel are commanded to dwell only in the Holy Land.⁷ The commandments can all be fulfilled only in the land of Israel. Moses yearned to enter the land of Israel in order to personally fulfill all the commandments.⁸

Because he is so circumscribed in the geographical domain, the Jew is directed at once to other domains of conquest and overflowing. "The eyes of GoD, your GoD, are always upon" this land (Deuteronomy 11:12); and one is bidden to "seek Him in His dwelling" (12:5).

According to the Talmud, when the people would assemble in Jerusalem on the pilgrimage festivals, no man ever said to his neighbor: *This place is too confining for me to find lodging.*⁹ Understood in more than one sense, the collective celebrations did not infringe on individual autonomy and personal devotion. When the Explicit Name was pronounced by the High Priest in the Holy Temple, and the densely packed multitudes prostrated themselves, there was ample room for everyone. This is termed a miracle.¹⁰

The essence of the miracle lay in the discovery of new dimensions. Both as individuals and as a congregation, the pilgrims explored the expanse of mental and spiritual realms. By reaching out for the vistas indicated in these imperatives, the Jewish people would naturally exhibit little interest in the conquest of foreign lands.

The pilgrims to the Temple were invigorated by love for one another.¹¹ That necessary condition can also be inferred from the teaching about an opposite situation: that the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because of baseless hatred of one Jew for another.¹²

In symbolic presentation: *When there was great love between us – between me and my wife – we could lie together on the blade of a sword.*¹³

Figuratively, GoD speaks about the loving relationship with the Congregation of Israel. Love among human beings is linked to love of GoD, as indicated in the commandment, “Love your companion as yourself. I am GoD”¹⁴ (Leviticus 19:18).

The cited passage in the Talmud concludes: *But now a bed of sixty cubits does not suffice.* The Temple is destroyed, the people are dispersed, and there is no evident presence of GoD.

In the future, the nations will come in peace as pilgrims to “His dwelling” in Jerusalem.¹⁵

Chapter 2

The Book And The Sword

The hour for invoking the *Shema* had arrived. How can any Jew delay calling out to mankind in its darkest hour that GoD is One? Rabbi Tarfon halted in mid-step to shout the hallowed words into the night¹. "Hear, O Israel, GoD our GoD, GoD is one!"²

Elsewhere, Rabbi Akiba, as his flesh was being raked by iron combs,³ echoed his words, and these two Sages of Israel became one in the One.

ooo

The Romans tortured Rabbi Akiba with iron combs, but the words of the *Shema* stayed on his lips.

"O master!" his disciples cried out. "Must it come to this?!"

Rabbi Akiba replied: "All my days I would suffer when uttering the words, "You will love GoD your GoD with ... all your soul" (Deuteronomy 6:5) – *even if He takes your soul!* I would say: How and when will I have the opportunity to fulfill this commandment? Now the opportunity has come. Shall I not fulfill it?"

His soul departed on the breath of uttering "One!"

ooo

Hadrian executed Rabbi Akiba for disobeying the imperial edict forbidding Torah study, the foundation of civilization based on the love and awe of GoD.⁴ "Because of my love" of Him⁵ "they hated me" (Psalms 109:4), King David said,

speaking for himself and for his people in every generation. "They who eat my people" like eating bread, "do not call upon GoD" (Psalms 14:4).

"This your stately form is likened to a palm tree" (Song of Songs 7:8). The Congregation of Israel has proudly and scornfully rebuffed attempts by tyrants and conquerors to force her to bow down to idols. Through her eminent sons, Hanania, Mishael and Azzaria in every age, she remained erect and stately like a palm-tree. When Nebuchadnezzar built a huge statue of himself, they defied him and refused to prostrate themselves.⁶ "You shall not make yourself any graven image..." (Exodus 20:4). There is no other fear, not even fear of death, when there is awe of GoD and love of GoD.⁷

ooo

The Israelites at Sinai "saw the voices." They did not see GoD.

The Pope bade the Jewish community of Rome to pray on Good Friday in the Sistine Chapel.

The elders tried to plead, but the Pope proved unapproachable. They are not expected to convert – said he to Cardinal Camerlengo.

My will is that on this holy day they should pray to the GoD of Jacob together with Christians.

I think – added the Pope – that once in church they will forget their bare synagogue.

The day had come and the Jews prayed most ardently. After the mass, the Pope looked around, but did not recognize his favorite chapel.

The beautiful statues of saints melted like ice, so fiery did the Jewish prayers turn out to be.

And all the Christians left the chapel for good. For it looked now like a synagogue.

Haim Sokolik

The Misuse Of Knowledge

When Rabbi Eliezer the Great lay ill, his disciples gathered.⁸ "Master, teach me the Torah!" wept Rabbi Akiba. So Rabbi

Eliezer taught him three hundred detailed regulations in the matter of *zara'at* (a skin eruption), as well as two hundred and sixteen explanations in the verses of the Song of Songs. After the master had taught Rabbi Akiba all the deep secrets that are in the Song of Songs, he made him swear not to misuse any of its verses, lest he destroy the world.

In the Book of Numbers, it is related that Miriam was suddenly stricken with *zara'at* for having spoken incautiously about her brother Moses.⁹ According to the Talmud, *zara'at* is the due punishment for slander and gossip – for misusing the gift of human speech.¹⁰ The same teaching is likewise expressed by the prophet: “GoD has given me the tongue of the learned” (Isaiah 50:4), which I have abused.

Torah law stipulates that one so afflicted is to be placed in quarantine away from society. As a matter of justice, “he will dwell alone” (Leviticus 23:46).¹¹ The retribution fits the offense; there is to be no interaction even among those so afflicted, just as their earlier misuse of speech drove people apart.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21).¹² The annals of human misery, bloodshed and enmity, often show that their cause lay in the abuse and misuse of words, through insult, intrigue, or knowledge revealed to the wrong ears.

The verses of the Song of Songs speak magnificently of love, longing and endearment. Rabbi Akiba said:¹³ “The entire world is not deserving of the day the Song of Songs came into being.” Yet even beautiful words – *especially* when expressing the deepest human emotions – can be manipulated to destroy the world.

In the spirit of King Solomon’s exhortation “To understand the words of the wise and their riddles” (Proverbs 1:6), it seems clear that Rabbi Eliezer’s admonition not to distort his teaching touches upon a universal problem – the misuse of knowledge.

Early in the twentieth century, Einstein wrote down the equation that relates a quantity of mass (m) to a quantity of energy (E); the familiar form of that equation is: $E=mc^2$ (c is the speed of light). To have discovered this relation called for a high order of genius. Yet something soon became apparent which everyone would understand and come to dread. The

equation led to the age of atomic power.

$E=mc^2$ is elegantly coded speech that harbors the promise of great bounty for mankind. It also augurs annihilation, if the disclosed information is misused. When passed along distorted tongues, even words of great insight can be manipulated to destroy the world. The ultimate result is limbs shrivelled and skin charred by radiation fallout.

The hidden and the revealed:
They were friends.

But there is anger in the air we breathe:
Menace dissolved in the water we drink.

And great truths are severed from each other
because hearts are fearful.

In a kindred sense, apparently, the Midrash says that *saфра* and *saifa* – a book and a sword,¹⁴ – both came down from Mount Sinai. Man must take care not to misuse the Word of GoD, whether proclaimed at Sinai or informing the pattern of nature.

Rome And Jerusalem

“Two nations are in your womb” (Genesis 26:23), Rebecah was informed. Later, when faced with the desperate task of salvaging the future, she spoke the following imperative words: “Esau your brother consoles himself by planning to kill you. Now listen to me, my son, arise and escape ... until your brother’s anger against you subsides ... why should I be bereaved of both of you in one day” (27:22).

Rabbi Yizhak Zev Soloveichik has written:¹⁵ Rebecah knew that under the influence of Jacob and his descendants, good and righteous men will arise among the descendants of Esau who will cleave to GoD. But with Jacob dead, no good will come from Esau. Therefore was she anguished over “both of you.” For then she would be bereaved of Esau’s progeny as well. According to the Talmud, descendants of Haman studied Torah in Bnei Brak.¹⁶

Esau wants to live by the sword, and Jacob desires to live by the Book. Surrounded by violent neighbors, Jacob begins to

cultivate as great a virtuosity in handling the sword as he has shown in exploring the Book. Otherwise, the “voice of Jacob” (Genesis 27:22) might become a gasp of terminal agony. But he has no delusions about the matter. To confront his brother with the sword is for him, as for all mankind, a tragedy.

When Jacob prepared to confront Esau, who had sworn to kill him, it says that “Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed” (32:8). The Sages explain:¹⁷ Whereas he was afraid of being killed, he was also distressed lest he kill others.

The personal confrontation ended amicably, with a promise to meet again (34:18) – that the descendants of Jacob and Esau would meet. The nature of that future event remained ambiguous; and the ambiguity is anticipated in the words of blessing that Jacob later bestows upon his son Judah: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the staff of legislation from his descendants; until Shiloh (the Messiah)¹⁸ shall come to him; *velo yikhat amim*” (49:10).

Midrash Rabba presents two polar meanings of this final phrase.¹⁹ One Sage declares: *He is the one who will make all nations gnash (yakheh) their teeth*. Another Sage declares: *He is the one to whom the nations of the world will gather (yakhel)*. They will come to acknowledge the Messiah; as it says in the Book of Isaiah: “The stock of Jesse shall stand, as a banner to peoples; nations will seek him out, and his dwelling place shall be honored” (Isaiah 11:10). These options will apparently remain unresolved until peoples and nations act to resolve them.

ooo

Today, on an unprecedented global scale, some Esau and Ishmaelite peoples and nations seem to abide by the oath to kill Jacob/Israel – every Jew – and to destroy the sovereign Jewish state. Though they may claim allegiance to their own versions of the Book, their words and deeds are bloody swords.

ooo

For many years, King David, scion of Judah, struggled against the enemies of Israel, and we find that Scripture refers to him as “*adino haezni*” (2 Samuel 23:8). According to the Talmud, when composing psalms he was utterly yielding and

subtle (*adin*), pliable as a worm. In battle, however, he was as hard as the trunk of a tree (*ez*).²⁰

Out of necessity, King David lived by the sword as well. But this “servant of GoD” (1 Kings 11:32), who constantly aspired to “behold the *noam* (pleasantness) of GoD” (Psalms 27:4), was denied the privilege to erect the Temple “because you have shed much blood upon the earth in My sight” (1 Chronicles 22:8). The Holy Temple is built in *Jeru-salem*, the “city of peace.”²¹ It is completed and consecrated by progeny called *Shlomo* – literally, “peace is his” – who are “at rest from all ... enemies” (1 Chronicles 22:9).

In the future, as well: “A shoot will come forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch will sprout from his roots. The spirit of GoD shall rest on him: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and courage, a spirit of knowledge and awe of GoD” (Isaiah 11:1-2).

The Talmud says: When GoD acts at the proper time to bring deliverance to the Jewish people, it will be an irrepressible development – like a lion and lioness approaching each other in their need to mate. Woe to the nation that finds itself impeding Israel in this process.²²

Chapter 3

Against Ignorance And Unreason

“Come!” they said. “Let us build for ourselves a city and a tower...” (Genesis 11:4). The sparse account of those distant events hints at a time of technological power.¹ Men dared to explore new avenues of thought and sought to reach up into the heavens – physically and intellectually.

The narrative begins with: “All the earth had the same language” (Genesis 11:1), which also refers to a universally shared culture and to social harmony.² Then it came to pass, however, that the impulse to overflow impelled them beyond their present horizons.³ The text goes on to state that the generation “journeyed from the east (*mi-kedem*)” (11:2); the Sages explain:⁴ They departed from GoD (the Ancient One/*Kadmon*), saying: *We want neither Him nor His rule over us.*

The Tower of Babel was to be, above all, a tower of concepts. The magnificent edifice would consolidate human thought around one central idea, and hence secure the unity and solidarity of mankind.⁵

In ancient Shinar,⁶ in the region later known as Babylon, the natives held to the idea that everything, including heaven and the spirit of man, consisted of bricks and mortar⁷ – a radically materialistic outlook. They explored this idea for its logical consequences and practical applications. Using bricks and mortar they began to build a tower, which would make heaven an accessible extension of the earth.

Their intuition that heaven and earth are not to be kept apart was deep and sound. However, it became clear that their thinking was basically flawed. What finally transpired is

reliably described as a confusion of tongues. The endeavor to create a single tower was abandoned.⁸ There is reason to believe that in its place rose many smaller structures, all pointing up into the sky. Thus, not long afterwards, men began to worship many different gods.⁹ That is to say, different objects of physical reality came to be regarded as sublime – most fundamental – by different people.

“Bow to the mushroom!” said he.

“Bow to the dryad!” said she.

They were the children of Terah¹⁰
before Abraham was born.
And Divine Presence was ignored¹¹
in Babylon

in New Babylon

amidst the sweet haze
and the drugs
and the passionate limbs
and the tongues trying to unite again.

Then Abraham came on the scene, and he saw something else in man’s urge to reach for the sky. This was evidence of the transcendent quality of man’s restless spirit, the heaven in man. He heard “Walk before Me and be complete” (Genesis 17:1),¹² and taught¹³ restoration of perfected soul-via-body human life.

Make ignorance a crime
and unreason a disease like leprosy

GoD said to Abraham.

And you will live forever
in the Promised Land.

Walk before Me – and before nothing else. Nothing in nature is to be the object of your worship or the key to your destiny. To be properly human is to strive for completeness, to become

free by emulating the Creator¹⁴ who freely created the world.

This call went out to all men, but only Abraham heard it clearly enough¹⁵ and acted. He became known as *Ivri*, says the Midrash,¹⁶ the one who stood “on the other side (*me’ever*)” of the stream of idolatrous beliefs.¹⁷ He smashed his father’s clay idols,¹⁸ and he was thrown into the fiery furnace¹⁹ for defying Nimrod, the ruler of Shinar. What Abraham taught proved stronger than the flames, however, and this heroic prelude set the pattern for his descendants.

ooo

According to the Talmud, one who absolutely rejects idolatry is called a Jew (*Yehudi*).²⁰

A Chaldean asks Abraham:

Had you seen your GoD?

And my gods are to be seen by everyone.

You worship mere sources of light – contended Abraham
– while I worship the Creator of light.

And light alone is invisible²¹ – like He who created
the light.

Haim Sokolik

When individual human responsibility is relinquished in the face of indifferent patterns – such as “nature” or “cosmic process” or any other bureaucracy where one believes that man is totally determined by internal and external influences – this may verge on idolatry.

According to Maimonides, the essence of idolatry is homage paid to the stars and constellations – not as deities but under the pretext that as servants of the King of the world they deserve to be honored.²² As explained in a discourse by Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman, Maimonides seems to be saying that placing anything in nature “above” man (i.e. absolute deterministic forces, fatalism, absence of human initiative) is idolatry.

“The word of GoD came to him ... He took him outside and

said: "Look toward heaven and count the stars ..." And he put his trust in GoD" (Genesis 15:4-7).

The destiny of Abraham and his progeny would not be determined by stellar configurations or the order of cosmic laws created by GoD as *Elo-him*; rather it would unfold through participation by man and by GoD in the providential order.

Expressed in conceptually fundamental Judaic terms, we can say that by placing anything in nature above oneself, one denies the reality of relationships sustained by man and GoD. According to Torah teaching, human achievement is a partnership, the result of human striving and Divine participation.²³

ooo

Abraham is described as "having lit the way before Him."²⁴ He illuminated men's minds to the existence of GoD²⁵ – at first in Mesopotamia and then in the land of Israel.

Fifteen hundred years later, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Hanania, Mishael and Azzaria, respectively) – alone among all the assembled multitudes and vanquished peoples – "answered and said to the king of Babylon: O Nebuchadnezzar! Behold, our GoD whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and out of your hand, O king. But if He does not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:16-17).

A pattern becomes evident: Abraham and his descendants are repeatedly pitted against kings and emperors who are obsessed with the conquest of heaven to usurp the throne of the Almighty. Nimrod and his people said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven; and let us make us a name" (Genesis 11:4).²⁶ Sanncherib marched against Jerusalem and the devout King Hezekiah, and declared, "I will enter into its farthest height" (Isaiah 37:24). Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Holy Temple, and proclaimed, "I will ascend above the height of the cloud" (Isaiah 14:14).

Jewish thought plays on the name Nebuchadnezzar: "When you demand that we pay taxes," said Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, "you are *O king* and within your rights. But when

you demand that we bow down to your idol and worship you, you are *O Nebuchadzirzer*. Your words are to us as the howling (*naboch*) of a dog, and as the chirping (*zirzer*) of a cricket!"²⁷

Chapter 4

Whatever Became Of The Light?

An old woman came into the idol shop one day when Abram was substituting for his father.¹ She pointed to one of the figurines. "How old are you?" Abram asked her. She told him that she was seventy years old. Abram said: "Aren't you embarrassed to bow down to an idol that my father fashioned only yesterday?"

When God Is Replaced By An Idol

The people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain.² The earth in man had lost contact with the heaven in man. So it came to pass that the people, reduced again (as in Egypt) to identifying GoD with visible material substance, danced around the Golden Calf. "This is your GoD, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4).

"Slaves!" cried a voice
out of the blue
shaping words in the sky.
"Slaves you are
slaves that you were!"

And the sky dimmed
and the voice ceased.
And the tablets
in shards
like ivory teeth
bit into dancing feet.

The first and second commandments distinguish between GoD and an idol.³ When that distinction is abolished, all other distinctions implicit in the Decalogue vanish as well. The difference of man and of human life is set forth in the sixth commandment,⁴ which reflects the first commandment. Every human being is then identified as the irreplaceable Adam⁵ in the sight of GoD. When, however, the first commandment is denied, the difference of man is denied. Human beings are then perceived as dispersible and dispensable molecules. You *shall* commit murder.

In his farewell address to the children of Israel, Moses tells them, "GoD came from Sinai; He shone upon them from Seir; He appeared from Mount Paran" (Deuteronomy 33:2). R. Yohanan explains:⁶ This teaches that GoD showed the Torah to every nation and tongue, and they did not accept it. When the children of Esau (who dwell on Mount Seir) were informed that the Torah says, "Do not murder!" they responded: We cannot accept this Torah, for we live by the sword. Then He came to Israel, and they did accept it.

Countless times in history, GoD was replaced by idols in the guise of "causes." "This is the Cause that will free you from slavery!" The tablets were shattered, and blood flowed.

In symbolic presentation:

"Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!"
 roared the great mouth
 of the guillotine.
 Then it clamped shut
 about the last neck in France.

ooo

The rights of the proletariat are set forth in the Torah. "You shall not oppress a hired worker ... At [the end of] his day you shall give him his wage" (Deuteronomy 25:14-15; Leviticus 1:13). When the workers' cause was ostensibly appropriated by people who denied man's worth before GoD, their corresponding manifesto proved to be a lie in the service of a dictatorship marked by oppression and murder.

Beneath the frozen wastes of Gulag Territory, in raised

letters, an epitaph is inscribed in mute reproof:

The price of honey
and the price of light
are now both beyond our means.

ooo

“Your enemies exalt You in vain” (Psalms 139:20). If they truly loved You, they would love Your ways on behalf of man.

Out of the dark throat He came
Crying: “Let there be light!”

And light was born.

The throat widened
widened
the singularity stretched
became space-time
and out came the world.

O fierce chorus
out of the dark throat!

Whatever became of the light?

*My son, what is your craft? asked Rabbi Yishmael.
I am a Torah scribe, said Rabbi Meir.
My son, be careful in your work, for it is the work of Heaven.
If you delete from one letter, or add to one letter, you will find
yourself destroying the world.⁷*

The Rashi commentary explains: When inscribing the verse, “Hear, O Israel, GoD our GoD, GoD is one (*ehad*, אחד),” the scribe might conclude with the letter *resh* (ר) in place of the letter *daleth* (ד). Then *ehad* (אחד) becomes *aher* (אחר) – “another.” The One GoD is replaced by “another.”

"Many are the sorrows of those who hasten after another" – other than GoD. "Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer" (Psalms 16:4).

Crimson tongues have sucked the dead
and filled the sun with blood.
A billion men who marched this day
lie parched upon the sand.

A billion men lie torn below.
Their eyes deny the angry glow.
Their faces, mute upon the sand,
now only image death's command.

A vulture croaks: "Cra-a-ah-h! Cra-ah-h!"

Super Race!
Super Race!
Wisdom-loving foolish-face!
Mark your brothers' last disgrace!
Homo sapiens – Ha! Ha!
Super funny!

"Cra-a-ah-h! Cra-ah-h!"

"A thousand years in Your sight are as yesterday," and every millennium in human history has been "a watch in the night" of murder and genocide. The record reveals that often the perpetrators acted and marched "In the Name of GoD" and "For the glory of GoD." Through perversion of the Word of GoD, the lofty manifestos masked the darkness within, a rage of Cain for blood and destruction. It was true of the Crusades, and of the Spanish Inquisition; and it holds true for all the savage *Jihads* "in the name of Allah" – today and in the past.

Serving GoD for GoD's "benefit" – to "glorify" GoD through destruction of human life – is grounded in idol worship. Death is revered by pagans; it is an occasion for awe and worship. Death is the envoy of a god to be propitiated, best through "emulation:" murder, suicide, human sacrifice.

It is often necessary to wage war in defense of life. In the pagan orientation, it may be the highest honor to die for one's country. But in the reality of relationships taught by Judaism, GoD is the source and promise of life – *in war as well*.

Maimonides writes: *If one goes into battle with all his heart and without fear, and his intention is solely to sanctify GoD's Name, he ... will not be harmed and no evil will befall him.*⁸

In the Torah system there is no mandate for man to initiate "holy wars." Regarding GoD-mandated wars in the Scriptures, specifically, the Israelite conquest of Canaan, it says, "GoD ... will fight for you against your enemies, and He will deliver you" (Deuteronomy 20:4). *There were to be no casualties* among the faithful. Thus we find that when the Israelites did suffer casualties in the first battle of Ai, GoD revealed to Joshua that they had broken faith with the covenant. For Achan had violated the ban against taking spoils from the city of Jericho (Joshua 7:5-12).

In the reality of relationships, measures expected of man are GoD's adaptation of Measures for the human domain. For man to implement the principle of emulation, man is *informed specifically* what those measures in the human domain are. Unless so informed, man cannot decide on his own what GoD wants man to emulate; this pertains, as well, to waging wars.

If human beings decide to wage war while waving the flag "For the glory of GoD!" or "In the Name of GoD!", that does not alleviate their ignorance about what GoD truly wants. The war does not become a war *consecrated by God* – truly a "holy war." A "holy war" is a relationship sustained through participation by man *and* God.

King David's perception, "*El the God of vengeance, El of vengeance appeared*" (Psalms 94:1), is a perception about the Domain of God. It did not serve David as a pretext for action against King Saul. In the human domain, David's conduct tells a tale of noble perceptions and majestic magnanimity.

The Word of God proclaims: "When I whet My flashing blade and My hand lays hold on judgment, vengeance will I wreak on My foes..." (Deuteronomy 32:41) – that is a truth about the Domain of God. According to the Torah, man cannot arbitrarily "emulate" corresponding actions in the human sphere.⁹

It is otherwise when a war is waged in defense of life, which is a measure of action that accords with the Will of GoD and the Word of GoD disclosed in the Torah for the human domain.¹⁰

The Torah says: "Choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). By choosing to live, man evokes greater participation by GoD in the human sphere; one loves GoD. If instead one chooses *not* to live, one hates GoD. The Torah warns against passing children through the fires of Moloch.¹¹ Every human death means a loss of participation by GoD in the human sphere.

ooo

One may ask: If executing a murderer likewise diminishes GoD's presence in the human sphere, why does the Torah mandate capital punishment?¹²

One possible response is that other considerations are to be taken into account in order to promote a viable human society. Furthermore, the Torah discloses that premeditated murder may sever the relationship between the murderer and GoD; and so the execution may not *further* diminish GoD's presence in the human sphere.¹³

Evidence for the latter conclusion may be drawn most evidently from the destruction of the Flood Generation: The Deluge occurred after the relationship between humankind and the Creator had been severed, as conveyed in the words, "GoD regretted that He had made man on earth" (Genesis 6:6). The decreed punishment – this time at the hand of GoD – was in effect the same as prescribed capital punishment for the murderer: "I will blot out from the face of the earth the man whom I created" (6:7). The decisive reason was that "the earth was filled with violence" (6:11) – *man against man*.¹⁴ The relationship was cut absolutely.¹⁵

"GoD knows the way of the righteous" (Psalms 1:6). He knows not "the way of the wicked," which "will perish" (Psalms 1:6). The wicked "way" severs man from GoD, which leads man to oblivion; as it says, "your iniquities have separated between you and your GoD" (Isaiah 59:2).

GoD's destruction of the Canaanites, in order to make way for the Israelites after the Exodus, is similarly justified by the Word of GoD:

When GoD your GoD has cut down before you the nations which you are about to invade and dispossess, and you have dispossessed them and settled in their land: Beware of being lured into their ways after they have been wiped out before you. Do not inquire about their gods, saying: "How did those nations worship their gods? I too will follow those practices." You shall not act thus toward GoD your GoD, for they perform for their gods every abhorrent act that GoD detests; they even offer up their sons and daughters in fire to their gods.

Deuteronomy 12:29-31

"GoD detests." The relationship between GoD and the inhabitants of Canaan as a collective had been severed. However, this carries no implication for the human sphere; man cannot arbitrarily decide to hate and kill.

ooo

In every human death there is the loss of a relationship sustained as well by human participation. "Save me as befits Your loving-kindness. For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will acclaim You?" (Psalms 6:5,6).

"They who hate me" – who hate the Torah – "love death" (Proverbs 8:36). Since they who love death hate GoD; and they who hate the Torah love death; they who hate the Torah of GoD hate GoD: They who hate *me*, hate *Me*.¹⁶

"For with You is the source of life; in Your light we see light" (Psalms 36:10). An enlightened humanity favors life; this humanity is Adam striving to return to non-death in the Garden of GoD.¹⁷

To kill, to succumb to the death wish, is to live in the savage darkness of hiding from Divine Presence.¹⁸

Chapter 5

The Way And The Anti-Way

The Talmud says: *Harsh is idolatry. Anyone who denies idolatry, it is as if he acknowledges the Torah in its entirety.*¹ In a discourse, Rabbi Menahem Schroder elaborated on this statement by first noting a difficulty.

We must explain an oddity in the above text of the Talmud. It begins with the presupposition: *Harsh is idolatry*. Instead of spelling out the harshness or severity of idolatry, and how terrible it is, the Talmud exclaims how wonderful is *denial* of idolatry! It extols the greatness of the person who denies and rejects idol worship. Why the inversion?

It may be helpful to preface Rabbi Schroder's elaboration by considering the following statements: (A) *Taking drugs is terrible*. (B) *See what it does to the drug addict!* (C) *Look at the person who avoids taking drugs; see how hale, healthy and lucid he is!* Statement B is superfluous, since its message can be inferred from statement C.

In the cited passage of the Talmud, there is no statement to parallel the above statement B. It does not say: *See what idolatry does to its practitioners!* Yet the statement is present by implication from the concluding statement: Take note of the person who fulfills the entire Torah, and so absolutely rejects idolatry, and by inferred contrast become informed about the person who does *not* reject idolatry. Once you come to know what idolatry does to its practitioners, you will know about idolatry.

