

# דור לדור

## DOR Le DOR

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WE MOURN THE LOSS OF

**CHAIM I. ABRAMOWITZ**

*Assistant Editor of DOR le DOR*

חיים יצחק ב"ר קלמן ז"ל

was a

*Member of the Editorial Board since 1974*

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*Tribute to him for his voluntary and dedicated service to Dor le Dor was rendered in 1985, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday.*

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO HIS MEMORY

יהי זכרו ברוך

## KEDUSHA — HOLINESS

BY SHIMON BAKON

The everyday life of a Jew is permeated by "holiness." אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וְצִוּנוֹ — *Who has hallowed us by His commandments*. Whenever a Jew performs a Mitzvah, a divine commandment, even if it seems prosaic, that act is hallowed and with it the person who performed it. The simple act of kindling lights on Sabbath eve hallows not only the Sabbath but the woman herself who kindled them. The *Kiddush*, the drinking of a cup of wine, sanctifies the Sabbath and the one who performed it. Marriage, considered a sacred occasion, is called *Kiddushin*. If one has lost a dear one, he recites the *Kaddish*, sanctifying the Holy Name and submitting to His inscrutable will.

The favored appellation for God Himself is the "Holy One" — *Kadosh* or *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* הקדוש ברוך הוא, "the Holy One, blessed be He." The Temple was called the *Beit Mikdash*, and the small area of the indwelling of God's glory was the *Kodshe HaKodashim*, the Holy of Holies. Sanctifying the Name of the Lord is *Kiddush HaShem*, and the martyrs who laid down their lives for the sanctification of God's Name are *Kedoshim*.

With all that one is hard put to define the term of *Kadosh*, holy. We know that God is holy, but have no clear cut idea what it signifies.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (Isaiah 6:1-3)

In the year 740-739 BCE, the year when King Uzziah of Judah died, a young man entered the Temple of Jerusalem. Suddenly he was overpowered by a vision accompanied by sounds. He saw the Glory of the Lord sitting on a throne *high and lifted up, surrounded by Seraphim, His train (שוליו) filling the Sanctuary*. And the Seraphim were calling to one another:

Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts קדוש, קדוש קדוש ה' צבא

The whole earth is full of His glory מלא כל הארץ כבודו

This young man was Isaiah, and the overwhelming experience marked his initiation into prophecy and the long ministry of one of the greatest prophets in Israel.

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The calls of the Seraphim bring to mind King Solomon's speech on dedicating the Temple he had built (I K. 8:27):

*But will God in very truth dwell on earth?*

*Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens  
cannot contain Thee; how much less this  
house that I have builded.*

From the beginning of Israel's monotheism, the paradox of God Whom the "heaven of heavens cannot contain," yet Who is willing to rest His glory in some specially designated place, was obvious to the spiritual elite. This paradox of God's transcendence and yet nearness to man is fully expressed in Isaiah (66.1-2):

*Thus saith the Lord*

*The heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool*

*Where is the house that ye may build unto Me...*

*But on this man will I look*

*even on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit  
and trembleth at My word.*

For Isaiah the threefold repetition in his first vision seems to indicate that holiness is the quintessential attribute of God, and the term "*the Holy One of Israel*" appears in a great number of his subsequent prophecies. The Targum Jonathan interprets it as follows: He is *holy* — in the highest heaven; He is *holy* upon earth, and *holy* for all eternity. The universe, conceived of as an inseparable space-time unit, cannot contain Him.

### INCOMPREHENSIBLE — MORAL PERFECTION

When Moses had requested: *Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory*, God's answer to him was: *Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live* (Ex. 33:18-20). It is in the Thirteen Attributes that He makes His ways comprehensible to Moses. The message is clear, as already implied in His Ineffable Name (the Tetragrammaton). He is undefinable, yet He can be comprehended in ethical terms. His holiness consists in moral perfection which is much more than the sum of the Thirteen Attributes. He cannot be understood in all His ways.

The greatness of the Book of Job consists precisely in the conclusion reached by the sorely tested Job after much suffering and long debates