The Discourse

What is awful about idolatry is not the attitude and the set of

ideas associated with idolatry. Idolatry is false but not horrible. This applies as well when man is the object of worship. Pharaoh, for example, thought that he created the Nile.² He thought that he was GoD. What does it really matter? Idolatry does, however, become problematic – indeed even horrible – when atrocities are committed in the name of the idol. The peoples of Canaan would burn their children to mollify their idols.³

Why is idolatry deemed to be so harsh? For one might say: “It is stupid. What is the difference? Why resist bowing down like everyone else? I know it is stupid!” Therefore the Torah says: Stupidity leads to terrible consequences. One will not stop with merely being stupid. One cannot merely *be* stupid; one will also *act* in a way that is stupid. And those activities will go beyond the limitations of what one thought he would never do. One thought it would be culturally stupid. But his actions inevitably turn out to be morally stupid as well. And moral stupidity ends horribly.

That explains the intent of the noted inversion. Idolatry is not singularly harsh because of what it is. On the face of it, the Torah law forbidding idolatry is like any other prohibition. Idolatry is no worse than, say, eating forbidden foods. True, the reasons for those latter laws are not understood, while the prohibition of idolatry can easily be understood: Idolatry is stupid. But so what? What is the horror of idolatry? *Harsh is idolatry* because of what could be accomplished if it were denied. The principal problem is not in the violation of the prohibition; it is in the loss involved in *not avoiding* idolatry.

If one denied idolatry, one would be on the way towards accepting “the Torah in its entirety.” It is a straight road. One could get all the way there. Or part of the way. Or one’s children could get there. One says about idolatry: “This is nonsense; I will have nothing to do with this. I am not worshipping this. There is only the way of GoD.” Saying this guides one on the path of optimal human life.

Judaism is a destination. “And you will ... show them the way in which they must walk” (Exodus 18:20). We generally do not make it all the way. No one makes it all the way. Moses our Teacher did not make it all the way. In his case, the way led to the land of Israel, and he was stopped because he did not adequately “sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel”

(Numbers 20:12).

Individually we are very far from being perfect, but we are striving to reach that goal. Thus in the case of Abraham it says: "For ... he will command his children ... and they will *keep the way of GoD...*" (Genesis 18:19).

If the opposite is true, however, and one does acknowledge some idolatry, or even doubts that idolatry is false and wrong, then one is not on the way; indeed, one then loses all the Torah in its entirety.

The Illumination In Her

The prophet says: "They have forsaken Me, and did not keep My Torah" (Jeremiah 16:11). R. Huna and R. Yirmiya elaborate in the name of R. Yirmiya son of Abba: "GoD says: *Had they but forsaken Me and kept My Torah, the illumination in her would have turned them back to the good.*"⁴

Theologies and philosophies alone are not sufficient to identify the basic truths which apply to human life. We think as we are, and Judaism is a complete program for transforming the human sphere. It provides a mandate for implementation of Torah instruction by persons and societies. Those who live by the Torah will acknowledge GoD as an expression of what they are, and not simply as an idea. But those who reject the Torah will also reject the GoD of Israel, since without the Torah man lacks the basis for undistorted knowledge about GoD.

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The Sages of the Talmud are the primary source for authentic knowledge about GoD in relation to man, and about man in the sight of GoD. In the context of the reality of relationships sustained through participation by man and GoD, what follows is a unique lesson concerning the autonomy of man at full stature. By personal example, the Sages teach us that man is mighty in this world when serving the Almighty through adherence to the Torah. *For that is the will of God.*

An application of Torah law came up for consideration in the house of study. Rabbi Eliezer ruled: "Pure!" All the other Sages present ruled: "Impure!"

On that occasion, Rabbi Eliezer countered with every possible

argument. But the other Sages did not yield to him by accepting any of them. Whereupon he finally said: "If the law accords with my ruling, let this be shown from Heaven."

A bat-kol (echo-voice) issued, saying: "Rabbi Eliezer! – the law follows his ruling in every instance!"

Rabbi Yehoshua rose to his feet, and said: "It is not in Heaven" (Deuteronomy 30).

What "is not in Heaven"?

Said Rabbi Yirmiya: "The Torah has already been given from Mount Sinai. No bat-kol is heeded. For You have already written from Mount Sinai in the Torah: "Incline after the majority" (Exodus 23)."

The majority ruling was accepted as law.

The Talmud goes on to relate that when subsequently Rabbi Natan 'encountered' Elijah the Prophet (visiting from the celestial realms), he asked him: "What did the Holy One do at that moment (of learned self-assertion)?"

Elijah said: "He smiled, and declared: My children have vanquished Me! My children have vanquished Me!"

BT Bava Mezia 59b

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In Judaism, obligations to GoD are obligations to man. Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman taught: *To be a servant of GoD is for man's purpose. Serving GoD for GoD's purpose is idol worship.*⁵

In the Torah strategy for human development, a person is held responsible as well for the welfare of the community, with reciprocal benefits for the individual and society. In Creation there is not I-alone, nor you-alone, nor GoD-alone. There is the reality of relationships – in the human sphere: man to GoD, man to man, GoD to man. "Love your companion as yourself," is conceptually and ontologically linked to "I am GoD." Accordingly, the nation Israel is defined in the Book of Deuteronomy (32:9) as "the portion of GoD": as "Jacob the cord of His inheritance." This relationship is a triply entwined enduring cord that connects the three patriarchs to each other, links all Jews in history, and binds them to the same ever-attentive One GoD.

Here we may recall the Talmudic teaching, *There is no artist like our GoD.*⁶ A man fashions some product, and the product

exists independently of that man. But the Creator continues to sustain His creation.

At issue, minimally, is the survival of man. Optimally, the destiny of mankind at full stature is anticipated in what is traditionally termed the covenant between GoD and the Jewish people. The covenant includes the promise that Israel will be a guiding “light” to the community of nations.⁷ By inference, love for the Jewish people is the anticipated context for the brotherhood of all peoples.

“All of you is beautiful, My beloved” (Song of Songs 4:7). GoD says to the Congregation of Israel: “all of you” – when you are whole; when spiritual beauty is joined to physical beauty – that is beautiful in My sight. When the physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions are joined in man through adherence to the Word of GoD, man as soul-via-body existence gains access to optimal abundance in the Promised Land. This anticipates the conditions for mankind to gain access to the Promised Planet.

For The Sake Of Heaven

In the *Hoshen Mishpat* compendium of applied Torah laws, the following ruling appears.⁸ When a community is faced with a problem in the public domain, and there is a difference of opinion about what should be done, a vote is taken and the course of action conforms to the majority view. However, prior to voting, *every individual will declare that his conviction is for the sake of Heaven.*⁹ If there are some who refuse to make this declaration, *their opinion is discarded and the rest vote to establish the majority view.* The entire community is then bound by the decision of the majority.

This *Hoshen Mishpat* ruling entails that if one acts for the sake of Heaven, then one votes. If one does not act for the sake of Heaven, the principle of majority rule does not apply.

If everyone votes for the common good and if everyone wants to improve the world, then the principle of majority rule applies. But if people vote *not* for the sake of Heaven, then there is no principle of “incline after the majority.” According to the Torah, to act for the sake of Heaven is to act for the good of man with a pure motive. Man is enjoined to serve GoD as the way to cherish man. “My servant Moses” was the “faithful shepherd” of his people.

Chapter 6

The Emptiness Within

A human being at full stature ascends from one significant stage in life to another. The ascent proceeds in harmony with the “earth” in man and the “heaven” in man; both are from GoD for cultivation by the individual. Peace can then prevail between one man and another, between one tent and another,¹ and between one nation and another.

Happy is the man basking in the sunlight
Who learned to sing before learning to speak
To feel before learning to think
To be before trying to explain.

Happy is the man who has always lived
In the Promised Land

Like Adam in the Garden.

*But together with Adam we were all driven from the Garden;
and – individually or collectively – we have yet To Return to
the promised Promised Land.*

The Emptiness Within

Whether it be to create or to destroy, “man is born to toil” (Job 5:7). Jacob “sits in tents,” exploring a vision anchored in GoD and in man as “in the image of GoD” (Genesis 25:27; 1:27). Esau is a hunter.² He craves game, including human prey, to

fill the emptiness within. Esau and Jacob are not necessarily, or potentially, different persons.

"The grave and the perdition are never sated;" people never stop dying; "so the eyes of man," of a man who is empty, "are never sated" (Proverbs 27:20). His eyes are windows to the grave within. "The grave has enlarged itself: and opened its mouth without measure" (Isaiah 5:14).

The Talmud says³ that Cain possessed the entire world, yet his eyes were not sated; for the grave and the perdition within are never sated.

Isaac understood his son Esau. He fathomed Esau's need. Isaac wanted to save him, fill him with blessings,⁴ direct him to the true source of blessing and plenty, annul his emptiness.

"Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Proverbs 30:7). Do not grant me wealth that is poverty. I should not crave more and more gain, for such wealth is poverty. Let it be, rather, "The blessing of GoD that makes rich, and He never adds sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22). I should not feel sorrow because others possess more.

In full awareness that our rightful possessions are from GoD, we rejoice. As the Sages have taught: Who is rich? – he who rejoices in his portion; as it is said: "When you eat the labor of your hands, happy are you, and it shall go well with you" (Psalms 128:2): *happy* in this world and *it shall go well with you* in the world to come.⁵

Abel is full, and he knows the source of his abundance. He is replete with knowledge of the best about himself; and his offering to GoD is of "the choicest of his flocks" (Genesis 4:14). But Cain cannot spare much; his hunger comes first. Cain kills his brother⁶ to fill his emptiness, but he remains empty. He feels threatened on every side by phantoms; his own hungers lie in wait for him. "Anyone that finds me will slay me" (Genesis 4:14), he whimpers, anticipating Esau's wail, "Behold, I am going to die!" (Genesis 25:32).

Whether it be to create or to destroy, human striving never ceases. Envy, lust and honor remove a man from the world, says the Talmud.⁷ That is why, said a sage, "The grave and the perdition are never sated."⁸

Alexander "the Great" died young. Arriving at the gateway to paradise, he shouted, "Open, O gates!"

The response came, "This is the gate of GoD; the righteous may enter into it."

"I too am a king," he shouted. They handed him the head of a corpse. One of its eyes was open. He placed the head on one pan of a scale, and on the other pan he placed all the gold and silver in his possession. The head outweighed the gold and silver.

"What is the meaning of this?!" he demanded.

"That is the eye of a man, and it is never sated."

"Can you show this to be the reason?" he demanded.

"Take a bit of sand and cover the eye." No sooner had he done so, than the pan came down on the side of the gold and silver.

Thus it says, "The grave and the perdition are never sated; so the eyes of man are never sated."

BT Tamid 32b

Profanation Of The Name

"The Torah of GoD is complete, restoring the soul" (Psalms 19:2). Having become "like a tree planted by streams of water," a man civilized by the Torah is like a tree that "brings forth its fruit in its season" (Psalms 1:3). But "he who sins against me," the Torah says, "does violence to his soul; and those who hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:35-36). They hate GoD.

A man may deliberately adopt the stance that GoD is absent. This is called *hillul Hashem*, literally, "emptying" of the Name of GoD. As in the world of Sartre's literary imagination, there appears to be "no exit" for human existence.⁹ The psychological self is not distinguished from the ontological self, and both are terminated simultaneously. Faced with this prospect, "in one's increase of understanding there is an increase of pain" (Ecclesiastes 1:18); and there is "terror in the land of the living" (Ezekiel 32:23). The strong despair; The weak turn away to become frenzied seekers after some unceasing pleasure, until overtaken by the oblivion of death.

"For GoD has controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor love, nor knowledge of GoD in the land. There is swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing harlotry; they break all bounds, and blood leads to blood" (Hosea 4:1-3).

How can it happen? How can the human psyche accept the total negation of GoD and opt for self-annihilation? According to Rabbi Nahman of Breslov, one possible answer is that the soul can become so sullied, that justice requires of GoD to put the thought of the total negation of GoD in our way.¹⁰

My people ask counsel of a piece of wood, and their staff declares to them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to err, and they have gone astray lewdly from under their GoD.

Hosea 4:12

When we are distorted, our comprehension is distorted. The “withered wretch” says “there is no GoD” (Psalms 14:1). But that very thought is a test, an invitation to look beyond – to Him who tests us. All is not lost.

Though “I am fallen” so low that I cannot fall any lower, that is when “I rise; though I sit in darkness” during my fall, “GoD is a light to me.”

Micah 7:8

Human beings may become incapable of transcending the impasse created by their thoughts and deeds. Still, all is not lost. For another human being, one whose spirit is on a different level, can serve as a guide to the “exit.” When “men of evil do not understand judgment,” they “who seek GoD understand all things” (Proverbs 28:5). When Moses descended from the mountain, he put a stop to the frenzied dancing around the Golden Calf.¹¹ Abraham “lit the way” for his contemporaries.

He said to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the Children of Israel, to the rebellious nations that rebelled against Me – they and their fathers have offended Me – to this day. And the children are hard-faced and hard-hearted; I am sending you to them; say to them: Thus said the Lord GoD. And they – whether they hear, or desist, because they are a rebellious house – they will know that there was a prophet among them.

Ezekiel 2:3-5

Chapter 7

A Parable About Man

When the scorpion strikes, it strikes without hatred. Hatred is a human vehemence. The bayonet impales a little child in sight of his mother, who shrieks in Yiddish. There is no hatred in the bayonet. Hatred is human, kin to love: “Esau” the twin of “Jacob.” Like Esau and Jacob struggling in the same womb,¹ hatred and love contend for the hearts of men, both equally hungry for blessings² whereby to inherit heaven and earth.

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Jacob was blessed, first with the blessings of heaven (“dew”) and then of the earth (Genesis 27:28),³ while Esau was blessed, first with the blessings of the earth and then of heaven;⁴ each brother first in accordance with his dominant aspiration. Isaac’s intention was to properly join the spiritual and the physical in his sons, as a legacy for their descendants.⁵

A Parable About Man

In every human being there is both a jacob impulse and an esau impulse. These elements are fundamental. Their relative magnitudes at any given time establish dominant behavior. In a jacob dominant person (Jacob), the non-dominant esau impulse is in abeyance, but it is not absent. As it were, the “voice of jacob” is heard but not the “voice of esau.” The obverse condition prevails in an esau dominant person (Esau).

The jacob impulse in one person can discern and interact with the jacob impulse in others within some range of proximity.

As a result of that interaction, or “resonance,” each jacob amplitude is increased, and the influence of each jacob impulse is reinforced accordingly. If person A interacts with person B, the degree of reinforcement of the jacob impulse in A and in B depends on the original amplitudes of the jacob impulse in A and in B.

The esau impulse in one person can discern and interact with the esau impulse in others within some range of proximity. As a result of that interaction, or “resonance,” each esau amplitude is increased, and the influence of each esau impulse is reinforced accordingly. If person A interacts with person B, the degree of reinforcement of the esau impulse in A and in B depends on the original amplitudes of the esau impulse in A and in B.

If the jacob impulse is initially dominant in all persons within an interacting group – each is a Jacob – its dominance in every individual is reinforced. This is because the increase in the jacob amplitude is then greater than the increase in the esau amplitude. If the opposite occurs, and the esau impulse is initially dominant in all persons within an interacting group – each is an Esau – its dominance in every individual is reinforced. Because the increase in the esau amplitude is then greater than the increase in the jacob amplitude.

Here we may recall the Talmudic teaching “*A gathering of the righteous is of benefit both to themselves and to the world, (since righteousness is reinforced in everyone) and a gathering of the wicked is bad both for themselves and for the world (since wickedness is reinforced in everyone.)*”⁶

If, however, the initial dominance in some members of the group is of opposite polarity, then the jacob- or esau- dominance in specific individuals may be weakened or strengthened. Some may even change their polarities: Jacob becomes Esau or Esau becomes Jacob.

The proximity of an esau dominant person and a jacob dominant person (Esau and Jacob) presents a situation of conflict. Because the non-dominant impulse in each is then reinforced more strongly than the dominant impulse, the present dominance, or polarity, is significantly challenged in each person, and both feel threatened. Granted that every person is committed either consciously or unconsciously – (depending on the relative amplitudes of the two impulses)

– to sustain the present condition of dominance or polarity, the struggle is joined against the invigorated internal threat. The inner confrontation is projected as hatred for the external protagonist: the stronger the threat, the more fierce is the struggle and the greater the hatred. The symmetry of the analysis would seem to force the conclusion: Esau hates Jacob; Jacob hates Esau. Yet nowhere in the Scriptures is it stated that Jacob hates Esau. An explanation will be forthcoming.

*Because of my love they hated me
Because of my love for Him.*

Psalms 109:4 and Rashi's commentary

Let us consider a tentative proposition: One is affected by hatred for another, when there is some element in the other which one does not accommodate in oneself. In other words, one is affected by hatred for another when there is some element in both oneself and in the other with which one does not properly accommodate.

The Parable Turns Into Biblical Reality

The struggle for dominance between Esau and Jacob is clearly and unequivocally expressed in the Genesis narrative. Before birth, "the children struggled within her" (Genesis 25:22) and this was followed by the struggle to be born first. Here the Midrash amplifies upon a central manifestation of what we have called more generally esau dominance and jacob dominance: Whenever their mother Rebecah passed by a place where the Word of GoD was studied, Jacob strove to emerge; and whenever she passed by a place of idol worship, Esau strove to emerge.⁷ Idolatry involves an attitude that accords supreme status to some manifestation of nature. For instance, one might relate to one's biological self as the apex of reality; and the esau impulse identified accordingly as the impulse of man's biology. Significantly, later in the narrative Esau is shown to be preoccupied with feeding and death. On the other hand, the jacob impulse might be identified as the impulse of the spirit; man "in the image of GoD" is invigorated by and is in open communication with the "Word of GoD." The jacob impulse in oneself resonates with the jacob impulse in others.

In the Genesis story, actually and symbolically, and in keeping with the earlier Genesis narrative about Adam where biology had a head start over spirit,⁸ Esau is the first to emerge from the womb. But Jacob grasps his heel.⁹ This last circumstance is no small matter: spirit (the jacob impulse) functions to place limits on biology and preclude destructive excess. Then again, biology provides the raw powers which spirit can channel to accomplish its ends in the human sphere. Solely in this sense does Jacob challenge Esau for the birth-right. For the sake of man's future on a global scale, ideally, "Mount Zion" aspires to "judge Mount Seir."¹⁰

The struggle for supremacy continues on more than one plane. The narrative reveals that Jacob is evidently not concerned with death.¹¹ This freedom is an advantage expressed as an attraction to goals of the spirit that are unknown to biology. In contrast, the organism as a biological entity is at all times taken up with fending off the ever-present spectre of death.¹² Esau is a hunter who kills to eat. When, therefore, Esau feels that he is on the verge of death by starvation, he readily forgoes a spiritual asset (the birthright) for a biological asset (food).¹³

At the biological level, the individual is not indifferent to death. "Behold, I am going to die! So what is the birthright to me?" (Genesis 25:32). The highest value is the preservation of biological life, and the acquisition of food to preserve it. Esau honors his father by feeding him.¹⁴ But the spiritual man seeks not to avoid biological death, but rather "to dwell in the house of GoD" (Psalms 27:4).

Therefore, when Isaac finally blesses Esau, he speaks of food and one particular, physical means of its acquisition – the sword.¹⁵ These are the meaningful terms in the biological lexicon of the esau dominant man. When he blesses Jacob, however, albeit in almost identical terms, there is a significant difference: Isaac speaks of GoD as the source of blessings.¹⁶

In the biological orientation, a father is honored as the ultimate source of one's own life, which in turn holds the promise of self-perpetuation through progeny. To Esau, DNA is what matters.

*Honor the DNA of your father, that the days of your own DNA
may be long...*

It is otherwise for Jacob. Subsequently, when blessing his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, he will continue in them the lineage conveyed by his name and the names of his father and grandfather. But he will twice speak of GoD before invoking his protective angel to bestow the blessing.

The Talmud speaks of three partners in man: father, mother and GoD. Individual survival is linked to all these aspects.¹⁷ This becomes evident when the fifth commandment in the Book of Exodus¹⁸ is superimposed on the corresponding text in the Book of Deuteronomy: “Honor your father and your mother, *as GoD your GoD commanded you*, that your days *may be long upon the earth*” (5:16).¹⁹

To one whose principal concern is feeding to fend off biological demise, feeding another is the supreme act of devotion and homage. According to the Midrash, Esau wore royal robes when serving food to his father.²⁰ He recognized no other commandments or priorities. Yet in the Decalogue, the fifth commandment is enshrined alongside commandments that place priority on obeying the will of GoD who willed all the commandments. Thus it says further in the Book of Leviticus, “Any man will fear his mother and his father, and you will keep My Sabbaths: I am GoD your GoD” (Leviticus 19:3).²¹ If a father tells his son to profane the Sabbath, the son is not to take heed.²²

According to the Talmud, if one profanes the Sabbath, that is like worshipping idols.²³ It is no less so when perpetrated at a parent’s behest. Ancestor worship can also become idolatry. The Kaddish prayer, recited for a deceased parent, does not glorify the parent; it glorifies GoD.

The Midrash teaches that on the day when Esau went forth to hunt for food for his father, he blasphemed against GoD and denied the reality of resurrection. He also raped and murdered.²⁴ On the same day he sold his spiritual birthright, which is thus offered as the explanatory link to his other activities.

Jacob

The Jacob dominant Jacob strives for goals of the spirit that transcend the mortal domain. “Choose life!” Moses urges (Deuteronomy 30:19), speaking in the Name of GoD. There is always a “remnant of Jacob ... as the dew from GoD” (Micah

5:6). Moses goes without food and drink for forty days and nights (Exodus 34:28), sustained by the Word of GoD. GoD “breathed” into man the “soul of life” (Genesis 2:7); and Jacob cares about the birthright that is linked to goals of the spirit, namely, to serve GoD.²⁵ His high purpose is anchored in the non-mortal (and “firstborn”) Adam.

“One thing I have asked of GoD” in the past, the Psalmist says; “and that will I seek” in the future. “That I may dwell in the house of GoD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of GoD, and to visit early in His temple” (Psalms 27:4).²⁶ The first-fruit and the firstborn are consecrated to the Holy Temple.²⁷

When the opportunity is not seized to heed the “voice of GoD” within the “voice of Jacob” (Genesis 27:22), men and nations can so degenerate that their “wine” – their very best produce (in music, literature, science or any other field) – is as “the rage of crocodiles and the cruel poison of asps” (Deuteronomy 32:33).²⁸

The Talmud tells us that if the Jewish people had not accepted the Torah, no nation could have withstood them.²⁹ The power and fury of Levi, son of Jacob, who with his brother slaughtered an entire city to avenge the rape of their sister,³⁰ was harnessed in his descendants, the Levites, for the purpose of teaching Torah and for chanting psalms in the Holy Temple.³¹

Esau is the protagonist who lives by the sword, who sheds blood; he is the “hand”³² that must strike because he knows of no other way to survive. But Jacob “sits in tents” of study;³³ “the voice of Jacob” articulates meaning and truth.³⁴ His energies are devoted to the conquest of horizons anchored in GoD, and he seeks to explain and justify all of existence. Why is there created existence? For by the will of GoD, “a righteous man is the foundation of the world” (Proverbs 10:25).

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Jacob dreamt of a ladder standing on the earth and its top reaching up to heaven; “and, behold, the angels of GoD were ascending and descending on it. And, behold, GoD stood over him (it)” (Genesis 28:12).³⁵ Jacob acknowledges no absolute intermediary forces; he knows that GoD is the creator of biological reality as well. This would explain why Holy Scripture never speaks of Jacob hating Esau.

The Talmud relates that Rabbi Meir had violent neighbors

who disturbed him, and he prayed for their death.³⁶ His wife Bruriah said to him: "What are you thinking?! Do you pray for their death because it says, 'Let sinners (*hataim*) cease from the earth' (Psalms 104:35)? However, it does not say *hotim* (sinners). It says *hataim* (sins)!" Sins, not sinners, should cease from the earth, and then "the wicked will be no more."

Esau And Jacob Meet And Embrace

In light of the foregoing analysis, it is significant that upon returning to the land of his birth, and facing the threat of Esau, Jacob struggles against what the Midrash identifies as "the envoy of Esau,"³⁷ which according to Rabbenu Malbim is his own body.³⁸ He struggles for supremacy over his biological self, his esau impulse, now reinforced by his brother's proximity. Emerging victorious, he emerges as *Israel*, "GoD will rule" (*isra-El*).³⁹ He then comes face to face with Esau and an extraordinary thing happens. "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and they wept" (Genesis 33:4).

Said Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: "It is a *halacha* (rule) that Esau hates Jacob. However, that one time only, his [Esau's] compassion was stirred, and he kissed him [Jacob] with all his heart."⁴⁰ Understood in terms of the present analysis, this says: Because the jacob impulse was now supremely dominant in Jacob, the jacob impulse in Esau was sufficiently reinforced to momentarily overcome the esau impulse. The polarity of Esau was changed, and he kissed Jacob wholeheartedly.

That scenario is the prototype for some ultimate future scenario. Once "the saviors will have gone up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount Seir" (Obadiah 1:21) – Seir as the home of the Esau peoples (Genesis 36) – "GoD will be one and His name will be one" (Zechariah 14:9). When the jacob impulse becomes sufficiently powerful in all Israel, through reinforcement by means of Divine intervention (Ezekiel 11), it will then become the dominant mode in all men and women. GoD will be acknowledged universally.⁴¹

Abraham was promised, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have harkened to My voice" (Genesis 22:18). When the descendants of Abraham are powerfully invigorated by the voice of GoD, and Jacob is fully "Israel," the jacob impulse can become dominant in all human beings.

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In contrast to His presence over Jacob's ladder, GoD is not said to be standing over Mount Seir. Esau does not set GoD above himself. To compare: "Thus says GoD *Elo-him* concerning Edom: Though you elevate high as the eagle, and you set your nest among the stars – from there I will bring you down. GoD has spoken" (Obadiah 1:4). Those who dwell on Mount Zion will ascend Mount Seir in the Name of GoD – symbolically, by means of the "ladder."

The Parable Continues As Collective Reality

On their way to Mount Sinai, the descendants of Jacob were attacked by the Amalek people,⁴² descendants of Esau. In the constellation projected in Holy Scripture, Amalek symbolizes the principle of the negation of GoD vis-a-vis the principle of affirmation symbolized by the children of Israel; Amalek stands for the denial of GoD and of His intervention in history, as opposed to "GoD will rule."

In the ensuing battle, we are informed that whenever Moses lifted his hands to Heaven (the people raised their eyes and lifted their hearts to Heaven⁴³), Israel gained the upper hand. When his hands (and their hearts) sagged, the Amalekites gained the upper hand. The dominance of Jacob (jacob) is not compatible with the dominance of Esau (esau).

Amalek is the collective esau impulse that functions in opposition to the collective jacob impulse. This ontological negation and mutual incompatibility, is explicitly formulated in the strongest possible terms as a manifesto addressed to the collective Jacob, the Jewish people. "Inscribe it in a document as a reminder, and set it in the ears of Joshua: I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven... GoD will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:14-16).⁴⁴

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Significantly, in the cited passage, "throne" and "GoD" appear truncated: respectively, *kes* is written instead of *kise* (the letter aleph, "one," is missing) and only half the

Tetragrammaton (Y-H) appears. This indicates that the rule of GoD is incomplete so long as there are men and nations who do not “call on the Name of GoD.”

On the one hand it says that GoD will “blot out”; elsewhere, GoD commands the Israelites to “blot out the memory of Amalek” (Deuteronomy 25:19). In the reality of relationships sustained through joint participation of man and GoD, man and GoD in collaboration “will blot out the memory of Amalek” in Creation on every level.

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In the aftermath of the sin of the Golden Calf, GoD said to Moses, “that I may consume them, and I will make of you a great nation” (Exodus 32:10). There was no question of discontinuing the enterprise entirely and leaving mankind without a collective Jacob. Moses alone would then continue the enterprise through his progeny.

The children of Israel were subsequently commanded: “They shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). By dwelling in the midst of this people, GoD would come to be acknowledged by all the nations. “My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7). Divine Presence will join the individual sanctuaries into a collective sanctuary.

The attitude of the nations to the children of Israel is the test of their attitude to God. *They who take a stand against the Jewish people, is as if they take a stand against God.*⁴⁵

The Created World Is A Parable

In the Book of Books, the created world can be understood as a parable. The parable is unfinished. Since man can choose, man can “decree” how the parable will continue as the parchment unrolls into the future.

In the human sphere, there has always been hatred and peril. The foregoing “retelling” of the Esau – Jacob story suggests an explanation for one age old hatred, namely, hating the Jew. The idea as elaborated is based on the insight: *When a man is impelled by hatred for another, the reason may be the existence of an element in him and in the other which he does not tolerate.* In this sense, then,

in hating another one hates the other in oneself.

How might the idea be taken beyond its allegorical dimension, and the insight applied to hasten the true dawn in human affairs?⁴⁶ How is Torah instruction for persons and societies to be implemented effectively?

The following answer camouflages at least as much as it discloses:

A call comes to me from Seir.⁴⁷ Watchman, what of night? Watchman, what of night? Watchman said: Morning comes and also night; if you wish to ask, come back.

Isaiah 21:11-12

Evidently, we are enjoined to help end the “night” of exile.

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How is loving GoD related to dominance of the jacob impulse? How is dominance or non-dominance of the jacob impulse related to the conception of reality as relationships sustained through participation by man and GoD?

When Joseph and his brothers met again in Egypt, they were reconciled. Past reckonings were forgotten. Joseph “kissed all his brothers and wept upon them” (Genesis 45:15). Unlike Cain’s response, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9), Joseph, who saved mankind from starvation, the dreamer who joined heaven and earth, the supreme interpreter of GoD’s will for man, said: “Am I then in place of GoD?” (Genesis 50:19).

The narrative of Joseph’s reunion with his family likewise discloses a discourse on larger realities. The broad context includes the universal aspect of “Am I then in place of GoD.” Here Joseph expresses his subservience to GoD’s design. This larger reality anticipates what will eventually happen in the future – recognition of the true GoD by everyone: “For then I will turn the peoples to a pure speech; that they may call in the Name of GoD, to serve Him with one consent” (Zechariah 3:9).⁴⁸

A pertinent additional text, in Genesis 45:4 and 46:29, expresses in a larger context: Joseph “fell on the necks of his brother Benjamin, and he wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck;

Joseph harnessed his chariot ... to meet his father; he appeared to him, fell on his neck, and wept upon his neck exceedingly."

Rashi comments: The plural form, "necks (*zavarei*)," alludes to the two Temples in Jerusalem, located in the land portion of Benjamin, which would eventually be destroyed.⁴⁹

Symbolically referring to the Temple, the Scripture says, "Your neck is like an ivory tower" (Song of Songs 7:5).⁵⁰ White as ivory and statuesque as a tower, the Temple was the spiritual might and shield of Israel.⁵¹

Joseph mourned for these national tragedies, which would occur in Israel's future.

The destruction of the sanctuaries would be a tragedy not only for Israel. The Midrash states that *if the nations knew how fine a thing the Temple was for them, they would surround it with fortresses to guard it*.⁵² In this connection, it is instructive to recall their teaching: *Moses prayed that Divine Presence abide in Israel; and that it should not abide in those who worship idols*.⁵³

In the reality of relationships, which is intrinsic to the Sinai Covenant, the collective Israel is the conduit for Divine abundance in the human sphere. "The Most High ... will set stable boundaries of the nations, according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8).⁵⁴ Consideration of the particular overlaps consideration of the universal issues of mankind.

Expressed as a fundamental law, what is prescribed for the human domain generally corresponds to what takes place in the Domain of GoD.

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, the mighty man glory in his might, the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glories, glory in this, that he is enlightened and knows Me. For I GoD perform kindness, justice and righteousness" (Jeremiah 9:22-23). Once a man is "enlightened and knows Me" then he is to glory in his wisdom, his might and his riches.⁵⁵ What in the human domain is considered kindness, justice and righteousness corresponds to Kindness, Justice and Righteousness in the Domain of GoD.

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"Benjamin ... wept." Joseph mourned for the two Temples,

located in the land portion of Benjamin, and Benjamin mourned for the Tabernacle in Shilo, in the land portion of Joseph, which would also be destroyed.⁵⁶

“Joseph ... wept ... exceedingly.” The Rashi commentary infers that only Joseph wept. At that moment, his father Jacob was saying: “Hear, O Israel, GoD our GoD, GoD is one” – a devotion that brooked no interruption.⁵⁷

Understood in the large, Joseph mourned; he “wept ... exceedingly” for all the tragedies Jacob’s descendants would suffer throughout history. But Jacob did not perpetuate mourning; the third patriarch of the Jewish people was immersed in devout contemplation; and he voiced the supreme manifesto for his progeny in every generation. He foresaw that the GoD of Israel would always sustain the survival of His people. He likewise anticipated the martyrdom of Jews reciting the *Shema* to sanctify the Name of GoD.

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The night can be dispelled. In a single confrontation, the oscillations of hatred can come to an end. The transformed Esau and Jacob can meet, kiss, and even weep for the past amidst rejoicing for the future.

Stated canonically, the design and test of human destiny is linked to the existence of the Jew. If the love for GoD – a welcoming response to the voice of GoD addressing man – becomes dominant in the Jewish people, it can become dominant in all human beings.

GoD appears to those who desire that He appear to them. In consonance with Isaiah’s words (Isaiah 2:2,3; 42:6), we may recall the following projected reading of the Word of GoD (Exodus 3:14): “I will be” with them who desire “that I will be” with them.⁵⁸

Chapter 8

Hating The Jew – Loving The Jew

Hatred for the Jew appears to be a physical addiction. “They who eat my people have eaten bread.” King David said twice in the Book of Psalms,¹ once about his own era and once apparently concerning the future. Devouring the Jewish people seems like eating bread, which has a sweet taste. Usually, when one eats the same food, it often becomes distasteful. That is not true of bread, whose taste never cloys.

Like all addicts, the anti-Semite cares about intensifying his pleasure. If he professes belief in GoD, the profession of faith apparently serves that purpose. Were it pointed out to him that GoD loves the Jews, and he became convinced it was true, he would most likely begin to look elsewhere for his fix. Unwilling or unable to accommodate such an affront to his convictions, he would deny GoD and intensify his hatred.

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“Avenge the children of Israel on the Midianites ... to impose GoD’s vengeance on Midian” (Numbers 31:1-3) – which leads to the inference: *They who take a stand against the Jewish people, is as if they take a stand against GoD.*²

“Advance, O GoD! May Your enemies be scattered...” (Numbers 10:35). Are there enemies before the One who spoke and the world came into being?! Rather, the Scripture tells that if one hates Israel, it is as if one hates the One who spoke and the world came into being.³ The enemies of GoD are the enemies of Israel.

In the confrontation between David and Goliath, Goliath

cried, "I defy the ranks of Israel," to which David responded to Goliath's defiance of "the ranks of the living GoD."⁴

Shouting "*Allah Akhbar!*" Islamists continue to incite one another, calling for a *Jihad*, a "holy war" against both the Jewish people and the State of Israel. In the Book of Numbers, Balaam likewise sought to destroy the Jewish people by invoking some irresistible incantation. He hated the Israelites,⁵ but was nevertheless compelled to bless them. "How shall I curse whom GoD has not cursed? Or how shall I denounce whom GoD has not denounced?" (Numbers 23:8).

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Scenes by El Greco on canvas

Suffering
in the image of a man
Suffering.
Figures in ardent worship.

The figures stir / Descend to the mob
To increase suffering.

In the Crusades, the Jews of Europe were victims; in the Inquisition the Jews were victims; in the Holocaust the Jews were murdered by baptized Christians.

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Some speak easily of love, even of GoD as Love; and they cite, "Love your companion as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). They totally ignore the Word of GoD which proclaims that love for the Jewish people is the prophesied context for the brotherhood of all peoples.

One can love another when loving oneself, love oneself when loving another. But to become truly abundant and wise at loving, one must first pass through a preliminary stage – to abide by the teaching "What is hateful to you, do not do to another."⁶

ooo

In the “Passion Play” about Christ performed throughout the centuries, the imagery of the legendary crucifixion is amplified by details of extreme violence. Today, neither Jew nor Gentile can avoid voicing an honest question.

Why has Christianity made the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth its *perpetual* theme? Why is the crucifix still the central icon for many? Why the continued fixation on the blood, the gore, and the violence? What follows may be significant in the quest to identify the full truth.

When “GoD incarnate” is exhibited as a man stricken, crucified, emaciated and helpless – this image carries a visual impact which conveys a devastating message: *man is a being stricken, crucified, emaciated and helpless*. The message shocks and insults the psyche which absorbs this dismal imagery as the condition of man.

The shock of violent insult generates rage. Rage seeks an outlet, a target: the Jew! Have not Christians been taught that this stricken, emaciated and helpless image of man, alias their crucified self-image, was a Jew?!

In order to keep the faithful devoted to Christ and away from Judaism, it may well be that the early Apostles devised a political strategy based on exploiting the violence so mercilessly inflicted upon the psyche. They would perpetuate hatred for Jews by making the crucifixion and the crucifix a necessary ritual presence in the lives of all Christians.

ooo

A gathering of the righteous, the Talmud says, is of benefit both to themselves and to the world.⁷ “A righteous man is the foundation of the world” (Proverbs 10:25). If the righteous wanted, they could create worlds.⁸ Righteous Gentiles share in the world to come.⁹

The legacy from Mount Sinai perceives man – man “in the image of GoD” – as challenged to “choose life” and to emulate the compassionate “ways” of GoD (Deuteronomy 30:16,19).¹⁰ The righteous reach out to others, aware that to cherish man is to acknowledge man as created in the image of GoD. This awareness echoes the teaching of Rabbi Akiba: “Beloved is man created in the image; it is a superior love that informed man that he was created in the image.”¹¹

ooo

Hillel taught: "What is hateful to you, do not do to another."

As it is hateful to you to turn the other cheek when struck, do not expect it to be different for others.

One does not cherish oneself by turning the other cheek. If one is compassionate towards those who are cruel, one ends up being cruel to those who are compassionate;¹² and one reinforces the sadistic element in the other. Neither the victim nor the assailant comes closer to viewing every man as GoD's creation "in the image of GoD."

As it is hateful to you when forced to accept another man's ideas and worship, do not force others to accept your ideas and your worship.

Christianity teaches that what you wish others to do to you, you are to do to them.

If you cherish the ideas you were taught and the faith in which you have been educated, you are under obligation to force others to accept those ideas and live by that faith.

If you are convinced that belief in Christ – and that alone – brings salvation to the soul, you are to propagate this conviction. Force it upon others. By the authority of the Church, force it upon the Jews to save their souls, even if you must torture and burn their bodies.

The Judaic Teaching

A number of significant contrasts may be identified in the Torah vision about man.

When "justice and peace" will "have kissed" (Psalms 85:11) as a universal human condition, this will include justice done by one person in relation to others, *as well as* justice done in relation to oneself. The first foundation of peace in the domain of *living human beings* is a proper balance of justice for everyone. According to the Book of Exodus, one must *help* ease the load on another man's donkey. One is not obliged to act alone, while

the owner looks on; "... you must raise it *with him*" (Exodus 23:5). According to the Torah, the Almighty combines the measure of justice and the measure of compassion in the world; and man is bidden to emulate His "ways."

To Save Their Souls

We can identify the distortion that made this outlook possible within Christianity.

In the Genesis story of the non-mortal Adam as soul-via-body existence, Judaism teaches that *the essence of Divine Presence was below*.¹³ This teaching – with its grand implications for human worth – has not been superseded. In the context of the individual person, Judaism identifies and indeed glorifies soul-via-body existence of man as potentially the "chariot" – the carrier – of Divine Presence.¹⁴ There is no such Judaic teaching regarding soul-without-body existence. The righteous individual, as soul-via-body existence, "is the foundation of the world." There is no corresponding statement about the soul, or soul-existence. "Choose life" affirms the primacy of *living human beings* in the sight of GoD.

By the Word of GoD to man, concern for the preservation and welfare of the person as soul-via-body existence is stipulated as a primary obligation.

The laws of the Torah are "nails well fastened" (Ecclesiastes 12:11,13) to Divine Presence; and in the human reality sustained through participation by man and GoD, there are laws which function as meta-laws.

On the Sabbath ... you shall not do any work.

On the Sabbath, all work is permitted to save lives.

Exodus 20:10; BT *Shabbat* 132a

When, instead, the welfare of the soul is considered pre-eminent in the sight of GoD, human worth is compromised; indeed the obligation to preserve soul-via-body individual existence is submerged. This distortion of the Word of GoD has led to the sanctification of murder both in Christianity and in Islam.

Torquemada

Praying For

The Final Inquisition

GoD Weeps.

Divine Presence is exiled from the human sphere.

In their zeal for saving the soul of the person, Christians have invented ostensibly mitigating grounds for justifying in the sight of GoD the destruction of the soul-via-body existence of people.

When, calling “*Allah Akhbar*,” a Muslim terrorist self-explodes in a crowd, he or she commits the same offense against man and GoD, distorting the Word of GoD.

GoD “In The Image”

Christianity advances the claim, or so it appears, that truth is disclosed as well in the inversion of the Torah teaching about man as “in the image of GoD.” It asserts the possibility, and its realization in history, of GoD as *in the image of man*.

In Torah teaching, man “in the image of GoD” identifies a relationship; man participates in a relationship, a creation, sustained by man and GoD.¹⁵

*If the righteous wanted they could create worlds.*¹⁶ Man emulates the Creator; man’s participation, which involves creation by man, parallels GoD’s participation – a creation by GoD. This relationship would apply as well to Jesus the man.

The inferred correspondence between man’s capacity to create, and creation by GoD, in no way compels human reason – a creation by GoD – to insist on a corresponding equivalence between *being man* and *The Supreme Being*.

We may restate Rabbi Akiba’s aforementioned teaching: *Beloved is man created in the image...* Beloved is man created to participate in relationships sustained by man and the Creator. GoD loving is a creation. Man loving emulates GoD loving, which creates a relationship sustained by man and GoD. Man loving and GoD loving are different *creations*. A man who loves greatly is not *the same* as GoD loving; and a man is not GoD.

What GoD knows is true; and what GoD knows includes what man knows, if what man knows is true. Man knows the sun; and GoD knows that man knows this creation as the sun.

GoD knows what man knows; man does not know what GoD knows. Man does not know whether the sun which man knows is other than what GoD knows as this creation. Man does not know whether GoD knows any man to have been other than a man.

If man “would but heed His voice,” man would know that “there is none besides Him” (Psalms 95:7; Deuteronomy 4:35). GoD knows that human beings can err, that they may sometimes consider what may not be true as true. There is comfort in the thought that since the concept that man can err is likewise a creation, GoD is said to forgive the well-intentioned error in man’s ways.

Remember The Torah Of Moses

Anti-Semites generally cherish distortions, aberrations and collective superstitions about Jews, which are often passed on intact from generation to generation. For Western man the ground was laid in the Gospels, where Judaism – the Word of GoD that teaches love and responsibility – was distorted by hatred for Jews and for the Law of Moses.

The addicted anti-Semite eschews responsibility. Instead of helping to build the ark, the mob seeks scapegoats, blaming Noah for the evils in this world. One cannot convince the anti-Semite that man “in the image of GoD” is in partnership with GoD; that while GoD is Chairman of the Board, man is the local Chief Executive Officer with sufficient autonomous powers: man as potentially mighty below in the service of the Almighty.

They acclaim Him from On High downwards, and He praises them from below upwards.¹⁷ Human beings acclaim GoD for His attentiveness to those below, and GoD acclaims them for having risen from their lowly state so high: they ascend ... to become “the people close to Him” (Psalms 148:4).¹⁸

“And he called it Almighty GoD of Israel” (Genesis 33:20). The Midrash explains that Jacob said: You are mighty On High and I am mighty below.¹⁹ “The voice of GoD is in power” (Psalms 29:2,4). It does not say “in His power,” but “in power” – to each in accordance with his power.²⁰

Evidently, one cannot merely advise someone to be healthy or to forgo an addiction. In order to truly help heal, one must understand the causes of the malaise and prescribe the proper remedy. Certainly, the problem of human malfunction is much deeper than simply deficient knowledge. Man does not necessarily want what man knows; man wants what man is. A thorough diagnosis is called for. No less than a theoretical and applied science of human motivation is required towards personal as well as collective transformation.

Personal redemption depends on the individual, Jew or Gentile, who is responsible for his or her own fate. According to the Midrash: Should you say that the evil impulse is not in your power, (GoD says:) I have recorded in the Torah: "Its urge is toward you, yet you can master it" (Genesis 4:7).²¹

In the concluding verses of the Book of Malachi – the last of the Hebrew prophets – GoD says: "Remember the instruction (*Torah*) of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him from Horeb..." (Malachi 3:22). Adherence to the Torah revealed at Horeb-Sinai is the necessary condition for transforming and redeeming the Jewish people. Correct, undistorted implementation of the Torah would result in the realization of the benevolent effects of *mizva* observance,²² the onset of authentic civilization based on the principles of justice and human worth,²³ and commitment to the authentic vision of salvation.²⁴

As is usually the case, the poets and masters of the fine phrase describe beautifully the splendor of life in general... They also know to highlight the general hideousness of things that impair life, and to protest against them most vehemently. But to penetrate to the innermost inside of all the individual factors: how they foster life and set it upon a good foundation, and shield it from anything detrimental, even the very least, lest it develop into something vastly destructive; – this matter has no trade with the hot and fierce power of the imagination, but rather with accurate wisdom. Here enters the work of the physicians, the economists, the quantifiers, the judges, and all who apply knowledge wisely... The practiced commandments, all of them,

and the details of their laws, in their full rigor and precision; how in the course of time, through observance and study, habit forming practice and affection for them, there emerges the inner delight concealed within; how the life-stream, GoDly and pure, by its power banishes darkness and idol worship, never to be revived; how the slow abandonment – which scorns the observances, the ramifications and the precision – opens the road to ruin, causing destruction of the vessels in which the higher spirit is absorbed and accommodated; how the urge of man's heart, the misleading imagination, full of radiant sparks on the outside and poisoned dust on the inside, thus gradually gains ascendancy; – that was not given to prophecy at all... That was not given to prophecy that is as through an unclear lens.²⁵ But it was given to the prophecy of Moses, the prophecy of "mouth to mouth" (Numbers 12:8) – the prophecy as through a clear lens, which alone can behold, as one, the power of the general principles and the precision of the details... For this reason, in the End of Days ... this prophecy will acknowledge the greatness of the functioning of wisdom... "Truth will sprout from the earth, and justice will peer from heaven. GoD will also give what is good, and our land will yield its produce" (Psalms 85:11-13). Then the soul of Moses will again appear in the world.²⁶

Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook²⁷

In The House Of GoD

When Jews display concern and love for one another, they are welcome in the House of GoD (today the synagogue). When violence, indifference and injustice prevail among the people, they are denounced for "trampling My courts" (Isaiah 1:12).

This holds true for non-Jews as well. Judaism teaches the vision of Isaiah, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7). All of humanity can pray to the One GoD together. Yet today there are non-Jews who "trample My courts." They prostrate themselves on the Temple Mount, and at the same time preach and pray for the eradication of Israel. So long as this malevolence persists, how can they expect their devotions to be welcome? "When you spread out your hands, I will turn My eyes away from you. Though you pray at length, I will not listen" (Isaiah 1:15).

In a different scenario, the Nations “will see eye to eye” with the Jews, “when GoD restores Zion” (Isaiah 52:8); and the “house of prayer for all peoples” will arise. As it is written, “Many peoples and vast nations will come to seek the GoD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to beseech the presence of GoD” (Zechariah 8:22).

GoD gave the Torah to Israel in order to benefit all the nations. Torah education accomplishes its purpose by cultivating in the person both love of man and love of GoD as the highest expression of human freedom.

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People may enter the House of GoD when they rejoice in each other; the benediction preceding the Priestly Blessing concludes with the words: “with love.” When people do not rejoice in each other, not only are they *not welcome* in the House of GoD – they are *not in* the House of GoD. In the words of the Sages: Divine Presence does not dwell amidst melancholy ... but in the midst of rejoicing at the performance of a commandment.²⁸

Do you want to see the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) in this world? Be occupied with the Torah in the land of Israel.²⁹ Divine Presence attends even when one person alone studies Torah.³⁰

When people are alienated from each other, they are alienated from GoD. Throughout history, those who have trampled the Temple Mount with hatred in their hearts were not in the House of GoD; in relation to them the mountain was not holy. No site is holy except when people render it holy through their awareness of being together in harmony in the presence of the Divine Presence as manifest in their thoughts and actions.

“The withered wretch has said in his heart: There is no GoD. They [the depraved] have dealt corruptly, they have done abominable deeds; there is none that does good” (Psalms 14:1). Both in their thoughts and actions they abandoned GoD, by their offenses “trampling My courts.”

When on Yom Kippur the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, he was in mortal danger should his service be flawed. Yet when Titus defiled the altar during the destruction of the Temple, the Talmud relates that nothing happened to him. The site was not holy in relation to him.³¹

To further substantiate the full significance and centrality of this implication in the Judaic conception of *kedusha* – “holiness” or “the holy” – we may refer to the great Torah luminary, Rabbi Meir Simha (1843-1926). In *Meshech Hochma*, his commentary on the Five Books of Moses, he writes:

The Holy One dwells in the midst of His children. If every one of them was to violate the covenant, all holiness would be removed from them, making them like an ordinary vessel. When [the Roman] invaders barged into [the Temple] and profaned it, Titus entered the Holy of Holies... Yet nothing happened to him, for its holiness was removed... There is no entity in the world that is holy [in itself] and assigned for worship and for our submission to it. The Holy One, only His Name is holy in His necessary existence, and Him it is proper to praise and to worship. All consecrations derive from a command commanded by the Creator.

Fragmentation And Aberration

Throughout the ages, grandiose ideas were presented as if they were the Voice of GoD announcing salvation for mankind. The problem with most revolutions is that their ruling innovative conceptions are incomplete, bounded by the vagaries of time and place and the limitations of their authors. They merely attend to some fragment of the real world, and therefore fail. Any imitation of the reality created by GoD, even the greatest lyrical composition or magnificent mental construction, which may enjoy prominence temporarily, can turn into a pagan idol when worshipped. It cannot be the viable foundation for lasting dominion and true civilization.

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The rights of the proletariat are set forth in the Torah. “You shall not oppress a hired worker ... At [the end of] his day you shall give him his wage” (Deuteronomy 25:14-15; Leviticus 1:13). When the workers’ cause was ostensibly appropriated by people who denied man’s worth before GoD, their corresponding manifesto proved to be a lie in the service of a dictatorship marked by oppression and murder.

Beneath the frozen wastes of Gulag Territory, in raised letters, an epitaph is inscribed in mute reproof.

The price of honey
and the price of light
are now both beyond our means

ooo

With the advent of the Israelites' intellectual and physical dispersion into exile, "this great nation ... a wise and understanding people" (Deuteronomy 4:6) was impoverished. They were deprived materially and spiritually: the Torah was reduced in the popular mind to "religion." So it came to pass that science began to develop out of Plato's cave, independent of Torah principles, and hence blind as to the origin of its axioms and their degree of significance. Western culture was deprived of the Judaic conception of existence as relationships sustained through participation by man and GoD.

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A great psychologist, Carl Jung, writes in his memoirs about one of his patients who was the daughter of a rich Jewish banker. The girl was wonderfully good-looking, brilliantly accomplished and elegant. On the surface, she seemed to be a worldly and vain creature, her main occupations being fashions, parties, and boyfriends. Yet she was on the brink of a nervous breakdown. The great psychologist asked her about her paternal grandfather.

"He was a Rabbi, the head of a Jewish mystical sect."

"You mean *hassidim*?"

"Yes, he was a *hassid*."

"Was he deemed a *zaddik*?"

"He was regarded as a great *zaddik*."

And suddenly, concludes Jung, everything became clear. Despite the modern fashionable attire, she was a daughter of GoD, and the secular worldly style of her life was driving her mad.

This story provides a clue concerning the history of the State of Israel. Her secular leaders and founding fathers have tried to present her as modern as possible. Distancing themselves from the awful experience of exile, some have grown contemptuous of everything in their past. When planning for the future of the Jewish people in Zion, they are unwilling or unable to acknowledge the dynamics of Jewish existence as a unique phenomenon which precludes that all generations cohere as a unity. This unity of being began at Sinai, and for that generation it was manifest in a shared emotion – “as one man with one heart.”³² Her leaders expect Israel to be a state whose way of life is largely based on scientific progress and currently accepted ideas. But these have proved as helpless in dealing with life in Israel just as medical science failed to help in the case of the lovely scion of *hassidim*. Those who have been running the country have taken into account a mere part of the reality, ignoring the fact that the history of the Jewish people is utterly incomprehensible unless it is seen as a realization of the Divine Design; until it is understood that Israel is a beautiful daughter of GoD – even when she appears in secular dress.³³

Once we in Israel accept that GoD acts for our good through us, we can be assured of His blessing in dealing with our murderers and would-be murderers. Fully established as a nation once again, guided by proper understanding of GoD’s will as indicated in the Torah, and the certain knowledge of His participation, we can proceed under His banner against those “who eat my people” as they “have eaten bread” (Psalms 14:4).

The Absolute Reference

In the neo-pagan orientation, the concept of progress cannot be properly defined for lack of an independent frame of reference. In welcome contrast, the Book of Psalms highlights the concept of “ascent” and songs of ascent.³⁴ Isaiah (6:3) spoke of a garland that crowns the ashes; human beings possess a dignity uniquely linked to their Creator. The Jew says in prayer: “You separated man from the beginning” – Judaism forbids man to identify with nature.³⁵

Rabbi Akiba said: *The works of man – through cultivation of nature and man – are finer than the works of GoD.*³⁶ Any judge who even for one hour applies the law in its truth as His truth

– it is as if he becomes a partner to the Holy One in the work of creation.³⁷ Judaism refers to a web of relationships that entwines the physical and the non-physical within Creation, including both human participation and GoD the Creator as the enabling power and absolute reference.

“GoD spoke all the things” (Exodus 20:1) ... everything at once. He inflicts death and brings to life at once; afflicts and heals at once; responds to the woman on the birth-stool, to those who go down to sea and to those who traverse deserts, to those confined in prison, to one in the east and one in the west, one in the south and one in the north. He forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil. All these He does at once. Dust turns into a man and a man turns into dust ... all the water in the Nile turns into blood – the blood turned back into water. Living flesh turns into dead – dead turns into living. The staff turned into a snake – the snake turned back into a staff. The sea turned into dry land, the dry land turned into sea... So it says: “GoD spoke all the things.”

Midrash Tanhuma, Yithro 12

The most evident lesson conveyed by this text is that *there is no irreversibility in relation to GoD*. Man perceives that the processes of human life persist in an environment marked by general constraints (laws) and fixed properties of things (water is not blood). But the Creator is not constrained by the created laws and properties of things.

He who commanded that oil should ignite, could say to vinegar that it should ignite.³⁸ GoD is free to choose not to create; and GoD is free to modify Creation for the good of man.

This may help explain the possibility of “return,” renewal through repentance, which eliminates or transforms all effects of wrongdoing.

They asked Wisdom, “The sinner, what is his punishment?”

They were told, “Sinners will be pursued by misfortune.”

They asked Prophecy, “The sinner, what is his punishment?”

They were told, “The soul that sins will die.”

They asked the Holy Blessed One, “The sinner, what is his punishment?”

He said to them, "Let him do penance and it will bring atonement."

JT Makot 2,6

This teaching clearly affirms that man is free to "do penance."

Albert Einstein sought absolutes. He did not think that freedom of the human will was an absolute. He agreed with Schopenhauer that "we can do what we want, but we cannot want what we want." Judaism teaches that a human being is not only free to act, but is free to alter what he wants.

Rabban Gamliel said: Fulfill His will as you would your own will, so that He may fulfil your will as though it were His will.

Pirke Avot 2, 4

Albert Einstein said: "My GoD created laws that take care... His universe is not ruled by wishful thinking, but by immutable laws."³⁹ If laws are creations, as Judaism teaches, those laws do not determine or limit activity by GoD. Otherwise it would mean that GoD is compelled to create such laws. Stabilizing laws seem immutable *within Creation*; but they are not an absolute reference, since GoD can choose to modify them.

The absolute reference is GoD; "there is none besides Him" (Deuteronomy 4:35). The Creator benevolently continues to sustain Creation and its stabilizing laws – including the one law that man is free to choose – and in doing so He acts in absolute freedom.

In His goodness, He continues daily to renew the works of creation.

Daily prayer

Against Destructive Human Raptures

The Book of Deuteronomy (30:19) exhorts man to "choose life," because at times it becomes necessary to guard against the human propensity to choose death. Out of exhilaration, in the frenzy of the moment, possibly impelled by impatience for the success of some "sacred" cause, or for "union" with GoD,

or other reasons, one might bring “a strange fire” (Leviticus 10:1) to the altar. Today, we bear witness to suicide bombers acting for the “great glory of Allah.” Given the means, they would push the “holy button” to incinerate what they consider the “profane” world of bothersome multitudes of unaccommodating Jews or Gentiles.

In his book, *Human Destiny*,⁴⁰ Lecomte du Nouy wrote: “Nevertheless, though individual indulgence should be cultivated as long as the fate of spiritual development is not involved, this indulgence should not be inspired by indifference, weakness, or cowardice and one must not forget the words of Aristotle: ‘There is no worse injustice than to treat unequal causes equally.’ The strength of nations of prey and of fundamentally bad men is drawn in part from the relative immunity derived from the humanitarian sentiments of their victims ... Men and peoples in which the voice of the brute covers that of man should be deprived of their power to do harm...”

Men and nations can repudiate the fantasy – that “the way of the wicked,” based on blood, power and cruelty, leads to personal or national or spiritual greatness.⁴³ “In all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:6). Through participation the righteous can create worlds. However, GoD does not sustain “the way of the wicked,” and so it “will perish” (Psalms 1:6).

The Sages speak of Torah study and erudition as an elixir of life; but knowledge can become a potion of death when misused by those who “lack merit.”⁴¹

The “twin tablets”?⁴²

How about

awe of GoD

good character?

When awe of GoD and good character are lacking, the tablets are shattered.

The Word of GoD is inscribed elsewhere.

Rabbi Shimon Shkop (1859-1939)
Introduction to his work *Shaarei Yosher*

They warn against teaching those who are unworthy. Any

student who is two-faced, whose inside is not as his outside, will not enter the house of study.⁴³

Monstrous deeds were often perpetrated by those who subverted the Word of GoD. At times they even spoke of universal “love” and of man as “in the image of GoD.” Their speech was a mask to conceal the darkness within that raged for blood and destruction – “their wine ... the rage of crocodiles” (Deuteronomy 32:33).

In the Book of Genesis, the patriarchs of the Jewish people lived in societies ruled by powerful kings, notably, Nimrod in Babylon, Abimelech in Canaan and Pharaoh in Egypt. Survival in those societies was a problem because, as Abraham said to Abimelech, “Except that there is no awe of GoD in this place” (Genesis 20:11). Rabbi Elhanan Wasserman, who perished in the Holocaust, wrote in his commentary:⁴⁴

The implication of “except” is that except for the absence of the awe of GoD, they did not at all lack in wisdom or social organization. However, those attributes are worthless when people lack awe of GoD.

The withered wretch said in his heart: There is no GoD. They have dealt corruptly, they have done abominable deeds; there is none that does good.

Psalms 14:1

The Torah speaks in all realms of existence: physical, mental, soul, and more. So conceived, the Torah of Moses does not deny any aspect of reality; the contrary is true. It is against what is false, such as idolatrous beliefs, and interdicts conduct that distorts human life and limits man’s horizons.

In the Holy of Holies in the Temple, the tablets of the Decalogue were located inside the Ark. These tablets served as the anchor of the entire Judaic system. Above the Ark, the extended wings of the *keruvim* (likeness of cherubic angels) could be understood to symbolize soaring thought and reaching of the soul.⁴⁵ The imagination of man may transcend the mundane – as it were, harken to the Voice of GoD. But without the Torah as anchor, human rapture is fraught with the danger of self-delusion and its arbitrary, often appalling consequences.

The Call Against Zionism

There is a disposition in man to venerate death and to admire violence that brings annihilation to oneself and others. Pagans practiced human sacrifice. Muslim terrorists immolate themselves in a state of induced rapture and programmed hatred. Fascism, it has been said, cultivated an aesthetics of dealing out death most efficiently; for the perpetrators there was something fascinating and admirable in the efficiency of the extermination camps. Most Nazi leaders committed suicide.

Today's manifestations of violence and hatred include best-selling books that promote superstition, pseudo-religion and vehement atheism – often coupled to antipathy for the Jew. The call against “Zionism” – the current “respectable” term of focus for hatred of the Jew – has become an almost worldwide manifesto. In the antagonism to Jews and the State of Israel, the lust for Jewish blood is reminiscent of pagan passions for human sacrifice. In the pagan psyche, unrelieved by adequate grounds for aspiration or warrant for conscience, human reaching is perceived as futile and even suspect; man does not require improvement.

“The withered wretch said in his heart: There is no GoD. They have dealt corruptly, they have done abominable deeds, there is none that does good” (Psalms 14:1). The verse concludes in the singular. There is not a single person among them who “does good... not even one” (Psalms 14:3).

Hating Those Who Love Life

Moses' parting words to his people were: “Choose life.” Balaam addressed the nations, disclosing the same definition of the Jewish nation as emblematic of life and the renewal of life.

“How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel! Like palm-groves that stretch out; like gardens beside a river; like aloes beside water. Their boughs drip with moisture; their seed has abundant water” (Deuteronomy 24:5-7).

Therefore they stand for blessing in the sight of GoD, and Balaam could not utter the curse he intended.

Hatred for Jews, it appears, can be explained as directly related to the Jews' embrace of life. Those who live in fear of death, who embrace death by bloodying themselves, who try to

propitiate death with human sacrifices, who deny the primacy of life, who commit murder and glorify war – they would naturally be expected to hate those who love life. After a burial, Jews recite the *Kaddish* that glorifies GoD as the eternal Source of life.

By choosing life anchored in the Eternal, the Source of life, Israel is chosen by the Eternal for everlasting life. “Choose life, so that you and your offspring may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). In the reality of relationships sustained through participation by man and GoD, that is the uncomplicated truth about Israel as the Chosen Nation. “Israel whom I have chosen... Jeshurun whom I have chosen” (Isaiah 44:1-2). Jews in turn proclaim, daily in joy and at times on the way to martyrdom, “GoD our GoD, GoD is One!” This proclamation carries “a light to the nations” for living on this planet.⁴⁶

Chapter 9

Guiding Their Destiny

The Talmud relates that in the presence of the Emperor of Rome, a heretic asked Rabbi Joshua ben Hanina: "What of the people (Israel) whose Master turned His face away from them?" The reply cited Isaiah: "His hand is still outstretched..." (5:25).¹

GoD's attentiveness continues; it is "a great voice that does not cease" (Deuteronomy 5:19). Individually, Jews are mortal, but the Community of Israel cannot perish.² The Jewish people continue to proclaim GoD to the world, and GoD continues to face them.³ He keeps them in sight, addressing them in hidden or indirect ways, guiding their destiny.

At the Seder on the first night of Passover, the festival of freedom, Jews proclaim that they had all personally been delivered from Egyptian bondage; and that in every generation there are those "who rise to annihilate us. But the Holy One saves us from their hands."

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Why did the Holy One show Moses the burning bush? Moses thought that the Egyptians might annihilate Israel. So the Holy One showed Moses a fire that burns yet does not consume. "Just as the bush is burning in the fire and is not consumed," He said to him, "so the Egyptians cannot annihilate Israel."⁴ The paradox of Israel's endurance is expressed in the paradox of the perpetually burning bush. The sustaining fire is a symbol, as well, of Divine Presence in human affairs.⁵

In a related sense, the people Israel *is* that unconsumed fire.

The Jews as a collective are like an incessant flame striving upwards; and because their GoD-directed devotion and curiosity are unabated, GoD looks down to engage their look – and to sustain them. If “fire” can symbolize time, whose passage “consumes” our individual mortal lives, the lifetime of immortal Israel is not consumed.

Throughout the generations, the survival of the Jewish people has often seemed a miracle, an ongoing creation *ex-nihilo* by the One GoD.⁶ Accordingly, the perpetual coming-into-being of this people is perceived by the Sages as reflected in the beginning word of the Book of Genesis: “In the beginning (*Be-reshit*)” – pertaining to the Israelite nation that is likewise denoted as *reshit*. “Distinguished as holy is Israel to GoD, the beginning (*reshit*) of His harvest” (Jeremiah 2:3).⁷ A collective came into being as a new creation in the human sphere.

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Following their physical liberation from Egyptian bondage, the children of Israel discovered at Mount Sinai that their emotions passed beyond their personal psychologies. Long ago, philosophers discovered that logical truths (e.g., two plus two equals four) belong to all human minds. This led to theoretical science. Emotions, on the contrary, retained their individual character. However, there was at least one significant exception in the history of man, when it came to pass that a collective emotion attested to the truth.

Haim Sokolik

ooo

The children of Israel became transformed into an *intrinsic* collective reality. Their feeling of identity with one another was amplified into an awareness of being connected with GoD, and sharing in a pre-established destiny as “the beginning of His harvest.”

Upon their arrival at Mount Sinai, the Book of Exodus says about the children of Israel: “They encamped (*va-yahanu*, plural verb form) in the wilderness. Israel encamped (*va-yihan*, singular verb form) there in front of the mountain” (Exodus 19:2). The Rashi commentary explains: *va-yihan* – “as one man

with one heart;" but in all other encampments it was with complaints and quarreling.

Rather than simply being an assortment of individuals, the children of Israel were now both – "as one man" *and* "with one heart." Two distinct conditions are described. The first is that on this occasion they became "as one man." An intrinsic collective entity came into being, whose members were joined by a bond that would endure. The second is that they were "one" through commitment as well – "with one heart." If on other occasions in the future, all Jews will not be in whole-hearted harmony with each other, they would nonetheless continue "as one man" – be the same intrinsic collective.⁸

When, at the Red Sea, the Israelites "looked up, they saw the Egyptians moving (*nose'a*) at their rear" (Exodus 14:10). Commenting on the singular form *nose'a*, rather than the expected plural *noseim*, Rashi says: "with one heart as one man." The reversal in the Rashi text here is explained by the author of *Aveni Nezer*: In contrast to Israel who *are* "as one man," the nations *act* as "one man" only when they are motivated by a common emotion – "with one heart" – to achieve some definite objective.⁹

ooo

A people came into existence that connected heaven and earth in a viable synthesis. This interesting people, who have continued to teach that freedom should be cherished as a gift from GoD, were promised a land of light and honey. They would be free to roam within the realm of ideas, and through allegiance to the Torah become a source of spiritual enlightenment for all mankind.

Freedom As A Gift

In Judaism, human freedom is epitomized by the physical exodus from Egyptian bondage and the potential for spiritual liberation at Mount Sinai. This idea is also propounded as follows. "I bore you upon the wings of eagles" (Exodus 19:4); which is followed by: "I ... brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). One is to see oneself as part of this people that literally (historically) exited

from Egypt; and one is to see oneself as having personally exited from *Mizraim* – from personal distress (*mezar*, place of distress).

A man lives in the biological and physical “house of bondage” of his environment and his body. But the eye of his awareness can contemplate his condition. He can also contemplate the fact of his contemplation (be aware of being aware), and so on – which can convince him that in his mind, at least, he is not trapped in the “land of Egypt.” Yet there remains room for doubt: perhaps he is confined within a larger prison, one that includes his mental domain. So man is assured – every Israelite was assured in the first commandment of the Decalogue – “I am your GoD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” Body and soul were liberated; and together could create a free man at full stature as soul-via-body existence.¹⁰

When GoD refers to Moshe as “Moshe avdi – My servant Moses”, the greatest honor attainable by man is bestowed upon Moses. Properly understood, this appellation elucidates and anticipates the modern philosophical, conceptual and social negation of slavery. Man is influenced and constrained by many factors: the social environment, the need for food and shelter, intellectual and spiritual aspirations, desires and temptations. No man is absolutely free from being enslaved to nature or to his needs. When, however, a man becomes a servant of GoD in total devotion, then all his temptations and aspirations are devalued, and to that extent are deprived of their power over him. Instead of having a myriad of masters, whether they be temptations of the body or compulsions of the spiritual quest – he has only one Master. By becoming a servant of GoD, he eliminates the subjugations that controlled him prior to that time. This is the negative aspect, so to speak, of being a servant of GoD. There is also a positive goal.

The definition of being a servant of GoD is completely different from being a slave to human masters. A man buys slaves and exploits them for his own personal benefit. But the Scripture says: “If you sin, what do you do to Him? If your transgressions are many, how do you affect Him? If you are righteous, what do you do to Him; what does He receive from your hand”? (Job 35:6-7). When a man is righteous in serving GoD, GoD does

not gain anything by his service. By being a servant of GoD, a man achieves his own great goal. Being a servant of GoD is for man's benefit. To serve GoD for GoD's benefit is idol worship in the fully pagan sense.

Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman¹¹

Enduring The Long Trek

To reach and permanently settle in their original homeland, *Erez Yisrael*, the sons and daughters of this people Israel have trekked for many centuries through a labyrinth of exiles. With the establishment of the State of Israel, the terrain in the lands of exile began to slope upward, in the direction of the light and the honey and the sun-drenched fruit. Lately, there has been an upsurge of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. Nonetheless – Judaism insists – some promises are indeed kept.

In the historical record of the Jew and of mankind, the initial stage and the final stage – the fulfillment – are aspects of the same design. The messianic king was born at the beginning of the creation of the world.¹²

Today, much of humanity direct their devotions to the One GoD. But there are violent distortions in this devotion. Nations, groups and individuals continue to direct their hatred against one another, often spuriously in the name of the One GoD. The devout Jew, on the contrary, does not neglect the earth while reaching for heaven. The obligations to man are anchored in obligations to GoD, and obligations to GoD often expressly involve obligations to man.

It was taught in the name of Aba Binyamin: Two entered to pray. If one of them preceded the other in prayer, and did not wait for his friend and exited – then his prayer is thrown back in his face... Not that only, but he causes Divine Presence to depart from Israel.... If he had waited, what is his reward? Said R. Yossi son of Rabbi Hanina: He merits the following blessings, as it says: "If only you would heed My commandments, your peace would be like a river, your triumph like waves of the sea. Your seed would be as [numerous as] the sand, and your offspring as [many as] its grains" (Isaiah 48:18-19).

BT Brachot 6a-7b

"I rejoiced when they said to me: Let us go to the house of GoD" (Psalms 122:1). When the Jewish people are in the House of GoD, they are to rejoice in each other; "its interior is inlaid with love..." (Song of Songs 3:10). By strong implication, the Jewish people already *are* in the House of GoD when they rejoice at being with each other.

The Talmud records that on the Sabbath, the guard on watch, when leaving the Temple would add a blessing to the watch entering the Temple: The One who has rested His Name on this House, may He cause love, brotherliness, peace and friendship, to dwell among you.¹³

Streams Of Abundance

Upon waking every morning, the Jew instantly offers thanks that GoD has "restored my soul within me." At the outset of awareness, one chooses to say in effect: I am aware. I am not the only one aware. You GoD are aware. You are aware of me. Therefore I am aware. The proper context is established for a renewed day of human striving.

Every individual is a potential Adam, the first man "in the image of GoD" who cultivates the garden. Every awakening to awareness is a re-enactment of the singularly important event when man first opened his eyes to behold the world and his awareness of having done so.

Throughout the many centuries, the enduring ideas and prescribed ways of the Torah established realities of consciousness in human beings who endeavored to live "before GoD continually" (Leviticus 24:8).¹⁴ The greatest and most learned among them were exquisitely motivated to emulate the "ways" of GoD. GoD is perpetually attentive to everything He has created, and they, the faithful to Him, endeavored to be attentive at all times.

At full awareness, Jews are nourished by three major streams of abundance. The first is law and tradition, inclusively referred to as the Torah, a transmitted resource that relates to the special way of being human through deeds, beliefs, intellectual creativity and relationships. The second abundance is the unfolding of events, which may be termed the collective memory of the nation. The third and innermost abundance is the flow of creativity that can transform domains of life and mind.

These major streams of abundance comprise zones of both the particular and the universal. In the most obvious way, the concept of civilization is common to both zones; and it is realized through detailed implementation of the idea of man's worth. This aspiration for mankind, as spelled out in Judaic teaching, includes a commitment to truth and goodness, which can be applied to meet the challenge of the world today in its individually human, global and scientific dimensions.

In a corresponding approach to the global aspect, we may recall here again: "The Most High ... will set stable boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8).¹⁵ The solution of the problem of nations encroaching upon one another is to be modeled on the solution of the same problem for the twelve tribes of the Israelite nation in the Promised Land. Generally, the important issues affecting the destiny of the Jewish people closely overlap the important issues of mankind.

Concerning the life of the individual, the following statement is made:

I make heaven and earth testify for me: Whether it be a non-Jew or a Jew, a man or a woman, a slave or a maidservant – each one in accordance with the deed that he does – so does the spirit of GoD rest upon him.

Eliyahu Rabba 7

More Streams Of Abundance: The Other

As communal creatures, human beings thrive on dialogue and other relationships. When the heart is troubled, the Talmud advises, discuss your troubles.¹⁶ Turn to a friend, engage and share. Turn to GoD, transform every monologue into a higher dialogue. Allow others to turn to you, to replenish and be replenished from your fountain. If you have possessions, dispense a percentage to those in need, talk to them, ease their anguish; your possessions will increase; your soul will expand. Study, but do not hoard knowledge; teach, share your legacy. Enlarge yourself by sharing yourself. Man at full stature sustains a dialogue. "A man's gift" to the world, "makes room for him, and brings him before great men" (Proverbs 18:17).

A funeral procession, heading in one direction, came across a funeral procession heading in another direction. No greetings were exchanged, no destinations altered. When inert straight lines intersect, they are unchanged by their meeting. It is otherwise when streams of life and thought overlap since they engage and enlarge each other.

More Streams Of Abundance: Scientific Endeavor

The Midrash states that GoD looked into the Torah while creating the world. Understood as a guide for the human sphere, this statement evokes the imperative of emulation. The Talmud says: If the righteous wanted, they could create worlds.¹⁷ In contemporary terms, this may be seen to include an affirmation of science as a potentially worthwhile creative and technological activity. By dispelling ignorance of nature, science as a tool can help liberate man from the worship of nature. Furthermore, the study of science can replace the conviction that human nature is inevitable; replace it with the knowledge that man might even be able to benevolently modify human genetics. This shift in orientation could liberate other, new aspirations for the good of man.

It is related about Hillel that he did not fail to learn any words of the Sages: even all the languages, even the speech of mountains and hills and valleys, the speech of trees and grasses, the speech of beasts and domestic animals... Why so much? For it says, "GoD desired for the sake of His (his) righteousness that the Torah increase and be magnificent" (Isaiah 42:21).

Sofrim 16,7

The indicated ambiguity (His, his) is significant. Knowledge of the truth and being righteous are inseparable in GoD. Likewise, in consonance with the imperative of emulation, they must be inseparable in man as well.

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The prophets spoke of a time when GoD "will roar like a lion." In his commentary on the Book of Hosea (11:10), Rabbenu Malbim (1809-1879) writes that at times, GoD acts

through manifestations of nature, and at other times through manifestations of His transcendent voice. Thus it says, "He will roar like a lion," and it says, "He will roar." Given these definitions, it might be said today that science both studies and finds applications for the "roar of the lion." More generally, translation into an appropriate language is often required in order to adequately convey what Jewish law and learning have to say about the character of reality, knowledge and human life. In any age, this language must overlap and perhaps also extend the currently known vocabulary of concepts that popularly communicate meaning and significance.

Judaism conveys that the world as a creation of GoD invites exploration of concealed patterns. Thus the term *olam* ("world") is cognate of *ne'elam* – hidden, out of sight. At some level, science endeavors to disclose these patterns; and beyond the patterns there is an invisible Presence.

Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of nature and you will find that, behind all the discernible concatenations there remains something subtle, intangible and inexplicable. Veneration for this force beyond anything that we can comprehend is my religion.

Albert Einstein¹⁸

The sun and the moon
and the constellations of the Zodiac
among the stars.

Fourteen trinkets that
beautify the heavens
and conceal the truth.

ooo

*He stands behind our wall, looking through the windows,
peering through the lattices.*

Song of Songs 2:19

*Just as GoD sees but is not seen, so the soul sees but is not seen.
Just as GoD fills the entire world, so the soul fills the entire
body.*

BT Berachot 10a

Light is physically invisible except as interaction with matter; a striking manifestation is the phenomenon of the rainbow. Soul is invisible, as thinking is invisible, except in co-existence with the body and as functioning minds. These respective forms of co-existence comply with respective sets of instructions or laws. Light modulating matter, and matter modulating light, follows certain laws; and soul-via-body existence functions optimally when modulated by the discipline of certain laws. The laws of light-via-matter and matter-via-light today are the same as they were when Moses stood on Mount Sinai. The Torah imperatives that Moses transmitted to his people are the same integrating laws of soul-via-body existence today.

In the reality of relationships, the laws determine *the consequences* of human participation. The participation is freely chosen, and GoD guides our destiny through His complementary participation.

Part Two

The Melody And The Destiny

Chapter 10

Living Presence – Living Absence

She sang
The Song of Songs.

Who?

The soul

The soul of my people.

The Song of Songs is a sublime metaphor that alludes to certain fundamental themes of universal importance. The introductory verse may be read, “A song of songs *by* Solomon” (*leShlomo*), or it may be read, “A song of songs *to* Solomon” (*leShlomo*). Solomon is both speaking and spoken to. The Midrash and Talmud also identify *Shlomo* as: “Peace is His.” GoD speaks and GoD is spoken to.¹

Movements In A Dance Between Heaven And Earth

In the Song of Songs, Solomon chose the allegory of love between a man and a woman – the *Dod* and the *Raya*. They long for one another after being separated, and hope to meet again. “Many waters cannot quench this love, and rivers will not drown it” (8:7). In the traditional reading, the *Raya* is *Knesset Yisrael*, the Congregation of Israel, and the *Dod* is GoD – both as Divine Presence and Divine Absence.²

According to the Sages, the Song of Songs was composed when King Solomon consecrated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.³ On that day, the Ark of the Law was placed in the Holy of

Holies, and Divine Presence filled the House of GoD.⁴ The love between GoD and the Congregation of Israel was represented by the image of the two *keruvim* (likeness of winged figures) facing each other above the Ark.

In every generation, *Knesset Yisrael* nourishes her sons and daughters: softly, urgently, with milk and honey, and by intoning these words:

The heart is a hammer
rhythm
life-calling echo of rhythms
out there in the world:
urgent, silent, a message in code.

E equals mc^2
atoms – galaxies forming unforming
the Song of Songs that Israel sings
GoD of Israel sings:
in pre-established harmony.

All deep rhythms are silent, my children:
my love and your love.

You are of the Song
you who are children of the children of Israel:
you are the evidence and the promise.

“Face to face had GoD spoken
To you on the mountain.”

Reach back and reach forward
decades or millennia:
Do you hear the same rhythm
message in code
Song of Songs
hammering in your ears?

It is your own heart, my children
life-calling

in concert with my heart
in symphony with the Heart of hearts:
your evidence and
your promise faithfully kept.

There came times, less idyllic, and the Raya-Israel found herself dispersed over the entire planet. In exile, her love for Divine Presence was often tested by Divine Absence. "You are GoD that hides Yourself" (Isaiah 45:15).

"My dove (love) in the clefts of the rock..." GoD called out to the Raya. "Show Me your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your countenance is comely." The Raya responded: "On my couch during the nights I sought the One whom my soul loves; I sought Him, but I found Him not" (Song of Songs 2:14; 3:1).

Walking through Auschwitz.
I-Israel.
Ambassador-at-large-for-the-Holy-Name.

Walking through Auschwitz.

Walking through Auschwitz, counting
the millions of six-pointed patches
(the six so suddenly prophetic)
I see two empty flasks lying in the grass
side by side
weeping.

Two empty flasks that once held oil
for anointing the brow of kings in Judea.

Empty.
More than empty.
Empty of time and empty of space.

I join in their weeping.
i-wandering-jew-in-search-of-the-Holy-Name.

I walk on, stepping through ashes
searching in empty flasks
marked "Zyklon B."

I step to the past
past empty nations
counting generations
empty of GoD.

Opening ancient memories.

And in every age I see
two empty flasks that once held oil
for anointing the brow of kings in Judea
weeping.

I step to the future.
Behold! – the weeping has ceased.
The flasks are full again.
Full to overflowing
With each other's tears.

I reach for my harp at mid-night
and strum to His Holy Name.
And I alone weep.

Hrubieszow, Poland, late 1939. A boy, just turned five, is running across a meadow to safety in the forest. Everywhere he looks, Jews, some of whom he knows by face, are running in the same direction. A lone plane overhead dives, then dives again. The child sees a woman running, a down-filled coverlet clutched about her body for protection.

Over six decades later, the boy recalls the following events as in a dream.

The Obsession

Mother ignored what father in his obsession was saying: "My heart tells me it will be very bad here. We must leave at once. Let us cross the border today!"

Hrubieszow, the Polish town where he had been born and lived, was merely a few kilometers from the Russian border. For some reason during that period in 1939, there was unobstructed passage over the border.

"What has come over him?" mother thought. "Here we are, with four little children, at home, safe. There is the store. There is the rest of the family – his brother Avraham, his sister Shifra, friends, neighbors. Life goes on as usual. How can we uproot ourselves? Why uproot ourselves and go into the unknown!"

She said this to him again and again, arguing passionately. But father only grew more alarmed. "Let us leave at once! I cannot explain it. I cannot deny what my heart tells me. I cannot stay here any longer – not even one more day!"

One morning he hired a horse-drawn wagon and crossed the border alone.

A few days later the wagon driver came to mother with a message; he was to bring us all to father. Mother dismissed him. A week later he came again, and again she dismissed him.

Then father came. The next day, we walked after the wagon for a while, then followed father's back with our eyes until he disappeared. Mother was with us.

This scene was repeated a number of times. Father came, stayed overnight, then headed back in the direction of Russia. Mother's pleas did not help. Father insisted that we all join him; soon it would be too late.

Then it happened. One cold and wet night I felt myself lifted high and handed to someone inside a covered truck. Mother and the others followed, together with various household goods and part of the stock from the hardware store that had been in the family for a number of generations.

The hand of GoD had intervened. Father had intercepted this truck that originally was commissioned to transport a family from Lodz across the Polish border into Russia. For this family, however, it had already become too late. Now the owner of the empty vehicle was fleeing east, and readily agreed to take us across the border.

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Ignited at Sinai, the Jew is a flame connecting heaven and earth. We leap to the stars, higher yet: "higher than high"

(Ecclesiastes 5:7), and descend to the ashes. Our people are acknowledged by history as the aspiration in man to walk with GoD. But we are constantly tested. Now exile, now redemption; now the Absence, now the Presence; we live in counterpoint. The Jew in human affairs is as one of the physical constants in nature, and his destiny is chronicled in Holy Scripture.

ooo

The inevitable testing was pre-established as a pattern in the life of the first patriarch, beginning with his ascent to “the land that I will show you” (Genesis 15:1). The destination was left indefinite, to test his readiness to continue the ascent. The testing concluded with the Word of GoD calling upon him to sacrifice the very same son promised by the Word of GoD.

“GoD tested Abraham” (Genesis 22:1) – testing his readiness to sacrifice that very reliance on the power of human reason which had guided him to acknowledge the One GoD.⁵

When Moses was addressed by GoD, he was faced with a “thick cloud” and a “fog” of dilemmas blocking comprehension.⁶ How could the finite mind of man receive communication from the Infinite One?!⁷ Nonetheless, at Sinai, Moses “went up to *Elo-him*” – as far as his natural powers permitted. Then followed: “Y-H-V-H called him from the mountain” (Exodus 19:3). Moses was taken higher, beyond the reach of his reason at that moment: “Y-H-V-H called Moses to *the top* of the mountain, and Moses went up” (Exodus 19:20).⁸

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The Talmud relates that Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Akiba came to the Temple Mount, where they saw foxes running amidst the ruins of the Holy of Holies. They all wept except for Rabbi Akiba, who laughed. He said to them: If the prophecy of Uriah has come true, that “Zion will be like a plowed field” (Jeremiah 26:18), then surely the prophecy of Zechariah will come true, that “old men and old women will yet again dwell in the streets of Jerusalem... And the streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing” (8:4-5).⁹

Sarah laughed. Abraham, too, laughed. Both laughed at the

paradoxical endurance of the Jew. And their son was named *Yizhak*, “will laugh,” even after he almost went up in flames as an ascent-offering to GoD.¹⁰

The third patriarch was called *Israel*, literally, “GoD will rule” – *isra El*. This explains our purpose and our endurance. “You are standing this day, all of you, before GoD your GoD ... that He may establish you this day to Himself for a people, and that He may be to you GoD... Not with you alone do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that stands here with us before GoD our GoD, and also with him that is not here with us today” (Deuteronomy 29:9-14).

You are of the Song.

You are the children of the children of Israel.

You are the evidence

And you are the promise.

By continually choosing life, anchored in the Source of life, Israel is chosen by the Eternal for everlasting life. The covenant that identifies the collective existence of this people, Israel, is emblematic of life and the renewal of life. “Choose life, so that you and your offspring may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). Sustained through participation by man and GoD, that is the uncomplicated truth about Israel as the Chosen Nation. “Israel whom I have chosen... Jeshurun whom I have chosen” (Isaiah 44:1-2).

Chapter 11

Healing The Exile

Why is death
and why is exile
a lump of ice in the heart
congealing the blood but unable to freeze the love?

Silicon earth: Dead hearts in mighty bodies: A statue in bronze has dwarfed the city, and men keep their eyes on the ground. The tears are long dry. The mind weeps with contradictions.

There is no love here, nor justice, nor understanding. The time has come to abandon all illusion. There is logic here and a machine that speaks the binary code. And there are the contradictions, which in a machine that speaks the binary code may be another name for death. Call it self-destruction.

Divine Presence is ignored in New Babylon; it is taught that bricks and mortar explain both the heaven and the earth in man. Killing a person is termed the demolition of a mobile resource.

To Be Silent Is To Weep – To Speak Is Also To Pray

We are the exiles, masters of another code. And the very same force that keeps us here enslaves us. We shed our tears: we weep for the exile and the contradictions of our existence; and finally we shed ourselves of tears. We pray to the source of tears, the source of logic and understanding, love and justice. We pray to the Source, creator of both the binary code and of the lips that pray.¹

We pray for help to resolve the contradictions and paradoxes that beset us. One approach to their proper resolution is implicit in the notion of relationships sustained through participation by man and GoD. Suppose the sun, or any luminous source, would not emit light if there were no other entities in the universe to absorb the light. Be that as it may in the physical domain, one may generalize a corresponding insight implicit in the teaching of the Talmud: human beings ought to be compassionate even as GoD is compassionate.²

This call for emulation can be understood as alluding to an order of pre-established reciprocity: Be compassionate so that, measure for measure, GoD will be compassionate. Intrinsically, realization of the one-to-One relationship (man to GoD), via the one-to-one relationship (man to man, love and compassion for ourselves and others), is joined to realization of the corresponding One-to-one relationship (GoD to man).

According to the Talmud, prayer too is accommodated in the order of pre-established reciprocity.³ When we pray to the Source, creator of the lips that pray, the Source, the creator of the binary code, looks down and prays. GoD asks for our prayers, for His exile to end: for the Absence to disappear from the human sphere.

GoD prays for man to pray, for man to compose His prayer. Man enters the Holy of Holies and elicits the innermost love, recorded in the Song of Songs, which overcomes the measure of stringent judgment. Man spans the chasm between the living and the Living One, and heals the exile.

Facing The Darkness – Seeking The Light

A Jew suffers the extreme punishment for which he or she finds no justification. A bayonet pierces an infant in the arms of her mother shrieking in Yiddish. Outrage? Despair? These have ceased being options. This Jew rises beyond them, and proceeds to pray for forgiveness and atonement. Thereby, he or she transcends every measure of human reason and sense of justice; this devotion appears grounded in paradox and contradiction. However, measure for measure, the Jew implores GoD to act beyond every measure of His law and judgment, to show mercy. According to the Midrash and Talmud, GoD rises from the seat of judgment to sit in the seat of compassion.⁴

We admittedly enter a grey area that is fraught with dilemma and presumption that emerge out of two concerns. *The First Concern* pertains to the truth about man in relation to GoD, and GoD in relation to man. True, the Jew who endures does not begin coping by inquiring whether there is a GoD; he or she affirms GoD's existence. He or she accepts that there is more than the immense parchment with the inscribed letters, or mathematical formulas; sees more than the colors of the rainbow; is impressed even more by the continued existence of the Jewish people. All these manifest GoD as the Creator sustaining His creations. GoD is attentive. However, *on what terms can man, dare man, confront GoD and challenge the Word of GoD?*

If we appeal to reason, our reasoning may not apply to GoD's reasoning. Yet the Talmud enunciates the principle that when arriving at decisions in Torah law, based on the Word of GoD, we are not expected to know more than what informed human judgment provides.⁵ "I will argue my ways before Him," Job insisted (Job 13:15), extending that principle. Abraham set the clear precedent, when he demanded, "Will the Judge of all the earth not deal justly?" (Genesis 18:25). The ensuing "negotiation" unequivocally confirmed the validity of that extension – both to GoD judging man⁶ and man confronting GoD. On behalf of the Israelites, Moses interceded with GoD in the aftermath of their misdeeds.⁷

The people of Sodom deserved judgment but not mercy, for they themselves showed no mercy.⁸ But Abraham was compassionate,⁹ and he left a legacy for his descendants "to do charity and judgment" (Genesis 18:19). *Whosoever is compassionate towards human beings will know that he is of the seed of our father Abraham.*¹⁰

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The Jew can be charitable to others, and the Jew can also be charitable to GoD. We can act beyond the measure of the law, and of our reason, to express compassion for GoD's exile – for the Absence. To act beyond, in this important sense, is for man to act when the immanent presence of GoD's loving-kindness¹¹ is not evident to man.

In the context of the reality of relationships sustained through

participation by man and GoD, every death is “mourned” by GoD as well. That is, His participation in the human sphere is diminished. When the *Kaddish* is recited for the deceased, one does not speak of the deceased. It is an occasion *for magnifying the Name of GoD*. For the presence of GoD in the world *has been diminished* by death. In reciting the *Kaddish*, man acts to compensate for that loss by eliciting increased participation by GoD in the human sphere.

Now let us multiply by six million, to make up for all the Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Indeed, we should multiply even more, to include all the innocent lives, Jew or Gentile, lost in all wars and genocides throughout history. We are bidden to mourn for the loss of GoD’s participation in the human sphere.

GoD “mourned” when Adam, through his sin, brought death into the world; and GoD “mourned” when Cain killed his brother.

We are to participate in GoD’s mourning, and act to relieve His Absence by evoking Divine Presence.

It is significant that the *Kaddish* is only recited in the presence of at least ten Jews, which constitutes a congregation in the sight of GoD. As it says, “I GoD dwell in the midst of the children of Israel” (Numbers 35:34) – a plurality of at least ten participants. “GoD stands in the congregation of GoD” (Psalms 82:1). Exploration of this teaching, in all its implications, must wait for another treatise.

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The Jewish people may insist on its demands and expectations before GoD, but individually we are also capable of relinquishing them in order to honor GoD. Does it hurt our reason to admit that perhaps we have sinned, after all? So be it! “Indeed, we and our fathers have sinned,” a Jew prays every morning. Some even recited these words in Auschwitz. Therefore, “GoD and GoD of our fathers,” we pray with good cause to be heard. “May our prayers come before You, and do not turn away from our supplications.”

ooo

In Psalm 23, King David said: “Yes, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For You are with me.” How is one to understand “You are with me”?

You are with me as I am with You.

“You are with me,” David said, as “I have set GoD always before me” (Psalms 16:8). His voice was likewise the representative voice of his people. “You are with me,” the Congregation of Israel declared in every generation, even as she affirmed, “GoD our GoD, GoD is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

David knew tragedy and death; David mourned; yet David said: “I will fear no evil. For You are with me.” How is one to understand this?

The following passage confronts the dilemmas of existence faced by the Jewish people, and penetrates to the core issues identified by King David in the cited psalm.

*Rav Matna cited, “GoD the great, the mighty and the awesome” (Nehemiah 9:32). This citation by Rav Matna comes in support of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. For Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Why were they (The Torah sages living at the time of the building of the Second Temple and onward) called Men of the Great Assembly? For they returned the crown (God’s dominion) to its former glory. Moses said, “GoD the great, the mighty and the awesome” (Deuteronomy 10:17). Jeremiah came, and he said: **Aliens are cavorting in His sanctuary! – Where are His awesome acts?** He did not say “awesome” (Jeremiah 32:18). Daniel came, and he said: **Aliens subjugate His children! – Where are His mighty acts?** He did not say “mighty” (Daniel 9:4). Those (the members of the Great Assembly) came, and they said: **On the contrary! This is His might, that He constrains His will by showing forbearance towards those wicked ones; and these are His awesome acts: that if not for the awesomeness of GoD, how could one nation (Israel) continue to exist among the nations!***

So how did those (Jeremiah and Daniel) act as they did, uprooting a practice instituted by Moses? Said Rabbi Eleazar: For they know that the Holy One is truthful (accedes to the

truth and abhors pretense), so they did not lie to Him.

BT Yoma 69b and Rashi's commentary

The Second Concern

The Second Concern pertains to the immediate situation in the human sphere. It is good, perhaps even impressive, for the living to come to terms with these deep paradoxes. But we must ask ourselves at once: How dare we do so? How dare we speak rather than howl eternally, rebelliously, when around us hover all the crazed remnants and the incinerated members of the congregation who cannot phrase these lyrical answers, and can neither forgive nor not forgive?

The only clear and readily acceptable answer is that we can speak only for ourselves, and yet be conscious that no man is alone. No one is responsible only for himself. When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, he elicited atonement "for himself and for his home" (Leviticus 16:17) and for all the people. As the living children of Israel in this generation – "the remnant of His heritage" (Micah 7:18) – we speak for ourselves, but in the knowledge

since we knew them all
directly or indirectly
in every generation

that our kith and kin would have us go on. So we also speak for them, even as they spoke and planned for us. In the aftermath of the near death of Isaac as a burnt offering, Abraham was assured, "By Myself have I sworn, GoD says; I will exceedingly bless you, and I will exceedingly multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore ... because you have heeded My voice" (Genesis 22:15-18). Isaac is never the same afterwards, but he has survived to beget a son who will beget a unique people.

We speak for ourselves, but in the knowledge that we are to look ahead, not backwards. Looking back might paralyze us with the wish to have perished together with the others. We cannot elude the clutches of this death wish, unless we forgive ourselves for having survived; and we cannot forgive ourselves unless we forgive GoD. By asking for forgiveness we make it

evident that we have forgiven; and unless we forgive GoD, upon whom, alone, we have always depended, and to whom we come with our dilemmas,¹² we cannot justify our being here while others perished. Indeed we cannot *not* forgive ourselves, for we cannot perish, since we are the guarantors, our own and theirs, and for those a thousand years hence. We cannot not forgive GoD, for how else shall we, and they through us, and all the others ahead of us – our life-envoys into the future – always be there to welcome the next Sabbath *because GoD rested on the Sabbath?*¹³

In every generation there is “the remnant of His heritage”¹⁴ against whom, the prophet Micah says, “He does not retain His anger forever, for He desires loving-kindness” (Micah 7:18). This statement principally applies, not to individuals or particular generations, who “come and go,”¹⁵ but to the Congregation of Israel that does not perish.¹⁶

Ehyeh asher Ehyeh – “I am and will be, that I am and will be” (Exodus 3:14). In this phrase, the Eternal states how man should know Him within the dimension of time. Literally and symbolically, it includes a Divine promise of *ehyeh asher ehyeh* in relation to the Jewish people – that the people Israel would endure.¹⁷

For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave, who will acclaim You?

I will sing to GoD with my living; I will sing to my GoD while I am.

I will not die, but live, and declare the works of GoD.

Psalms 6:6;104:33; 118:17

We choose to live because GoD lives. To live means to “walk in His ways” – to participate in His Presence as the Source of life. In choosing to live, we forgive ourselves, and we forgive GoD no less – for His insistence that we must go on living, to constantly “choose life.” Therefore, He cannot but forgive us; indeed, perhaps most of all, He cannot but forgive our insistence that we should understand His justice. Nor are we wrong to insist; for as the prophet Isaiah has informed us, a time is coming when “the earth will be filled with knowledge” – *knowledge* – “of GoD as waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

We can relate the axiom of our endurance to the teaching of the Talmud and Midrash, that “there is no artist like our GoD.” A man fashions a product, and the product exists independently of that man. But GoD the Creator continues to sustain His creation. The Talmud says that three keys were not entrusted to any envoy: life, sustenance of life, resurrection of life.¹⁸ These keys remain in the hand of GoD. The world is being created anew every moment, and every day the children of Israel hear GoD proclaim anew: “Choose life.”¹⁹

Life Shall Not Cease

“Call the Shunamite...” (2 Kings 4:12). We recall the tale of how the prophet Elisha brought her son back to life. Parable turns into Biblical reality that relates to the possibility of similar manifestations in the future. When it comes to human intervention and issues of life and death, it is the will of GoD that man has the ability to soften His decrees; not to give up but choose life.

In all enslavement there is some element of self-enslavement for which we must repent and ask forgiveness daily.²⁰ We choose life in doing so. We elicit the gift of life from the Source of life, and help alleviate GoD’s exile from the world. In tangible terms, by doing away with the absence of the knowledge of GoD and lack of adherence to His dictates, we help alleviate man’s exile.

“Look from the peak of *amanah*,” GoD says to the Jewish people in the Song of Songs (4:8). We are to look with faith (*emunah*) to the “peak” – to Abraham and Sarah, the beginning of our nation.²¹ They were old and resigned to childlessness, and GoD gave them Isaac.²²

On the Ninth of Av, the day of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the Holy Temple, the Jew concludes the elegies with a lament that begins as follows:

El-l-i-i! – (wailing sound) – Zion and her cities. Like a woman in her pangs of labor!²³ And like a virgin wrapped in sackcloth for the husband of her youth!²⁴

The suffering of the virgin bride, whose marriage was never consummated, will not be eased in the future. Her husband

is dead, and there are no progeny. There is no future. Not so the suffering of the wife when giving birth: the anguish of the present is for the sake of the future, and it will end.

In the darkest moments, the Jew is faced with a choice. Will he or she go on, or decide that GoD has severed His participation in human affairs? Will we in the House of Israel choose life or the path of non-meaning and final destruction? Will we continue to cleave to the Congregation of Israel, or will we excise ourselves from this Family, Community, the House of Israel, that never ceases to give birth to new generations ready to enter the Promised Land and proclaim GoD to the world?

They who continue to participate in Israel's destiny, can identify with those who declared, "We are your bone and your flesh" (2 Samuel 5:1), when coming to anoint David as their king. They identify with and share in the messianic promise associated with the descendant of David as the Redeemer.

According to the Talmud,²⁵ in her most painful moments, a woman giving birth vows to never allow her husband to approach her again. After having given birth, she brings a penance offering for making that vow, and can welcome his love once more.

"A bundle of myrrh (*zeror hamor*) is my beloved to me, between my breasts he will lie" (Song of Songs 1:13). According to the Talmud, the Congregation of Israel says before GoD: Master of the world! Though You, my Beloved GoD, has distressed (*zar*) me and embittered (*mar*) me,²⁶ He lies between my breasts. He is again my Beloved.

Yad VaShem

The number of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered ... it will be said to them: You are the children of the Living GoD... And it will be on that day, GoD says, that you will call: "My Husband!"... And I will betroth you to Me for ever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness, and in justice, and in loving kindness, and in compassion. And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness; and you will know GoD.

Hosea 2:1-22

I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me.

Song of Songs 6:3

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who between them explored and confirmed all the ways to know GoD and to live in this world in His presence, appear in every generation of the Jewish people. As the Talmud declares, implicitly: Abraham composed the morning prayer, Isaac composed the afternoon prayer, and Jacob composed the evening prayer;²⁷ Abraham is called a mountain,²⁸ Isaac is called a field, Jacob is called a house. More explicitly, the Sages teach that Abraham represents the essence of kindness, Isaac power of the spirit, and Jacob truth.²⁹ This “three-fold cord is not easily severed” (Ecclesiastes 4:12);³⁰ and as the guarantors connected by this continuous chain, we Jews endure across all the generations.

The Congregation of Israel bears witness that even the most awful silence is the Silence or Absence, another face of the Presence. “Your silence is praise” (Psalms 65:2). “From afar GoD appeared to me, saying: I have loved you with an eternal love” (Jeremiah 31:2).

The Jew need never keep silent in the face of the Silence. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him; but I will argue my ways before Him. This will also be my salvation; for a hypocrite will not come before Him” (Job 13:15-16).³¹ The Jewish people need not remain passive in relation to their adversaries. Jacob prepared to face Esau by offering gifts, praying to GoD, and by setting in motion a plan of battle, should that become necessary.³²

After we have forgiven, and been forgiven, and whether we act by praying or act by doing, the Jewish people function today through Divine mediation of a new beginning in our own land. “The voice of my Beloved – Behold! He comes, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My Beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart; behold, He stands behind our wall looking through the windows, peering through the lattices” (Song of Songs 2:8-9).

Ten Songs were heard in this world, and the Song of Songs is the most worthy of all. The tenth Song will be sung in the future by the exiles upon their exit from the exile.

Midrash Tanhuma Beshalah 10

Chapter 12

Dawn

In Judaic sources, night occasionally serves as a euphemism for exile, human aberration and suffering. Dawn may refer to the onset of recovery, restoration and redemption.

Rabbi Hiya Raba and Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta were walking in the Valley of Arbel at dawn, as the morning star was rising. "Thus will be the redemption of Israel," exclaimed Rabbi Hiya: "Little by little, glimmering, and advancing ever higher with increasing light."

JT Berachot 1,1

Towards the close of the sixth Day, each Day symbolizing or lasting a thousand years on the Hebrew calendar, once again the mountains of the Holy Land are covered with greenery and the soil "yields fruit to My people" (Ezekiel 36:8).¹ According to the Talmud, there is no better evidence for the onset of the promised new dawn.²

Every generation is invested with the task of preparing life-envoys for the following generation who build the "celestial Jerusalem" – the domain of mind and spirit, thus extending it throughout time. In the words of the Sages: Anyone who teaches Torah to his son, Scripture says it is as if he had received it from Mount Sinai. Anyone who teaches Torah to his son, Scripture says it is as if he taught it to his son, to his son's son, and so forth to the end of all the generations.³

Today, the spiritual Jerusalem is being reunited with the physical Jerusalem. The physical Jerusalem can no longer remain desolate of its people, and the Jews cannot remain exiled

from one another and without access to the “gate of heaven” (Genesis 8:17). In this, the sixth millennium – the sixth Day of human history projected in the Bible⁴ – the Jews have begun their final return to the City of GoD;⁵ and the State of Israel is an intense presence on the world scene.

On the global scale of nations and societies, in “the days to come, instruction will come forth from Zion and the Word of GoD from Jerusalem” for all mankind (Isaiah 2:3).

Today, water purification expertise and agricultural know-how, pharmaceuticals, electronic wizardry and phosphates, are among the technologies exported from Zion to the rest of the world. There is also a demand for military expertise from “the valiant men of Israel ... seasoned in skills of war” (Song of Songs 3:7). Uzzi sub-machine guns are not being recycled into ploughshares. The reason, of course, is all too apparent. Worldwide, almost literally, “every man’s sword is upon his thigh because of terror in the nights” (Song of Songs 3:8). The victim and the slayer are neighbors also in Zion.

Other exports will follow towards transforming man. These exports can be perceived as representing an anticipated stage in the unfolding of Isaiah’s prophecy. In the indicated sequence of redemptive stages, the telling evidence for the Jewish people at this time is their regained self-rule in their ancient homeland.⁶ For mankind generally there is the unprecedented scientific and technological mastery over nature.

In Judaic sources, technological mastery is linked to spiritual transformation as the universal destiny of human existence. King David possessed both – the physical prowess of human kingship and spiritual-intellectual grandeur. Once the “son of David” – the messianic age – integrates the terrestrial Jerusalem and the celestial Jerusalem, humankind “will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (Isaiah 2:4).

We live in a time of upheaval and transition that affects both the quality of human relationships and the alignment of countries and peoples. Particularly striking is the changing reality of the Jewish people and the preoccupation with the State of Israel. Jews living in exile are challenged by the opportunity to return to Zion, to gain knowledge of the dimensions of Judaic thought adequate for today and tomorrow, to pledge allegiance to the Torah way of life, and possibly to participate in Israel’s geopolitical responsibilities.

Like Dreamers At Dawn

The nation Israel is an internal and empirical reality, as well as a lasting source of individual identity and belonging – a stronghold of solidarity and aspiration. The Jew of greatest personal stature is the most involved in trying to make other Jews great; Moses was the “faithful shepherd” of his people. This truth echoes in the words Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook:⁷

Listen to me, my people, I am speaking to you from within my soul ... from within the bond of life by which I am bound with all of you, and all of you are bound with me ... only you, only all of you ... only you are the substance of my life; I live in you ... except for you I have nothing ... I am compelled to love you with an endless love ... every one of you, every individual soul within your collective whole is a large and important spark from the torch of eternal light that illuminates for me the light of life. You give me substance, for life, for work, for Torah [study], for prayer, for song, for hope ... by way of you I feel everything, I love everything... Upon the spiritual wings of loving you, I am elevated to love GoD ... through your eternity I live a life of eternity ... by the pain that is in your soul, I am filled with bitter things ... your land, the land of your hope, is holy to me...

When Jews love one another in the sight of GoD, they are a source of individual and collective strength. The opposite is exile and alienation, which promote empty distance between the living and the living. If exile of the human spirit is essentially empty distance between the living and the Living – alienation from GoD – then the Community of Israel has never been alone in the lands of dispersion.

“GoD your GoD will return (*ve-shav*) [with the return of] your captivity” (Deuteronomy 30:3). It does not say “will bring them back (*ve-heshiv*)...,” but “will return (*ve-shav*)...” which teaches that the Holy One Himself will return with the Jews from their various exiles. It is further inferred that Divine Presence accompanies them into every exile, to dwell in their synagogues.⁸

When King Jeconiah and his entourage were exiled to Babylon they built a synagogue in Nehardea, using the stones and dust of the Holy Land which they had brought with them into exile.

Rashi commentary on Psalms 102:15

In our time, the Community of Israel says to each of her sons and daughters: "GoD bless you out of Zion; and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life; and see your children's children. May peace be upon Israel" (Psalms 128:5-6). However, this call is not heard by all her sons and daughters.

At times, Divine Presence is displaced by the alien spirit of self-hatred in the hearts of individual Jews. They cut themselves off from past, present and future generations of life-envoys; and hence continue the work of destruction that Hitler and others failed to complete. The following lines, with the details appropriately adjusted, could be about both well-known and not-so-well-known Jews, and the tragedy of their alienation.

The fine lady lark:
How well she sang
about the splendid vault where
Torquemada reposes:
Waiting for the Resurrection.
Praying for the Final Inquisition.

Outside the sepulcher, she failed to see the image of her grandmother, lighting candles without a benediction. Or was it Rachel, wife of Jacob, wailing for her children?

"A cry is heard on a height – wailing, bitter weeping: Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone (*einenu*)" (Jeremiah 31:14). The grammatically appropriate plural form *einam* ("are gone"), has been replaced by the singular form *einenu* (literally "is gone"). Rachel refuses to be reconciled to the loss of even a single one of her children.⁹

For years now the lady lark
has sung about the beauty of
Torquemada's vault.

And she has a large following
 who marvel at the high
 elegance of her voice.

ooo

Rachel's children, Joseph and Benjamin, were separated for twenty-two years. Upon being united again, Joseph "fell on his brother Benjamin's necks and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck" (Genesis 45:14). The plural and singular forms (necks, neck) allude to calamities that would befall their descendants. Benjamin wept for the destruction of the Tabernacle at Shiloh, located in the land portion of the tribe of Ephraim son of Joseph. Joseph wept for the destruction of the First and the Second Temple in Jerusalem, located in the land portion of the tribe of Benjamin.¹⁰

A necessary condition for the House of GoD to remain standing on earth, is for people to love one another as Joseph and Benjamin loved one another. This projection may be seen reflected in the verse: "I rejoiced when they said to me: Let us go to the house of GoD" (Psalms 122:1). In order for the people *to possess* a House of GoD, they are to rejoice in each other. In the Holy of Holies, the loving relationship between GoD and the Jewish people was represented by two winged figures embracing.¹¹ According to the Talmud, the First Temple was destroyed primarily because of idolatry and other offenses – manifestations of ignorance about the ways of GoD and of man's inhumanity to man often in the Name of GoD. The Second Temple was destroyed primarily because of baseless hatred of one Jew for another.¹²

The Community of Israel today says to each of her sons and daughters: Span the empty distance. Negate the exile. Love yourself; love another. Pitch your tents in the Promised Land. Ascend to Jerusalem. Welcome Divine Presence into your hearts.

To be aware of Divine Presence is to acknowledge that "He made us, and we are His" (Psalms 100:3). This provides for optimal human response. In Jerusalem, King David said: "I will seek You in earnest; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You" (Psalms 63:2).

For the sake of Zion I will not be silent; For the sake of Jerusalem I will not be still, until her victory emerges like a brilliant light and her deliverance like a flaming torch... You shall no longer be called "Forsaken," nor shall your land be called "Desolate." But you shall be called "I delight in her".

Isaiah 62:1-4

Chapter 13

A Sharing From Jerusalem

The pages of this work mainly relate, and through ideas in effect re-create, the true story of the Jewish people. Begun by others, it will be continued by others. Telling the story, living it, becoming part of the narrative is a passionate engagement for the Jew in every generation. There is a fresh telling for and by the present generation which also participates in shaping the State of Israel.

Jews and generations of Jews do not simply “come and go” (Ecclesiastes 1:4). They are entries in the family album of the House of Israel supervised by the GoD of Israel. The following verses are anchor and anticipation:

From the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you ... And because He loved your fathers, He chose their offspring after them ... Observe His laws and commandments ... that it may go well with you and your children after you ... Ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you ... For GoD's portion is His people, Jacob ... His inheritance.

Deuteronomy 4:36-40; 32:7-9

While writing in Jerusalem, I felt privileged and protected; the Talmud speaks of Divine Presence attending high effort.¹ Amidst the tension and exhilaration of reaching for the truth, living thought was transformed into texts.² On every page, I invite the reader to reverse the process of creation: turn texts into shared living thought.

Modern Developments

When the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in favor of a renewed homeland for the Jewish people in the land of Israel, Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook, who later became the first Chief Rabbi of the land of Israel, declared: "I have come today not to thank the English people, but to congratulate it at having merited that this Declaration regarding Israel has come forth from it."³

It is an axiom of Judaic thought that man can ameliorate ominous Divine intervention in the human sphere. In the Book of Jonah, the people of Nineveh repented and so the city was saved. Decrees which are benevolent to man, however, are never retracted.

"I will not turn back to destroy Ephraim; for I am GoD and not man."

"I am GoD" who fulfills the word of My benevolence; and it is not My measure to retract on the good.

Hosea 11:9 and Rashi commentary

Although the Balfour Declaration was later followed by the infamous White Paper and other regressive actions, there was to be no reversal.⁴ The nation Israel would return to its land. In consonance with the same Divine dynamics of that still-unfolding epoch, General Montgomery was victorious in the battle of El-Alamein, which saved the Jews living in the land of Israel. The Battle of Britain which was won by the English people, set the stage for the liberation of the European continent and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel.

A friend living in Soviet Russia during the Six Day War, recalled hearing a BBC news announcement that "Jericho has fallen." Modern Joshuas had re-enacted an ancient scenario, and suddenly everything seemed to make sense. One simply had to understand the difference between nations whose wars and peace times are dwelt upon in history books, and the people whose chronicles are anticipated in Holy Scripture. Judged by the world's preoccupation with the Jewish people, this difference continues to be important for the whole of humanity.

Haim

It is quite impossible to write about Jewish thought and reality without incorporating the concept of *return*, a return to the intellectual and spiritual Jerusalem. Two Jews met at the Wall in Jerusalem – and immediately a special kind of human music flowed between them.

“I cannot imagine not having lived in the epoch after Einstein,” Haim said to me. Later, in our joint little book, Haim, research physicist Henryk Sokolik at the Moscow Academy of Sciences and later at Tel Aviv university, wrote:

Plato has noted how painful it must be for a prisoner of the cave to see for the first time dazzling sunshine, since it means terminating all dialogues with shadows. All my life, I wandered in quest of poetry and beauty; and I cannot help regarding it as wonderful luck that I found beauty and poetry and wisdom in the faith of my forefathers. Before, I could not help feeling a bit ashamed evolving formulas. But here, in the Holy Land, I did learn that true joy is not something you need be ashamed of. Probably it is the most convincing definition of a Jew.⁵

His words brought to mind the Torah teaching, that in all human activity man is enjoined to “serve GoD with joy, come before Him with song” (Psalms 100:2). In the same spirit, Haim wrote:

On the second day of travel, the Captain invited Einstein to his cabin: I am puzzled, Honored Professor, why you have created a new theory of gravity. No doubt you are aware that the old fashioned charts suffice for purposes of navigation.

My grandfather, answered the scientist, taught me an old prayer of my people: “We kindle these lights in memory of miracles with which our forefathers were sanctified.

These lights are sacred to us and it is not permissible to make profane use of them. We are only to look at them in order that we may give thanks to His Great Name.”

And I also created a geometrical theory of the field of gravity to reveal to everyone the perfection of the Divine Design, and not for the purpose of navigation.

“Ethics are *a-priori* in your person.” I inserted these words of dedication in a copy of *Pirke Avot – The Ethics of the Fathers*, which I presented to Haim on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. His every second insight reminded me of a teaching by our Sages whom he never actually studied.

Haim, extraordinary human being and friend, traversed this world too quickly to touch everyone with his wisdom and love. Together we dreamt about unified reality where, he insisted (at least at first), every dialogue becomes a monologue; while I insisted that higher human dialogue involves a dialogue with GoD.

Haim’s body was interred in the Holy Land on the 17th of the month of Av, in the year 5742 (1982). At my suggestion, the inscription on his headstone reads (here in translation from the Hebrew): *He longed to disclose the One in Creation.*

Haim is gone. Haim my friend is gone. Or so it seems, for there is a paradox here, since *haim* means life.

Your wise understanding is like a deep healing.
I leap up
and out into the night
to walk the streets of Jerusalem

the terrestrial and the celestial

of which we tried to sing
as if with the lyre of David
in philosophical parables.

A Mandate For Transformation

Supine body: Supine mind.

Tilt the common contours

by ninety degrees.

Vertical body: Vertical mind: Ascending soul.

These symbolic presentations bring across the idea that the word of GoD includes a complete program for transforming the human sphere, a mandate for implementation by persons and societies.

“In all your ways know Him” (Proverbs 3:6). Selective approaches will not do. To “know Him,” one must ponder and practice *all* the ways open to man’s reaching.

“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob” (Exodus 6:2). Rashi explains: “I appeared” to the *avot*. The *Hatam Sofer* elaborates on Rashi’s intent: The term *avot* (a plural noun for fathers, here the three patriarchs) can also be interpreted as (a verb form, as in:) “they who desire (*avot*).” To compare, “they desired (*avu*),” cognate of *lo ye’ave*: “will not want” (Deuteronomy 29:19). We are informed by Rashi that the Holy One, blessed be He, appears only to those *who want* that He appear to them.⁶

Craftsmen were summoned to erect a permanent staircase.

“How can we possibly reach up to the very highest level?” they protested.

“Have I, then, asked you to begin from on high?” a voice said. “Begin from below and continue until you reach the very top.”

This commandment ... It is not in heaven ... but very near

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

To Channel The Abundance

Following the awesome events at Mount Sinai, Moses was instructed to tell his people to “return to your tents” (Deuteronomy 5:27-30) where new generations are brought into

being. These generations are worthy of entering and dwelling in the Promised Land, that “The eyes of GoD your GoD are always upon it (the land), from the beginning of the year to the end of the year,” to bless with abundance those who “walk in His ways” (Deuteronomy 11:12). Thus, the idea of *geula shleima* was heralded at Mount Sinai.

The Voice of GoD within each soul calls to advance all worthwhile human endeavors. Man is invited to do more than merely listen. In Torah thought and law, the required endeavor to help bring about the future *geula shleima* is different for the Jew and the non-Jew. In general, man is responsible for developing and cultivating the physical world. In doing so, he reveals the enduring word of GoD which permeates creation.⁷ By contributing towards optimal scientific knowledge, man brings the *geula shleima* closer. The Jew, however, is obligated through the Torah to perfect the poetry of living in the presence of Divine Presence and influence others.⁸

As a citizen of the world, the Jew also participates in building civilization. Together with the rest of mankind, he may channel the abundance of Word and Voice emanating from the Author of all knowing and being. This voice includes a call to creativity which mandates, as well, his involvement in developing the arts.

How Lovely Is That Tree

Rabbi Yakov says: If a person, traveling on the road, studies Torah, and interrupts his study to declare: “How lovely is that tree; how lovely is that field!”, scripture regards him as though he has mortally offended his soul.

Avot 3,7

This teaching has contributed to the superficial view that Judaism is opposed to art and aesthetics. The contrary is true. Judaism affirms the aesthetic domain in its loftiest human context – *GoD looked into the Torah while creating the world (Bereishit Rabba 1,1)*. The greater one’s spiritual attainment, the greater is one’s art or science. If one’s greatest work of art is oneself, through self-transformation, one’s creativity optimally emulates the Creator’s participation in shaping Creation.⁹

Concerning self-transformation, Rabbi Akiba said: *The*

*works of man are finer than the works of GoD.*¹⁰ The human artist is joined by the Divine Artist in a relationship (a creation) sustained through reciprocal creative participation. The greater the artistic level of the participating human artist, the greater is GoD's participation.¹¹

In one approach towards understanding Creation, the scientist constructs abstract relations and mathematical formulas. How is that related to GoD's creation? One answer is indicated in the following Talmudic teaching: *The Almighty transforms contemplation (by man) into facts.*¹²

How is it that the scientist's activity of disclosing relations or formulas is often found to describe what actually happens in the world? One fundamental answer is that such "good" human thoughts are those which intrinsically have counterparts – namely, facts created by GoD. These thoughts (relations, formulas) are like the "way of the righteous" (in thought) that "GoD knows" (Psalms 1:6); hence they are true; they correspond to created facts or realities.

Fundamentally, the idea of *corresponding* facts and realities created by GoD is evident in the following teaching:

"All that GoD has spoken we will do and we will hear" (Exodus 24:17). "He declares His words ... His statutes and His judgments..." (Psalms 147:19). GoD's measures are unlike the measures of flesh and blood. A man of flesh and blood may instruct others to act, while he does nothing whatsoever. It is otherwise for GoD. That which He does [and keeps from doing], He tells Israel to do and to keep from doing.

Exodus Rabba 30,9

In the aforementioned teaching by Rabbi Yakov, the student's shout of rapture is presented, not as having been *part* of Torah study, but as *an interruption* of Torah study.¹³ Judaism directs man to enjoy life in this world, and to delight in the pleasures related to contemplation of the beauties of nature. But nature is not to be regarded as something apart from a larger context. One is to behold in nature great beauty; and GoD's participation is manifest in the evocation of human wonder.

"How sweet to my palate is Your word..." (Psalms 119:103). King David responded in song to both – the Word of GoD as mediating nature and the Word of GoD as the Torah.

Jerusalem

Judaism does not direct our concern away from this world, and towards some purely spiritual domain. The “celestial” Jerusalem is to be realized in the terrestrial Jerusalem of Israel’s earthly existence. The Holy One said: “I will not come into the Jerusalem on high until I come to the Jerusalem below.”¹⁴ Jerusalem is a city joined together” (Psalms 122:3); Jerusalem is a city that joins Israel to one another.¹⁵

When the physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions are joined in man through adherence to the Word of GoD, man as soul-via-body existence gains access to optimal abundance in the Promised Land. Truth and Beauty become synonyms – in the person and in the Land.

Jerusalem is “perfection of beauty” (Psalms 50:2). Jerusalem is the light of the world, and GoD is the light of Jerusalem.¹⁶ Jerusalem deserves its name when awe before GoD and peace unite the people.¹⁷ Ten measures of beauty came into the world. Jerusalem took nine measures; one was taken by the rest of the world.¹⁸ Together, these teachings make it evident that Jerusalem was given nine measures of beauty because great beauty properly goes together with awe of GoD.

Mount Moriah – the site of the Temple in Jerusalem – is associated with the binding of Isaac, which made manifest Abraham’s supreme awe of GoD.¹⁹ In the traditional reading: “All of you is beautiful, My beloved” (Song of Songs 4:7), GoD says to the Congregation of Israel: “all of you” – when you are whole: when spiritual beauty is joined to physical beauty – you are beautiful in My sight.

The matriarchs of the Jewish people are praised for their beauty of appearance and comely form. Yet the Book of Proverbs concludes the praise of a magnificent woman, by stating: “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is in vain; but a woman in awe of GoD – she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). Why, then, does Scripture highlight the beauty of the matriarchs? The answer is that when a woman is in awe of GoD, she is to be praised as well for her beauty and charm.²⁰

When the physical beauty of Jerusalem becomes fully “joined” to the moral and ethical beauty of all its inhabitants,

the fulfillment of the prophecy that humanity “will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (Isaiah 2:4) will take place.

Part Three

Authentic Civilization

Chapter 14

Dignity And Responsibility

The renewal of Jewish statehood in the land of Israel draws attention to ancient traditions that nourished a dream – that the Jewish people would return to both the physical and the intellectual-spiritual Jerusalem. In the past, legal and political documents in many countries incorporated ideas based on the Bible; but there was little if anything that the Gentiles would claim to have learned about the theory and practice of government. The situation has changed; the State of Israel can learn to implement Judaic conceptions for a viable society and matters of state, and contribute to a more receptive audience worldwide.

Primary Judaic concepts provide for a social order that can aptly be called *Israel* (*isra El* = GoD will rule) and *Zion* (emblem of excellence). Explicit and implicit aspects of Torah thought and law bear on the ideal of proper government and authentic civilization.

Definitions, Principles And Paradoxes

In traditional Jewish thought, authentic civilization demands awareness of living in the presence of Divine Presence (*Shechina*). The following sampling from classical Judaic literature is instructive about what this would generally entail:

GoD stands in the congregation of GoD; in the midst of the judges He judges.

Psalms 82:1

Divine Presence dwells ... in the midst of joy at the performance of a Divine commandment.

BT Shabbat 30b

On account of the iniquity of bloodshed the Holy Temple is destroyed and Shechina departs from Israel.

BT Shabbat 33a

If husband and wife are worthy, Shechina is present between them.

BT Sota 17a

A fundamental general prescription for an enlightened society requires a proper balance between the autonomy of the individual within the community, and the integrity of the community. This balance manifests the principle of dignity and responsibility in human affairs.

The proper claims of the individual, relative to the claims of society upon its members, can be examined fundamentally by exploring the appellation which refers to GoD as “King of kings.”¹ As GoD the King is to kings of flesh and blood, who are subjects of the King, so the king (ruler, government) is to the people who are subjects of the King. The central implication of this relationship is nowhere set forth more emphatically than in the following passage from the Book of Numbers:

Two men remained in the camp, and the spirit rested on them. The name of one was Eldad, and the name of the second was Medad... They prophesied in the camp. A young man ran to inform Moses, “Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp!” Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Moses from his youth, spoke up, “My master, Moses, stop them, destroy them!” Moses said to him: “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all GoD’s people were prophets! Would that GoD put His spirit upon them!”

Numbers 11:26-29

When all the people are subjects of the King, in principle they each have the right to an audience with the King. As their leader and king, Moses is their teacher; he informs them how to

claim that right. The Law of Moses – the Torah – is the manual of royal etiquette, the protocol of living at all times in Divine Presence, in the presence of the King of kings.

In the presence of the King, a king among his people is considered an equal among equals. “A song of ascents by David: I rejoiced when they said to me: Let us go to the house of GoD, when our feet stood within your gates, O Jerusalem. O Jerusalem built as a city joined together” (Psalms 122). King David foresees a time when the entire people would ascend to Jerusalem and the Temple.² In anticipation, David rejoiced among his peers. “I am a companion of all who are in awe of You” (Psalms 119:63).

By implication, all the people are kings in the presence of the King. The Talmud defines a king by reference to the verse, “And he will fulfill one of the commands of GoD his GoD” (Leviticus 4:22). A king has no one over him except GoD.³ Thus it would appear that the usual notion, of subservience to a king of flesh and blood, is at variance with the principle of living in the presence of the King of kings.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered, and came to Samuel at Rama, and said to him “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” But the thing displeased Samuel when they said: “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to GoD. And GoD said to Samuel: “Harken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:4-7).

Nonetheless, one can usefully consider the ramifications of a state of affairs whereby king and King rule in harmony. An order of human affairs can be designed whereby allegiance to a king of flesh and blood – compliance with the demands of government – is inseparable from allegiance to the King. In the Jewish view, giving to “Ceasar” what is to “Ceasar,” is contingent upon giving to GoD what is to GoD. The king’s (government) responsibility towards the individual citizen is inseparable from the king’s (government) responsibility to the King. Taken together, these two provisions of the design constitute the basis for what we have here termed the principle of dignity and responsibility.

One can propose that a balance between the autonomy of the

individual Jew, and the integrity of the Jewish community, is conveyed by the fact that both are called *Israel*, literally, "GoD will rule" – *isra El*. In Scripture, Jacob represents the individual Jew; and Israel represents as well the collective Israel.

Accommodation of this triad of relationships – between king (government), commoner (the governed) and King – evidently requires that the norms of individual conduct, and the regulating norms of society, find their common ground in the will of GoD as made known to mankind. It is thus more than symbolically significant that the High Court, or Sanhedrin, where Torah law was elucidated and applied to private and public matters, was located in the Chamber of Hewn Rock, adjunct to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.⁴ "GoD stands in the congregation of GoD, in the midst of the judges He judges."

Chapter 15

The Central Relationships

The following instances of Torah law and thought highlight the principle of dignity and responsibility. A basic statutory aspect of this principle is that society does not possess the right to save itself by means of the destruction of even a single innocent individual.

Dignity And Responsibility

The Halacha stipulates that if heathens say to a group of Jewish women: "Give us one of you and we will defile her; if you refuse, we will defile all of you", all the women should be given over rather than give one single life of Israel. Likewise, if heathens say to a group of Jews: "Give us one of you and we will kill him; if you do not, we will kill you all," let them all be killed rather than sacrifice one single life of Israel.¹

"The value of any individual is infinite, a million individuals having no greater value than one individual."² The worth of human beings cannot be grasped or compared through quantitative criteria, which are external measures of man.

The obverse side of this provision is the presumption of an individual's absolute responsibility for the fate of society, indeed, for the fate of all mankind. Maimonides writes: "Therefore ought every man to see himself during the entire year as if half innocent and half guilty. If he sins one sin, he has thus inclined himself and the whole world in its entirety unto the scale of guilt and caused its destruction. If he has performed one commandment, he has inclined himself and the whole world in its entirety towards merit (exoneration), and

caused both himself and them deliverance and rescue. Thus it says, 'And the righteous man is a foundation of the world.' That pertains to when righteousness has inclined the whole world in its entirety towards merit (exoneration), and saved it."³

A man was devoured by a lion on the outskirts of the town where Rabbi Joshua ben Levi resided. The Talmud relates that for three days the sage was admonished by silence from On High.⁴ He shared in the responsibility for the tragedy, if not by commission then by omission. He was not attentive enough, or his merit On High was not great enough, to have prevented it.

If the slain body of a stranger is found in a field, the elders of the nearest town must be able to declare, "Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it" (Deuteronomy 21:7-9). Then they must ask forgiveness for possible acts of omission towards the unfortunate stranger.⁵

When Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land to establish a new kind of civilization, he was instructed:

Only be strong and very valiant; be on guard to do according to all the laws of the Torah, which Moses My servant commanded you; Turn not from it, to the right or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you will meditate therein day and night.

Joshua 1:7-8

Of the three national obligations stipulated in Deuteronomy, one was the obligation to erect the Sanctuary in "the place which GoD your GoD will choose" (Deuteronomy 12:5). Another was the obligation to appoint a king "whom GoD your GoD will choose" (17:15). Once the king is seated on his throne, he must fulfill the commandment "to write for himself a copy of this Torah in a book ... and it will teach him, and he will read therein all the days of his life. That he may learn to be in awe of GoD his GoD, to keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes, to do them; that his heart not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he not turn aside from the commandment, to the right, or to the left" (17:18-20).

"Through me kings reign" (Proverbs 8:15). The principle of dignity and mutual responsibility is anchored in the Law of Moses. It teaches their king that his heart should not be

haughty towards his brethren. For his subjects are no less kings before the King of kings, than he is a king before the King of kings. Since a monarch has no one over him except GoD, the sole guarantee that a king of flesh and blood will sustain this edifying conception of his subjects, is that “he should learn to be in awe of GoD his GoD.” Accordingly, a king while praying – and only a king – must remain bowed the whole time.⁶

“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, the mighty man glory in his might, the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glories, glory in this, that he is enlightened and knows Me” (Jeremiah 9:22-23). Rabbi Elijah (the Gaon) of Vilna infers: Once a man “is enlightened and knows Me,” he is to glory in his wisdom, his might and his riches.⁷

Torah law stipulates that when one beholds a king of Israel, one pronounces the benediction: “Blessed be He who has shared of His glory with those who are in awe of Him.”⁸ Edification of a king of flesh and blood by his subjects is grounded in the king’s allegiance to the King of kings. The benediction confirms one’s perception that awe of GoD is an edifying quality in the king. Pronouncing it confirms that one’s own allegiance to the king is inseparable from one’s allegiance to the King.

Torah law affirms that one need not obey a royal command to violate a tenet of the Torah. King and commoner are obliged to fulfill GoD’s commandments, which thus take priority.⁹

The monarch’s responsibility towards his subjects is likewise grounded in their allegiance to GoD the King. In honoring his responsibility to his subjects, the king confirms his perception that awe of GoD is an edifying quality in his subjects. Indeed, on this ground they are his equals. As the Midrash says: One who is in awe of GoD will be a king. Moses was in awe of GoD, and he was made a king.¹⁰

By honoring his responsibility to the people, the monarch confirms his allegiance and responsibility to the King of kings.

Chapter 16

The King-to-king Relationship

We have now indicated that allegiance to the King, on the part of both king and commoner, is the proper ground for allegiance and responsibility between king and commoner. To complete the logic of this state of affairs, we must consider more explicitly the corresponding ramifications conveyed in the appellation “King of kings.” Specifically, what is indicated about the converse relationship King-to-king?

Reciprocal Glory

Concerning the King-to-king relationship, the Midrash says:

Who is the king of the glory (ha-kavod)? (Psalms 24:8). That is the King, the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who apportions glory to those who are in awe of Him. Hence it is written “the glory.”

Midrash Tanhuma, Vaera 8

Based on the Ez Yosef commentary, the explanation of this passage is that man is not asked about the “glory” of GoD *as GoD*, as it were about Himself, which is inaccessible to human comprehension and irrelevant to human affairs. The question concerns the “glory” *that GoD bestows upon human beings*.

The passage in the Midrash continues:

A king of flesh and blood, no one sits on his throne; but the Holy One placed Solomon on His throne. As it says, “And Solomon sat on the throne of GoD” (1 Chronicles 29:23)... A

king of flesh and blood, no one makes use of his scepter; but the Holy One handed His scepter to Moses. As it says, "And Moses took the staff of GoD (Elo-him) in his hands" (Exodus 4:20)... A king of flesh and blood, no one is called by his name, (e.g.) Emperor Augustus; and if one is so called, he is killed. But the Holy One called Moses by His Name; as it says, "See, I have set you Elo-him to Pharaoh" (7:1). The GoD of hosts, He is the "king of the glory" – the glory which He, the King, apportions to those who are in awe of Him.

Attentiveness to His creatures – a relationship – is identified as an aspect of the "glory" of GoD. Similarly, in related contexts, "glory" (*kavod*) connotes attentiveness, the active form of awareness. Thus "the throne of Your glory" (Jeremiah 14:21) conveys that the Creator as Sovereign is attentive to His handiwork.¹ In turn, human attentiveness – man's "glory" or attentiveness, as when honoring others – emulates attentiveness on the part of GoD. Thus the condition of "glory" within humankind is significantly characterized as where "kindness and truth have met, justice and peace have kissed" (Psalms 85:11).

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In the reality of relationships, emulation here entails that "I honor those who honor Me" (1 Samuel 2:30). For in honoring others one honors GoD's participation in sustaining them as soul-via-body existence; in this ontological sense, one glorifies GoD as the Creator. If, instead, one shames another person, one in effect vilifies GoD. As the Talmud says "Whoever embarrasses another in public, it is as if he sheds blood."² Killing a person severs the relationship sustained through participation by GoD vis-à-vis that person; Divine Presence in the human sphere is diminished, which "dishonors" GoD.

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As the King is attentive to kings of flesh and blood, who themselves are servants of the King, so the king's loyal subjects are attentive to their king. More, deference to their king does not detract from their dignity or excellence. Indeed, it attests

to it. In relation to GoD, similarly, the King's "grandeur" is attested to rather than diminished when He apportions "glory" to kings who are in awe of Him.

"Wherever you find the grandeur of GoD," the Talmud says, "there you find His humility."³ GoD's grandeur is evident in the "humility" of being attentive to His subjects, including His attentiveness to kings of flesh and blood. In a similar sense, when a man is attentive to his monarch, that is, when by his loyalty he edifies a king of flesh and blood on account of the monarch's allegiance to the King of kings – that man is marked by the majestic grandeur of his own allegiance to the King. The edification of the monarch is an act of emulation, corresponding to the King's attentiveness to the monarch.

The converse relationship of king to commoner, was expressed in Moses' response regarding Eldad and Medad. Any person who is an acknowledged subject of the King, a servant of GoD, is entitled to – indeed, comes by – a portion of His "glory." For the latter, this "glory" apparently became manifest as a capacity to prophesy.

According to the Midrash, the servant of a king is a king.⁴ Here we may read: The servant of the King is a king.

Chapter 17

Authentic Kings

Despots are enslaved by the fear of losing their power and grandeur, and consequently, they enslave others. “The earth rages: for a slave when he reigns” (Proverbs 30:21-22). In contrast, King David set forth the nature of kingship as a conduit for promoting the kingship of GoD. Fitness to rule is related to the ruler’s freedom of soul to acknowledge that GoD rules.

“In all your ways know Him and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:6). King Solomon includes in this maxim the ways of kingship. Acknowledge GoD as King of kings and He will make your paths straight also in the art and science of government.

When a ruler is “enlightened and knows Me” (Jeremiah 9:23), he may glory in his wisdom, his might and his wealth. For then these possessions do not corrupt him. On the contrary, they augment his capacity to promote the freedom of his people in tangible ways, and to acknowledge that every one of his subjects is a king before the King of kings.

David And Moses

And David knew that GoD had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

2 Samuel 5:12

Moses led a multitude of the enslaved towards becoming the freest people on earth, the harbinger of lofty human destiny. On

the way they failed again and again; but when it came to caring for his people, “Moses was very humble, more so than any man on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Even when the people failed dismally and faced annihilation, and Moses was offered the opportunity of fathering a new Jewish nation, he was not corrupted by the promise of personal grandeur. “I will make of you a great nation,” GoD said to him; and he responded: “If you will only forgive their sin! If not, erase me from the record which You have written” (Exodus 32:10-11).

Moses was the teacher of his people – *Moshe Rabbeinu*; and his grandeur lay in their grandeur. He was their king, and he saw them all as kings before the King. Thus we find that when they failed, he was told, “Go! Descend!” (Exodus 32:7); and the Sages explain: Go down from your greatness.¹

Because David desired for every Jew that which he desired for himself, nothing less than to possess the freedom that comes from being solely “a servant of GoD” (1 Samuel 18:1),² King David is emblematic of man’s greater future. He is the progenitor and anticipated personification of the messianic king.

“I am a *hassid*” (Psalms 86:2), King David said; that is, he did more for his people than duty demands of a monarch. The Talmud elucidates: “The kings of east and west do not rise before three hours into the morning,” David said. “But my hands are grimed in the blood and the afterbirth, to permit a wife to her husband.”³

Understood literally, this statement informs us that King David would take the time to apply his Torah knowledge to decide in matters related to marital relations.⁴ Understood in the large, David justified his kingship by promoting closeness between the Congregation of Israel and the GoD of Israel.⁵

Moses the Lawgiver, the supreme prophet, toiled to cleanse his people of their addiction to the fleshpots⁶ and the idolatries of Egypt, from which they had emerged as from a polluted womb. Having proven himself the attentive “nurse”⁷ and “faithful shepherd” of his flock,⁸ this first king of the Jews was honored for all time as “My servant Moses” (Numbers 12:7).

Chapter 18

True Kingship

In the relational reality, the right to kingship is properly traced to the relationship of reciprocity between king and King; schematically: one-to-One :: One-to-one. He will call Me: “You are my Father, my GoD, and the Rock of my deliverance. I will also appoint him firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Psalms 89:27-28).

The Right Of Kings

And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him, who lives forever... At the same time, my reason returned to me; and the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me ... and still more greatness was added to me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways justice; and He can humble those who walk in pride.

Daniel 4:31-34

Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan monarch whom GoD had sent to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem, finally understood that kingship and the heart of kings are in the hand of the King of kings.¹ This literal reading evokes another: An awesome worldwide transformation is projected for the future, which anticipates vindication of the messianic vision by King David.

David, son of Jesse, king over Israel, said, “I have set GoD always before me” (Psalms 16:8). By virtue of his allegiance

to the King, his glory attested to the glory of the King of kings. Inherent in the large pattern of existence, his glory (his attentiveness to GoD as King) is reciprocally joined to the glory of the King (GoD's attentiveness to him) in like measure for the future as well. "And David My servant will be their prince forever ... and they will seek GoD their GoD and David their king" (Ezekiel 37:25).

King David said, "I will dwell in the house of GoD forever" (Psalms 23:6); and he was granted an everlasting royal dynasty. For "the glory," attentiveness by the King of kings, is not time bound. Torah law stipulates that only kings of the House of David could be seated inside the Holy Temple,² the reserve of Divine Presence.³

Kingship in Israel properly belongs to the House of David, as reflected in the benediction pronounced in the presence of a king of Israel: "Blessed be He who has *apportioned* of His glory to those who are in awe of Him."

A different benediction is pronounced when coming into the presence of a king of the nations: "Blessed be He who has *given* of His glory to His creatures."⁴ The right of kingship is a conditional gift, unless intrinsically deserved as one's portion. Thus, on the day that Nebuchadnezzar saw himself at the height of his imperial glory, and demanded to be worshipped, he was informed: "The kingdom is departed from you ... in order that you may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of man, and gives it to whomever He will" (Daniel 4:28).

Thus were the Israelites instructed about inheriting the land of Canaan from the kings of Canaan.⁵

When a man arrogantly begins to emulate the grandeur of GoD, this removes him from Divine Presence, and he is rendered less than fully human. Nebuchadnezzar "will be with the beasts of the field ... be made to eat grass like oxen" (Daniel 4:29).

It is stated in the Book of Jonah (4:14): "Nineveh, that great city, in which there are twelve myriad persons ... and much cattle." In the Rashi commentary, "cattle" is a reference to people who do not know to acknowledge their Creator; their understanding is no different than bovine understanding.

"Do not exalt yourself in the presence of a king (the King), and do not stand in the place of the great. For it is better that you be told: "Come up here," than that you be put low in the presence of a prince whom your eyes have not seen" (Proverbs 25:6-7).

When Jeroboam, son of Nebat, became king, "he drove Israel from following GoD, and made them sin a great sin" (2 Kings 17:21). According to the Talmud, the Almighty took hold of Jeroboam's cloak (appealed to his reason), and said to him: "Return! Then I and you and the son of Jesse will promenade in the Garden of Eden."⁶

"Who is at the head?" he asked Him.

"The son of Jesse is at the head."

"If so, then I do not want it."

ooo

King David is at the head because he is "the sweet singer of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1); and he desires for all Israel that which he desires for himself. Their allegiance must match his allegiance to the King of kings. Then they will properly attest to the King, be "My witnesses" (Isaiah 43:10) for all time – a people that endures. But Jeroboam, son of Nebat, sings the song of his own imagined supremacy, and he forfeits the realm of eternity and Divine Presence. His people are not turned back to the King, and they suffer the consequences.

David justified his kingship, and for all time established the measure of true kingship, by promoting closeness between the Congregation of Israel and the GoD of Israel. This found its most evident expression in the national enterprise to build the Holy Temple. "As for me, in the uprightness of my heart, I have willingly offered ... and now I have seen with joy Your people that are present here offer willingly" (2 Chronicles 29:17). What is the supreme joy of a king anointed by GoD as fit to rule? It is to behold the joy of his people match his own joy at having offered joyously to the King of kings.

Appendix

Translation Of Author's Yiddish Poem

The people awake from a terrible nightmare
 Of exile and horror and grief
 And surge toward the Wall once of Wailing, united,
 Their longings converged in relief.

The age when we wandered is over, is dying,
 And no one is mourning, and no one is crying:
 'Tis the Western Wall which the people now grips
 With the hands of our heroes, with eyes and with lips.

From galut, from the corners of Earth, Jews are straining
 To wrest themselves free of the nations' restraining,
 With clenched fingers writhing against iron nets
 In the dark prison-house of the grim Soviets.

Outcries, long stifled, from here and from there
 Rush toward the Kotel, our triumph to share;
 We feel them, dim shapes which tallesim enfold,
 In our midst by a touch of redemption consoled.

Now arise, reassembled, bones crushed by fury
 Who had waited long ages for news, now they hurry,
 And those who in death had made holy the Name
 Have gotten their orders to come home again.
 After centuries of hope, after centuries of trust,
 In these days of testing, surmounting the past,
 The locked doors of silence swing wide in Creation:
 The way is paved homeward for Israel's nation.

The nations are muttering and grinding their teeth,
 Without understanding in fury they seethe,
 They are scorched by the light that illumines our way
 From the Mediterranean to Aqaba's bay.

Now in their assemblies the haters arise,
 With murderous faces and mouths full of lies
 They wield words like weapons to wrest back the lands
 That were hallowed to us, out of our rightful hands.

They torture the truth, and GoD they contemn,
 His redemption-command has no meaning for them,
 Our victory and comfort they cannot endure,
 So they lie to themselves, "We can even the score."

But today we are learning the meaning of those
 Ancient words in the scrolls about history's close,
 The manifest sense of the old prophecy
 That lies wrapped in the pledge of our GoD's constancy.

David's son has been summoned, he comes to explain,
 Stepping over the threshold to tell it again
 Till the teeth-grinding nations at last understand
 That these six days of victory were wrought by GoD's hand.



*This translation was prepared by Esther Cameron, poetess and
 close friend of the author.*

About The Author

Zvi Faier was born in the town of Hrubieszow in eastern Poland in 1934. His childhood years were spent in southern



Russia, his family having fled the Nazi occupation. In 1948, they immigrated to Montreal, Canada, where he received a yeshiva education, and then a B.Sc. degree from Sir George Williams University. He continued on to doctoral studies at Northwestern University in Chicago where he was awarded a Ph.D. in theoretical physics in 1965. It was here that he met his wife, Chaya, and his mentor, HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Halevi Zimmerman, who served as Head Rabbinic Scholar

at the Hebrew Theological College.

Dr. Faier pursued a teaching and research career, first as Research Physicist at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, and then as member of the physics faculty of St. John's University in New York. Simultaneously, he taught at Touro College and served as editor of INTERCOM, the Journal of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists.

In 1973, he made aliya with his family to Israel. In Jerusalem, he maintained his Talmudic studies with Rabbi Zimmerman at the Harry Fischel Institute, where he received rabbinic ordination in 1976. He taught at the Jerusalem College for Women, BMT Yeshiva, and at Yeshivat Hatefutzot.

In 1977, he embarked on a career of translating classic works

of biblical exegesis into English: the Malbim commentary (Bereshit-Shmot, 1978-84), the Me'am Lo'ez anthology (Bamidbar, Trei Asar, Tehilim, Mishlei, Shir HaShirim, Kohelet, 1982-97) and the Da'at Sofrim commentary (Ezekiel, Trei Asar, 2001-5). In addition, he edited other works (The Rav Speaks: Five Addresses by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, 1983; To Fathom Darkness: a Torah Perspective on the Holocaust by a Survivor, adapted and expanded from a Hebrew sketch by Rabbi Z. E. Schonfeld, 1983). In 1979, he published his first original work "Burnt Offering: a Return to the Physical and Intellectual Jerusalem", co-authored with Dr. Haim Sokolik.

The focus of Dr. Faier's teaching and research activity was centered on clarifying and applying the conceptual links between modern scientific methods and results and fundamental teachings of Judaism, i.e., developing a scientific analysis of Talmudic sources. His aim was to generate an integrated understanding of Torah, man, and the scientific universe.

Zvi Faier was a man great not only in mind but also in soul. Though constantly immersed in complex abstract concepts, he possessed the curiosity, eagerness and innocence of a child. Kind and generous, he responded with joy to humaneness and fairness, and with anger and outrage to inhumanity. He reacted intensively to every occurrence on the social, national and global level that impacted on the Jewish people. Blessed with great intuitive psychological understanding, he was intensely aware of the complexity of human nature, and extended support, guidance and unstinting compassion to those around him.

Dr. Faier passed away in 2009 after a long illness, which he bore with faith, dignity and courage. He left behind his wife Chaya, seven children, and many grandchildren.

Notes And References

Notation: BT=Babylonian Talmud; JT=Jerusalem Talmud

Prologue

- 1 Psalms 85:11.
- 2 Compare to Job 10:22; and see Malbim commentary on this verse. When there are no ordered patterns, even the light is as darkness. By implication, when there is order, light emerges from darkness, as in the Creation Story about “day one”. On the connection of darkness and disorder to social disarray, death and evil deeds, compare BT *Sota* 49; *Exodus Rabba* 14,2.
- 3 This is based on the Malbim reading of Psalms 90:4 “as yesterday... and as a watch”. See his commentary on Isaiah 21:11.
- 4 Compare “Watchman, what of the night...” (Isaiah 21:11-12). Sometimes, night serves as a euphemism for exile, human aberration and suffering. The onset of redemption is also termed dawn; See JT *Brachot* 1,1 and *Taanit* 1,1. According to the Sages, the reference is to two rates and modes of redemption.

Part One

Facing The Darkness – Seeing The Light

Chapter 1

- 1 BT *Sanhedrin* 108b.
- 2 BT *Berachot* 64a.
- 3 To ponder Psalm 122, especially verses 7-8.
- 4 Rabbi Eliyahu (the Gaon of Vilna), *Kol Eliyahu, Vayeze*.
- 5 The primary Judaic source for this conclusion, may be identified with the following teaching: “You shall be holy to Me, for I GoD am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine”

(Leviticus 20:26). The Safra on this verse says in the name of Rabbi Elazar ben Azzaria: How is it [known] that a man should not say: "It is not feasible to eat the [proscribed] flesh of the pig. It is not feasible to copulate when that is proscribed". Rather [that one should say]: "It is feasible, but what can I do? My Father in Heaven has so decreed upon me [that I must not]!" Thus it is taught, "I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine". Thereby one stays away from transgression, and accepts the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.

- 6 BT *Yevamot* 92b.
- 7 Compare Jeremiah's vision of the future (Jeremiah 32:37-44).
- 8 BT *Sota* 14a.
- 9 *Pirke Avot* 5,8.
- 10 *Pirke Avot* 5,7.
- 11 "I rejoiced when they said to me: Let us go to the house of GoD" (Psalms 122:1). When the Jewish people are in the House of GoD, they are to rejoice in each other. See also Song of Songs 3:10 and Chapter 9 of this book.
- 12 BT *Yoma* 9b.
- 13 BT *Sanhedrin* 7a and Rashi commentary there.
- 14 Compare Proverbs 27:10 "Your companion, and your father's companion, do not forsake" and Rashi's commentary "The Holy One - who is called a 'companion' to Israel, and 'your father's companion' who cherished your fathers." Compare also Song of Songs 5:16 "This is my Beloved, and this is my Companion".
- 15 Compare Zechariah 8:19-23.

Chapter 2

- 1 BT *Berachot* 10b.
- 2 Deuteronomy 6:4.
- 3 BT *Berachot* 61b.
- 4 Deuteronomy 10:12.
- 5 Rashi commentary on the verse.
- 6 Daniel 3:16-18.
- 7 Compare to Rabbenu Moshe Haim Luzzato, *Mesilat Yescharim*, Chapter 9. There is then no fear of imagined dangers and possible difficulties that time may bring. Compare to Psalms 23:4.
- 8 *Zohar* 98; cited in *Meam Loez* on Song of Songs, introduction.
- 9 Numbers 12:10.

- 10 See BT *Erchin* 15b. Within the context of Measure-for-measure, see *Klei Yakar* on Numbers 17:5.
- 11 BT *Pesahim* 67 and Rashi there.
- 12 “Who wants an elixir of life?” the smart peddler of perfumes called out. And when the people gathered, he pulled out a Book of Psalms and read to them: “Who is the man who desires life...? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile” (Psalms 34:13-14). See *Leviticus Rabba* 16,2 and sources cited in Note 10 above.
- 13 *Yadaim* 3,5; *Songs Rabba* 1,11.
- 14 *Deuteronomy Rabba* 4,2; *Leviticus Rabba* 35,6.
- 15 *Hidushei HaGriz al HaTorah*, on this Genesis text: “But with Jacob dead, no good will come from Esau”. Fathomed symbolically, there is a tradition that when Jacob died, Esau’s head rolled into the same grave (BT *Sota* 13a).
- 16 BT *Gitin* 57b.
- 17 Rashi commentary on the verse.
- 18 Shilo refers to the Messiah (*Genesis Rabba* 98,8).
- 19 Ibid. 99,8.
- 20 BT *Moed Katan* 16b.
- 21 Thus *yeru* (city) *shalem* (peace, complete). Compare “His tabernacle is set in *Shalem*” (Psalms 76:3) – in Jerusalem (Rashi on the verse). The name *Yerushalaim* is also seen as alluding to two righteous individuals. One is Abraham: Following the binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah, “he called that place: GoD will see (*yireh*) ... on the mountain GoD will be seen (*yeraeh*)” (Genesis 22:14). The other is Malchi-zedek, “king of *Shalem*” (ibid. 14:18). (*Pesikta Zutreta*, *Vayera* 22,14). See *Genesis Rabba* 56,10 and Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *The Living Torah*, New York, 1981, notes on Genesis 14:18 and 22:14.
- 22 BT *Sanhedrin* 106a.

Chapter 3

- 1 Compare *Genesis Rabba* 38,6.
- 2 The Midrash (*Genesis Rabba* 38,7) teaches that because the people of this generation had loved each other, they survived, but the earlier Flood Generation perished, because then “the earth was filled with violence” (Genesis 6:11). Mankind as a whole is judged more harshly for man’s inhumanity to man, which mitigates intrinsically against a viable society, than for sins against GoD.
See Rabbi Akiba’s teaching, “Love your companion as yourself (Leviticus 19:18) is a great [survival] principle in the Torah” (*Genesis Rabba* 24,7). Except for the implementation of this principle, no

society could exist. Rabbi Akiba had 24,000 disciples, and they all perished because they failed to honor one another (BT *Yevamot* 62b).

Compare JT *Peah* 1,1 “The generation of David were all righteous [in matters between man and GoD]; but because there was malicious tale-bearing among them, they would fall in battle. The generation of Ahab were all idol worshippers; but as there was no tale-bearing among them, they ventured into battle and emerged victorious”. Elaborations on this teaching were repeated innumerable times by Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman, of blessed memory. For a discussion of the *corresponding* principles of Divine guidance, see Rabbi Meir Simha of Dvinsk, *Meshech Hochma*, *Beshalah* portion.

- 3 See Chapter 1.
- 4 *Genesis Rabba* 38,7.
- 5 They knew the unity and solidarity that comes from sharing the same language, culture and location. They now wanted to *secure* this state of affairs by means of a loftier concept or impressive symbol.
- 6 *Genesis* 11:2.
- 7 *Ibid.* 1:3.
- 8 *Genesis Rabba* 38,8.
- 9 The tower was to serve as the pedestal for an idol (*ibid.* 38,6).
- 10 Like all his contemporaries, Abraham’s father worshipped idols; *ibid.* 38,13.
- 11 *Ibid.* 38,7.
- 12 In anticipation of what Moses would tell all his descendants, to “walk in His ways” (*Deuteronomy* 30:16).
- 13 Compare to: “and the souls whom they made in Haran” (*Genesis* 13:5) – which refers to converts, to worship the One GoD (*Genesis Rabba* 84,4).
- 14 Compare “walk in His ways” (*Deuteronomy* 30:16). See *Job* 9:12.
- 15 See *Sfat Emet* on *Genesis* 12:1.
- 16 *Genesis Rabba* 42,8.
- 17 See the text corresponding to Note 20 below.
- 18 *Genesis Rabba* 3,13.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 BT *Megilla* 13a.
- 21 What we see as “light” is rather the result of light in interaction with matter.

- 22 *Yad HaHazaka, Hilchot Avoda Zara* 1,1. See *Genesis Rabba* 3,9.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Compare to: "Light is sown for the righteous" (Psalms 97:11); "GoD is a light to me" (Micah 7:8). Abraham was the first to call GoD *Adon*-Master of the world (BT *Berachot* 8a).
- 25 *Genesis Rabba* 30,10. Abraham set the precedent for his descendants, who would be "a light for the nations" (Isaiah 42:6).
- 26 This expression is identified as referring to idolatry (*Genesis Rabba* 38,8).
- 27 *Songs Rabba* 2,14. In the text (Daniel 3:16), they said, "...king, Nebuchadnezzar..." The term Nebuchadnezzar appears redundant, which leads to the stated inference.

Chapter 4

- 1 *Genesis Rabba* 38,13.
- 2 Exodus 32:1.
- 3 Ibid. 20:2-6.
- 4 Ibid. 20:13.
- 5 The actual creation of Adam appears in the singular (Genesis 1:27).
- 6 BT *Avoda Zara* 2b.
- 7 BT *Eruvin* 13a.
- 8 *Yad HaHazaka, Laws of Kings* 7,15.
- 9 See *Torah and Reason*, Jerusalem, 1979, page 179-182.
- 10 See Exodus 22:1ff; BT *Berachot* 58a and 62b. See *Torah and Reason*, ibid.
- 11 Leviticus 18:21.
- 12 Numbers 35:17; Genesis 9:6.
- 13 To ponder the implication of Numbers 35:34.
- 14 See BT *Sanhedrin* 108a.
- 15 Ibid. 107b.
- 16 It is instructive to inquire about the converse of this statement: They who hate *Me*, hate *me*. Is this true? Do they who hate GoD, necessarily hate the Torah?
See *Lamentations Rabba*, Introduction 2 "Because ... they have forsaken Me, and did not keep My Torah (Jeremiah 16:11). R. Huna and R. Yirmiyya said: GoD says: *Had they but forsaken Me and kept My Torah, the illumination in her would have turned them back to the good*". Knowing and being are entangled; man believes and thinks

according to what man is.

The teaching of Judaism is realized in the human being at full stature. *Blessed be He who has chosen them and their teaching* (Avot 6,1). "GoD desired for the sake of his (man's) righteousness that the Torah increase and be magnificent" (Isaiah 42:2). A human being, when transformed by the Torah, will not reject or hate GoD as an expression of what he or she is.

The attitude of the nations to the children of Israel can be a test of their attitude to GoD. Compare to: *They who take a stand against the Jewish people, as if take a stand against GoD* (Rashi on Numbers 31:3).

- 17 Isaiah 51:3. See also Proverbs 3:18 The Torah "is a tree of life to those who hold her fast"; Proverbs 6:23 "Torah is light"; *Genesis Rabba* 24,8 "Adam was worthy of receiving the Torah".
- 18 Compare Job 10:22 in juxtaposition with Psalms 14:1. See BT *Sota* 49a; *Exodus Rabba* 14,2.

Chapter 5

- 1 BT *Kiddushin* 40a.
- 2 *Midrash Tanhuma, Vaera* 9.
- 3 Deuteronomy 12:29-31; 18:10.
- 4 JT *Hagiga* 1,7; *Lamentations Rabba*, Introduction 1,2.
- 5 *Torah and Reason*, page 174.
- 6 BT *Berachot* 10a; *Midrash Tehilim* 18.
- 7 Isaiah 42:6.
- 8 *Choshen Mishpat* 163,1, Rama. I am indebted to Rabbi Chaim Brovender for this reference.
- 9 See *Pirke Avot* 2,2.

Chapter 6

- 1 See Psalms 122:7-8 and BT *Ukzin* 3,12 "The Holy One found no vessel worthy to hold blessing for Israel as (except) peace. As it is written, 'GoD will give His people strength; GoD will bless His people with peace' (Psalms 29:11)".
- 2 Genesis 25:27.
- 3 BT *Sota* 9b. See also *Meam Loez* on Proverbs 27:20.
- 4 Genesis 27:4.
- 5 *Pirke Avot* 4,1.
- 6 Genesis 4:8 – the first murder, precursor of all murders.
- 7 *Pirke Avot* 4,21.

- 8 *Maamar Mordechai*, cited in *Meam Loez* on Proverbs 27:20.
- 9 A play by that title.
- 10 R.Y. Starret, *Esther: A Breslov Commentary on the Megilla of Esther*, Jerusalem, 1992, page 9.
- 11 Exodus 32:20-28.

Chapter 7

- 1 Genesis 25:22.
- 2 Genesis 27:19,31.
- 3 Compare: "Listen O heaven... May ... my speech distill as the dew" (Deuteronomy 32:2-3).
- 4 Genesis 27:39.
- 5 In context, "heaven" is the soul (BT *Sanhedrin* 91b).
- 6 BT *Sanhedrin* 71b.
- 7 *Genesis Rabba* 63,6.
- 8 Compare Genesis 2:7.
- 9 Ibid. 25:26.
- 10 Obadiah 1:21.
- 11 Echoes of non-mortal Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2).
- 12 Echoes of the mortal Adam having to contend with the "accursed" earth (Genesis 3).
- 13 Genesis 25:2-34.
- 14 Genesis 25:28. The confrontation between Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:30-33) might be dramatized as follows:
"Haliteni na – Gorge me..." – Esau gasped. He did not say: "*Hachileni na* – Feed me." Food was to be gorged, gulped down, devoured like a beast devouring game. Esau was "*ish yodea zayid* – a man who knows hunting".
"What about the birthright?" – Jacob suggested, hinting at spiritual food for his brother. The firstborn must excel at serving GoD.
But the hint passed unheeded – and remained generally unheeded for thousands of years afterwards.
"Birthright???" – Esau thought, perplexed. "*What is this talk of hierarchies?*" (Out loud:) "I am going to die!" *I am game for another hunter. There are no hierarchies of game.* (Out loud:) "Of what use is this birthright to me?"
Then Esau "ate and drank, and he rose up, and he went on his way." The Sages complete the inferred message: He ate without washing his hands; stood up without a word of thanks; he departed without a nod of acknowledgment. There was nothing here of distinctive

- human conduct. "Esau despised his birthright." When he ate, it was as the beasts eat (BT *Baba Bathra* 16a; *Genesis Rabba* 63,12; *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Pinhas* 13; Rashbam *Genesis* 25:27 on this verse).
- 15 *Genesis* 27:39-40.
- 16 *Ibid.* 27:28. See Note 2, above. Again we hear echoes of the Garden of Eden, where readily available sustenance is provided in abundance (*Genesis* 2).
- 17 BT *Kiddushin* 30b.
- 18 *Exodus* 20:12.
- 19 As indicated in the story of Adam in the Garden of Eden, unflawed transmission in the open system between man and GoD entails non-mortality. About Moses, "trusted in all My house," it says, "mouth to mouth I speak to him" (*Numbers* 12:7-8) which means that there is unflawed communication. At the age of one hundred and twenty, accordingly, "his eye was not dim and his moisture unabated" (*Deuteronomy* 34:8). But they who grow frail before dying, they "die of rust (*heled*)" (*Psalms* 17:14), which inhibits communication/transmission and dulls awareness.
- 20 *Genesis Rabba* 65,16.
- 21 The laws regarding the Sabbath are part of the reality of relationships sustained by man and GoD: Man keeping the Sabbath "holy," corresponds to GoD "keeping" GoD's Sabbath "holy." The latter – the cosmic Sabbath (the Sabbath of GoD's Domain) – is referred to in *Genesis* 2:2-3. Both are referred to in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue (*Exodus* 20:11). Judaism teaches that the Sabbath is a source of abundance for all other days of the week.
Man's observance of the Sabbath, manifests that man is free *not* to labor: free not to make lasting changes in Creation. That GoD "rested" (*Genesis* 2:2-3), expresses by analogy the necessary truth which Judaism teaches about GoD: the Creator is free *not* to create. Hence GoD is not to be identified with any creation by GoD, nor with Creation as a whole. This Judaic teaching refutes pantheism.
- 22 The parent is likewise commanded not to profane the Sabbath; and "the words of the Master override the words of the servant." Nor can one appoint another to act as one's envoy to commit a transgression (BT *Kiddushin* 42b).
- 23 See BT *Eruvin* 69b.
- 24 *Genesis Rabba* 63,11-12.
- 25 *Genesis Rabba* 63,13.
- 26 In *Psalms* 27, King David is borne on the wings of song to reach for the unflawed communication that prevailed between man and GoD in the Garden of Eden. The "sweet singer of Israel" (2 *Samuel*

23:1), his hymns form enduring bonds between the people of Israel and the GoD of Israel. King David is mortal, and he cannot celebrate personal non-mortality. However, he can celebrate the non-mortality of his people.

27 Leviticus 23:10; Exodus 13:2.

28 The comparison was expounded in a discourse by Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman.

29 BT *Beza* 25b.

30 Genesis 27:22.

31 The priestly clan, the Levites and the judges, were explicitly charged with educating, guiding and judging the people. Compare: Deuteronomy 17:9.

32 Genesis 27:22.

33 Ibid. 25:27, a reference to the study center of Shem and Ever (Rashi commentary on the verse).

34 Ibid. 27:22. By reaching for unflawed communication with Divine Presence, hence for optimal grasp of the truth, there is *more Divine Presence and greater abundance in the human sphere*.

"May my discourse come down as rain, my speech distill as the dew... For the name of GoD I proclaim" (Deuteronomy 32:2-3). "For the Name..." refers to the creation of a relationship; and in juxtaposition these verses affirm that there would always be Jews to proclaim the teachings of the Torah in the Name of GoD. There is the further implication that penance is accepted, since penance enhances GoD's participation below; for the degree of abundance from On High depends on the level of participation by man below.

Regarding the connection between repentance and participation by GoD, see JT *Makot* 2,6. See also Chapter 8.

35 In the reality of relationships, (1) GoD sustains the ladder; (2) Divine Presence participates in human mentality; (3) Human activity is monitored.

36 BT *Berachot* 10a.

37 *Genesis Rabba* 77,3.

38 Malbim commentary on Genesis 32:25.

39 In one sense, dominion of spirit over matter. Compare to Rashi on "the spirit of *Elo-him* hovers over the waters" (Genesis 1:2).

40 Cited by Rashi on the verse.

41 The name *Isra-el* – "GoD will rule (*isra-el*)" – would be realized.

42 Exodus 17:8-16.

- 43 BT *Rosh Hashana* 29a. They “raised their eyes” to the One who perpetually “stands” over Jacob (the collective Israel) and Jacob’s ladder; and this represents their mandate or striving to ascend.
- 44 Compare to Jeremiah 10:25 – “Pour Your wrath upon the nations that have not known You, and upon the families that have not called in Your Name.” In the imagery of the “ladder,” their worldly ascent will be terminated.
- 45 Rashi commentary on Numbers 31:3.
- 46 For the imagery of night and dawn in Rabbinic sources, see Prologue, Note 4.
- 47 Seir refers to the Esau peoples, or their habitat on Mount Seir.
- 48 In Torah sources, “small narratives” are generally indicative of larger realities. See Prologue.
- 49 BT *Megilla* 16b.
- 50 *Siftei Hachamim* gloss to the cited Rashi commentary.
- 51 *Mezudat David* commentary on the said verse.
- 52 *Numbers Rabba* 1,3.
- 53 BT *Baba Bathra* 15b.
- 54 See Chapter 1.
- 55 See Chapter 1.
- 56 BT *Megilla*, *ibid.*
- 57 BT *Yoma* 19b.
- 58 See Chapter 13, Hatam Sofer exegesis.

Chapter 8

- 1 Psalms 14 and 53.
- 2 See Chapter 7, Note 46, and corresponding text.
- 3 See also *Eliyahu Rabba* 7.
- 4 1 Samuel 17:10,26,36; Rashi on Numbers 10:36, Exodus 15:7. See Rabbi Chaim Drukman, *HaMachon HaTorani Or-Ezyon*, 5766, page 35.
- 5 *Midrash Tehilim Balak* 5,8.
- 6 BT *Shabbat* 31a.
- 7 *Sanhedrin* 71b. A person as soul-via-body existence is a relationship sustained through participation by GoD and man. Man “in the image of GoD” describes the basic relationship true for every human being: Jew and non-Jew are “sons of Adam” (see especially Psalms 33:13). “GoD knows the way of the righteous” (Psalms 1:6),

which designates a corresponding optimal relationship. Compare *Eliyahu Rabba* 9.

8 BT *Sanhedrin* 65b.

9 *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 13; Rambam, *Yad HaHazaka*, Laws of Repentance 3,5.

10 See BT *Shabbat* 133b.

11 *Pirke Avot* 3,14.

12 *Midrash Tehilim* 7. Compare Deuteronomy 12:29-31; 21:18-21.

13 *Genesis Rabba* 19,13.

14 Ibid. 82,6.

15 To ponder in this context, see *Genesis Rabba* 4,4.

16 BT *Sanhedrin* 65a.

17 *Songs Rabba* 6,6.

18 Malbim commentary on Genesis 1:25.

19 *Genesis Rabba* 79,8; Malbim commentary on Genesis 1:26.

20 *Mechilta Yithro* 5; *Exodus Rabba* 5,9; *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Shmot* portion, 25.

21 *Genesis Rabba* 22,6.

22 See *Lamentations Rabba*, Introduction 1,2; JT *Hagiga* 1,7. "Said R. Huna and R. Yirmiya in the name of R. Hiya son of Abba: It is written, '...and have forsaken Me, and have forsaken My Torah' (Jeremiah 16:11). GoD says: Had they but forsaken Me and kept My Torah, the illumination in ... her would have turned them back to the good."

23 For "GoD knows the way of the righteous" (Psalms 1:6).

24 See as well Isaiah 56:7.

25 BT *Yevamot* 49b.

26 Note the future tense in Exodus 15:1; Compare to BT *Sanhedrin* 91b.

27 *Orot*, Jerusalem, 1982, page 120. The translation of this paragraph is my own.

28 BT *Shabbat* 30b.

29 *Midrash Tehilim* 105.

30 BT *Berachot* 6a.

31 BT *Gitin* 56b.

32 See Rashi on Exodus 19:2 and see Chapter 9.

33 The foregoing four paragraphs are an adaptation from our joint book, *Burnt Offering: A Return To The Physical And Intellectual*

- Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, 1979.
- 34 Psalms 122-124.
 - 35 Compare Psalms 8:7-9.
 - 36 *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Tazria* portion.
 - 37 Compare BT *Shabbat* 10a.
 - 38 BT *Taanit* 25.
 - 39 W. Hermanns, *Einstein and the Poet – In Search of the Cosmic Man*, Brookline Village, 1983, page 123. What Einstein perceived as created laws, has more simply been called the “way of the world”: “On the day the first man was created, once the sun set over him, he said: Woe is me! Because I have offended, the world has become dark for me. The world will return to chaos ... and that is death as decreed upon me from Heaven. He continued fasting and weeping that entire night, and Eve wept across from him. Once the morning star rose, he said: That is the set way of the world” (BT *Avoda Zara* 8a).
 - 40 To ponder Hosea 14:10 in the present context.
 - 41 Compare *Avot* 2,8 and 6,7; BT *Eruvin* 54a; *Yoma* 72b; *Taanit* 7a; *Kiddushin* 30b; *Avot deRabbi Natan* 34,19; *Deuteronomy Rabba* 7,3; *Midrash Tehillim* 78,1.
 - 42 Compare Jeremiah 17:1; Proverbs 3:3; 7:3; also Exodus 32:15 (“tablets” of the heart).
 - 43 BT *Berachot* 28a.
 - 44 *Maamar Yirat Shamayim*, Kovez *Maamarim*, Tel-Aviv, 1986.
 - 45 Exodus 25:18,20.
 - 46 Isaiah 49:6.

Chapter 9

- 1 BT *Hagiga* 5b.
- 2 2 Samuel 7:24; see Psalms 23:4. See final section in the foregoing chapter.
- 3 BT *Berachot* 6a; Compare Deuteronomy 26:17-18.
- 4 *Exodus Rabba* 2,5.
- 5 Compare Deuteronomy 9:3.
- 6 Compare the “miracle” following the Maccabean victory over the Greeks. The olive oil in the single consecrated cruse found in the Temple was replenished as if *ex-nihilo*. The event is traditionally celebrated every year on Hanukah.
- 7 *Genesis Rabba* 1,1; Rashi commentary on Genesis 1:1.

- 8 "All the persons (*nefesh*) belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt ... all these persons (*nefesh*) were sixty six. And Joseph's sons... The total of Jacob's household who came to Egypt was seventy persons (*nefesh*)" (Genesis 46:26). Commenting on the repeated appearance of the singular verb *nefesh* (rather than the plural *nefashot*), Rashi says: *For they all served one GoD*.
- 9 Rabbi Avraham of Sochochow, cited in *Mai'no shel Torah*, Ed. Alexander Z. Freedman, Tel-Aviv, Vol. II, page 66.
- 10 And it is stated, "the tablets were the work of GoD, and the writing was the writing of GoD, engraved (*harut*) on the tablets" (Exodus 32:16). Read not *harut*, "engraved," but *herut*, "freedom" – for there is no free man except a person who is engaged at the Torah... (*Pirke Avot* 6,2). Regarding the "liberation" of the body, compare *Songs Rabba* 4,7 "At Sinai all bodily flaws were eliminated".
- 11 *Torah and Reason*, pages 173-175.
- 12 *Pesikta Rabati* 34,6.
- 13 BT *Brachot* 12a.
- 14 Compare as well Psalms 16:8.
- 15 See Chapter 1.
- 16 Proverbs 12:25; BT *Yoma* 75a.
- 17 BT *Sanhedrin* 65b.
- 18 Max Jammer, *Einstein and Religion*, Princeton, 1999, page 39-40.

Part Two

The Melody and The Destiny

Chapter 10

- 1 BT *Shvuot* 35b; *Numbers Rabba* 12,4; Rambam, *Yad HaHazaka*, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 6,9.
- 2 Rashi, introduction to Song of Songs.
- 3 See Song of Songs 3:9-11; BT *Taanit* 26b; see introduction to *Meam Loez* commentary on Song of Songs.
- 4 2 Kings 8:6, 10-11.
- 5 Regarding the very "large" and fundamental implications, see the *Meshech Hochma* commentary on Genesis 22:14.
- 6 Upon reflection these insights were suggested by what Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman wrote in *Torah and Reason*, Chapter 1.
- 7 Ibid.

- 8 As might be anticipated, based on the reality of relationships, optimal participation by the human being is matched by optimal participation by GoD.
- 9 BT *Makot* 24b.
- 10 See Genesis 17:17; 18:12; 22 and Note 5, above.

Chapter 11

- 1 See Psalms 51:17 “GoD, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praises”, which also serves as preface to the *Shemone Esrei* prayer, and BT *Berachot* 4b.
- 2 BT *Shabbat* 133b.
- 3 BT *Berachot* 7a.
- 4 *Leviticus Rabba* 29,3; Compare BT *Avoda Zara* 3b.
- 5 BT *Baba Bathra* 131a.
- 6 To ponder the conceptual significance of GoD judging man see JT *Rosh Hashana* 1,3 and *Exodus Rabba* 30,9. These sources convey that GoD adheres to Torah law. Hence, keeping Torah laws and commandments corresponds to and affects domains of reality, and are not only “values.”
- 7 See Exodus 32:11-13. See also the teaching of Rav Matna in this chapter.
- 8 See *Leviticus Rabba* 4,1; *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer* 2.
- 9 Genesis 18:1-6; *Tosefta Berachot* 1; BT *Beza* 32b; *Genesis Rabba* 78,8.
- 10 BT *Beza* 32b.
- 11 Compare Micah 7:9.
- 12 Through adherence to the Word of GoD that is the Torah, Jews are also GoD’s disciples – His spiritual children. See *Sifre* on Deuteronomy 6:7. “One’s disciples are as one’s children.” In this sense especially, “you are children of GoD your GoD” (Deuteronomy 14:1). The verse “You are indeed GoD who conceals Himself,” (Isaiah 45:15) ends “O GoD of Israel, bring deliverance”.
- 13 BT *Shvuot* 39a “All of Israel are guarantors for one another”.
- 14 The Divine promise that Israel would endure directly relates to a “remnant,” as history has shown. See BT *Menahot* 53b and compare with Ramban’s commentary on Genesis 32:9.
- 15 Compare Ecclesiastes 1:4.
- 16 Compare 2 Samuel 7:24.
- 17 See Deuteronomy 26:17-18; Jeremiah 7:23 and 11:4; Ezekiel 11:20,

14:11, 36:28. The verse or group of verses preceding each of these sources includes verb-forms of *hayē* (*heh-yud-heh*) “to be”, once in relation to GoD and once in relation to the Israelite nation. See foregoing chapters.

- 18 BT *Taanit* 2a.
- 19 See foregoing chapters.
- 20 For example, see Exodus 21:1-6.
- 21 Compare Isaiah 51:2; See also *Meam Loez* commentary on Song of Songs 4:8.
- 22 Genesis 17:19; 21:1-3.
- 23 Compare Isaiah 21:3.
- 24 Compare Joel 1:8.
- 25 BT *Nida* 31b.
- 26 BT *Shabbat* 88b.
- 27 BT *Berachot* 26b.
- 28 BT *Pesahim* 88a; *Genesis Rabba* 50,11.
- 29 See commentaries on Micah 7:20.
- 30 In relation to the three patriarchs, compare *Sifre* Deuteronomy 32:9.
- 31 See *Yalkut Shimony Eicha* 1035, Job as allegory for the Jewish people.
- 32 Rashi and Ramban commentaries on Genesis 32:9.

Chapter 12

- 1 Compare Leviticus 26:4-5 and see Rashi’s commentary there; contrast with BT *Sota* 48a, regarding what followed the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- 2 BT *Sanhedrin* 98a.
- 3 BT *Kiddushin* 30a.
- 4 In some contexts in Judaic thought, the “six days” of the Creation Story (Genesis 1) are projected on a scale that corresponds to 6000 years of human history. See BT *Sanhedrin* 97a; See also Aaron Leib Dukes, “Entering the Sabbath of History”, *B’Or Ha’Torah* Vol. 15 (2005), page 115.
- 5 Compare Isaiah 60:14; Psalms 46:5.
- 6 BT *Berachot* 34b.
- 7 *Orot HaRa’aya*, Jerusalem, 1985, page 54.
- 8 BT *Megilla* 29a. See also BT *Berachot* 6a “How is it known that the

Holy One is to be found in the synagogue? As it says: 'GoD (*Elo-him*) stands in the congregation of GoD (*El*)' (Psalms 82:1)".

Even so, there is a fundamental difference between the Jewish people in the land of Israel and exile. The collective Israel is defined only in the Holy Land, while outside of it, the synagogues are "small sanctuaries." (See Rambam, *Sefer HaMizvot mizvat ase* 153, *Hatam Sofer, Yore Deah* 234). Regarding the individual, see BT *Ketubot* 110b "One who dwells outside the land of Israel, it is as if he has no GoD".

- 9 Rabbi Hanan Porat, *Me'at min Ha'or*, No. 209.
- 10 See Chapter 7.
- 11 BT *Yoma* 54a.
- 12 Ibid. 9b.

Chapter 13

- 1 See BT *Berachot* 6a "Divine Presence attends even when one person alone studies Torah"; See also *Midrash Tehilim* 105 "Do you want to see *Shechina* (Divine Presence) in this world? Be occupied with the Torah in the land of Israel". By inference, Divine Presence is linked to knowledge and awareness in one form or another. In figurative presentation, "In Your light we see light" (Psalms 36:10). Most evidently, Torah study forms and informs human mentality: "Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). See also Proverbs 6:22 and BT *Sota* 21a "Torah study shields like light, whose illumination shields from obstacles and hidden dangers". Just as light is a creation (Genesis 1:3 "Elo-him said: Let there be light! - and there was light"), awareness, insight and knowledge are creations. When what we know is true, we participate in what GoD knows is true in Creation. "In Your [created] light we see light". This is what is meant by the statement (BT *Hagiga* 12a) "With the light of Day One, Adam saw from one end of the world to its other end".
- 2 See BT *Shabbat* 55a "the seal of GoD is truth"; See also *Pesikta Rabati* 24 "GoD created everything except the measure of falsehood". Stated axiomatically - truth identifies a creation by GoD, and every creation by GoD is related to a corresponding truth. Judaism affirms this axiom by speaking of the Word of GoD. "The beginning of Your word is truth" (Psalms 119:160). The Word of GoD had a beginning, it is a creation, it mediates all creation, and it is to be true. Judaic sources affirm that the Torah too is both true and a creation (see Psalms 119:142 and BT *Pesachim* 54a "Seven things were created before the creation of the world ... Torah"). Accordingly, the Torah is referred to as the Word of GoD (see Exodus 20:1) "GoD

spoke all these words". The created world is likewise referred to as a creation of GoD. The Talmud (BT *Rosh Hashana* 32a) cites Psalms 33:6 "By the word of GoD were the heavens made" with reference to the act of creation (Genesis 1:1), thus conveying that the word *Bereshit* stands for the Word of GoD as a creation. That is, *Bereshit* does not serve a *solely* linguistic function; it is not simply a text, part of the first verse in the creation narrative – as it reads in the standard translation, namely, "In the beginning". Rather, it also stands for the Word of God as a creation that mediated the creation of heaven and earth. The corresponding reading of Genesis 1:1 would therefore be "GoD created the heavens and the earth by the word of GoD". It might therefore be said further: This reading in juxtaposition with the standard reading – "In the beginning GoD created..." – conveys that this Word of GoD was a creation, hence that it had a beginning.

The significance of this parallel is indicated in the statement (*Genesis Rabba* 1,1) "GoD looked into the Torah while creating the world". This teaching may be understood as an indication for the human sphere. Man can look to knowledge of the Torah in order to disclose unknown knowledge of the world and man; and man can look to scientific knowledge, and the methods of discovering knowledge in science and other endeavors, to clarify and help apply knowledge of the Torah. Informed insight discloses connections; and this leads to the discovery that a simple narrative may likewise be a discourse on larger realities. In science, the local scenarios have been shown to disclose larger scenarios. For the same reason that the apple falls, the moon is seen to move "around" the earth, and the sun is seen to move "around" the earth; and so forth.

If mankind had not received the Torah, we would not know that what is expected of man is an adaptation of the Word of GoD for the human domain. The Word of GoD is usually applied to texts of Scripture and transmissions of the Oral Torah. Yet the Word of GoD refers to a creation; and it sustains communication between all aspects of created reality. Pythagoras imagined a "music of the spheres" that was created by the universe. This was principally inspired by the mathematically precise movements of the heavenly bodies. Judaic sources (see *Sefer Yezira* and compare BT *Berachot* 55a) speak of GoD creating the world by means of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; and since each letter also bears a numerical value, one can likewise speak of a corresponding "music" of numbers in nature. Many psalms refer to a variety of musical instruments, including stringed instruments with different numbers of strings; the context of the psalms ranges over all aspects of existence, including the changing moods and circumstances of King David's personal and public life.

When science discloses the invisible relationships in nature, the “music of the spheres” – the pattern of astronomical and other regularities – becomes knowledge accessible to everyone. This knowledge explains the local phenomena as well. A symphony is a creation of sounds for all to hear, devoid of mysteries. There are symphonies that we, or some of us, may never hear, and there are panoramic sights we may never see. In the Judaic orientation, the Word of GoD sustains order in Creation, and it holds out the promise of successful exploration. “GoD knows the way of the righteous” – this verse in Psalms 1:6 is read by Rabbi Elijah (the Gaon) of Vilna (*Aderet Eliyahu* on Numbers 23) – the way in thought as well.

Generally, our knowledge of the truth – about ourselves, other people, the world, and about GoD – reflects what we are and if we are undistorted, our thinking is undistorted as is conveyed in BT *Shabbat* 92a “Divine Presence does not come to rest except in one who is wise, mighty and rich, and a man of stature”. In essence, such an individual is not suffering from personality flaws – related to privations in knowledge, strength, material possessions, or short stature – which can distort his knowledge of reality. See Deuteronomy 32:5 and Rashi commentary, BT *Kiddushin* 7a and BT *Nedarim* 38a.

Judaism teaches the special worth of human life as soul-via-body existence; and that man requires reliable guidelines to become man at full stature in proper coordination of body and soul. The verses Genesis 17:1 “walk before Me and be complete” and Numbers 12:7 “My servant Moses, he is trusted in all My house” imply the principle of emulation. Man must endeavor to emulate the “ways” of GoD, whose “work is complete” (Deuteronomy 30:16; 32:4). The optimal truth accessible to a human being at full stature, is encompassed by the truth (Truth) known to GoD.

Human mentality is a creation by GoD; and GoD does not falsify (see Jeremiah 10:10); GoD does not mislead man – man can in principle rely on human determinations of the truth. More generally, compare BT *Avoda Zara* 3a “The Holy One does not conspire against His creatures”.

- 3 Recorded in Rabbi Shmuel Avidor HaKohen, *Ish Neged HaZerem*, 2002, page 120.
- 4 See Prologue.
- 5 *Burnt Offering: A Return To The Physical And Intellectual Jerusalem*, Jerusalem, 1979. Compare Maimonides, *Sefer HaMizvot mizva* 3 – “experience the ultimate joy” (comprehension of the Torah); “and love (of GoD) will ... follow.”
- 6 Cited by Alexander Zusia Freedman in *Mai'no shel Torah* II, Tel-

Aviv, page 32. Compare Deuteronomy 26:17-18, and Ibn Ezra commentary. See Psalms 145:18-19.

In the *Hatam Sofer* exegesis we find application of the methodological principle identified earlier, that can guide exploration of Torah sources. Namely, what reads as a *simple narrative* may likewise be a discourse on larger realities. Through the requisite informed mind-set one becomes a source of potential insights that lead to knowledge of those realities.

Here, the *simple narrative* on the one hand refers to the cited text of Scripture – “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob” – to which Rashi adds a single word: *avot*, ostensibly the plural noun for fathers or patriarchs. So understood, Rashi’s addition appears redundant.

The informed mind – *about Rashi* – knows what he knew, namely, that the audience for whom he is writing his commentary (including our generation) knows this about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: they were the patriarchs of the Jewish people. It likewise knows that the great Rashi *does not indulge in writing redundancies*. Rashi also knows that *the Word of GoD does not accommodate redundancies*.

Rashi knows the teaching of the Sages that *GoD looked into the Torah while creating the world*. Nature is likewise mediated by the Word of GoD. In nature there are no superfluous phenomena. Hence the Word of GoD does not accommodate redundancies. Therefore, *Rashi’s simple narrative* – the added single word *avot* – must convey additional information. The *Hatam Sofer* says: Rashi informs his readers (us as well) that the Word of GoD does not simply (superfluously) tell Moses *the identity of the three patriarchs*. The Word of GoD must be telling Moses *something significant* about them. Based on the knowledge that the noun *avot* shares the same root as the verb that means “to want” – the *Hatam Sofer* is led to his “larger” insight about Rashi’s intent: The Word of GoD informs Moses that *GoD appears only to those who want that He appear to them*.

In this instance, the informed mind-set *about Rashi* appeared publicly centuries later, through the exegesis of the *Hatam Sofer*.

- 7 The following verses illustrate the connection between the Word of GoD and nature: “GoD said: Let there be firmament...Let there be lights” (Genesis 1:6,14); “Forever, O GoD, Your word stands firm in the heavens” (Psalms 119:89); “Whoever knows how to calculate the seasons and [the positions of] the constellations, but fails to do so, of him it is said: ‘But they do not look to the work of GoD...’ (Isaiah 5:12)” (BT *Shabbat* 75a).

- 8 See *Midrash Tanhuma, Devarim* 3. See also *Torah and Reason*, ch. VII.

- 9 When the work of art is oneself, through constant self-transformation, one's creativity evidently emulates the Creator *in this as well*: The *product* (oneself) *does not exist for a moment independently of the creator of the product!* The Creator continues to sustain *all* His creations, and here – uniquely with respect to *this* creation (oneself) – the living human creator likewise continues to sustain the creation. This explanation can give us insight into the meaning of the law that upon perceiving beauty in nature or creatures (also oneself), one pronounces “Blessed be He for whom that is so in His [hence man's] world” (*Tosefta Berachot* 6,4).
- 10 *Midrash Tanhuma, Tazria* 5.
- 11 In consonance with, and emulation of man having been created “in the image of GoD” (Genesis 1:27).
- 12 BT *Kiddushin* 40a. If one thinks to perform a good deed – or more specifically, to fulfill a commandment – and is prevented from actually doing so, GoD credits the thought as an accomplished deed. Literally: *GoD attaches the thought to the deed*. This Godly action is a special creation by GoD. Regarding the italicized statement, see further the elaboration by *Meshech Hochma* on Genesis 22:14.
- 13 See Irving Bunim, *Ethics from Sinai*, New York, 1974 .
- 14 BT *Taanit* 5a.
- 15 JT *Baba Kama* 7,7.
- 16 *Genesis Rabba* 59,5.
- 17 *Genesis Rabba* 55,7; 56,10.
- 18 BT *Kiddushin* 49b.
- 19 Genesis 22:12.
- 20 Rabbi Elijah of Vilna; *Kol Eliyahu, Vayeze*.

Part Three

Authentic Civilization

Chapter 14

- 1 Compare BT *Berachot* 28b.
- 2 Deuteronomy 16:16.
- 3 BT *Horiyot* 9a and Rashi.
- 4 Psalms 82:1.

Chapter 15

- 1 Rambam *Yad HaHazaka, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 5,5. See Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman, *Torah and Existence*, page 264.
- 2 *Torah and Existence*, page 127.
- 3 *Yad HaHazaka, Hilchot Teshuva* 3,4.
- 4 BT *Makot* 11a.
- 5 BT *Sota* 45b-46a.
- 6 BT *Berachot* 34b.
- 7 Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, *Kol Eliyahu, Vayeze*.
- 8 BT *Berachot* 58a.
- 9 See BT *Kiddushin* 42b.
- 10 *Numbers Rabba* 15,14.

Chapter 16

- 1 See also Isaiah 6:3 and Psalms 138:6.
- 2 BT *Baba Mezia* 58b.
- 3 BT *Megilla* 31a.
- 4 See BT *Shvuot* 47b “the servant of a king is as a king” and *Midrash Tanhuma Zav* 13 “the servant of a king is a king”. In reference to Moses “the servant of GoD”, see Numbers 12:7.

Chapter 17

- 1 BT *Berachot* 32a.
- 2 Compare Deuteronomy 34:5, regarding Moses.
- 3 BT *Berachot* 4a.
- 4 External evidence of menstrual emission renders a woman ritually unclean (*nida*), and marital relations are proscribed. The same holds true after giving birth or the ejection of a minimally developed embryo.
- 5 Based on the traditional reading of the Song of Songs, Raya represents the Congregation of Israel, and Dod represents the GoD of Israel. King David promoted among his people love of GoD, as well as justice, charity and righteousness among themselves, in consonance with what it says about Abraham “For I know ... he will command his children after him, to keep the way of GoD, to do righteousness and justice” (Genesis 18:19). Compare as well “I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness, and in justice, and in loving-kindness, and

in compassion. And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness; and you will know GoD" (Hosea 2:21-22). As it is to be expected in the reality of relationships, sustained through reciprocal participation by GoD and man, man is to sustain participation. During morning prayers, while donning tefillin, symbolic of the bond between Israel and the GoD of Israel, the Jew recites these verses.

- 6 Compare Exodus 16:3. See also *Exodus Rabba* 2,2 "Moses was not tested by GoD except through the flock he shepherded".
- 7 Numbers 11:12.
- 8 *Esther Rabba* 7,18.

Chapter 18

- 1 See Proverbs 21:1 "The heart of a king is in the hand of GoD".
- 2 BT *Yoma* 25a; JT *Pesahim* 5,10.
- 3 *Pesikta Zutreta* 25,16.
- 4 BT *Berachot* 58a.
- 5 See Deuteronomy 6:10-15, 8:6-20, 9:1-6 and Rashi on Genesis 1:1.
- 6 BT *Sanhedrin* 98a. The phrase "Garden of Eden" here has projections for the future as the "Promised Land" and the "Promised Planet" in the messianic age, when all of mankind has accepted the kingdom of GoD upon themselves.

A Day Is A Thousand Years is a unique exposition of major Judaic concepts related to the destiny of the Jewish people and their interplay with the rest of mankind, throughout history and today. Broad in scope, it addresses a universal audience. People versed in Jewish sources will find here enlightening new perspectives on familiar themes.

Besides its originality and the profound ideas expounded, this book has two other exceptional features. One, the presence of the author, his personality and experiences permeating throughout the book, intertwining with the concepts and forming a framework within which the concepts are discussed and developed. Two, its rich language and beautiful flowing style and imagery, combining prose and verse, classify it as an unusual piece of literary art.

This is the first of two posthumous works by Zvi Faier – Torah scholar, theoretical physicist and poet.



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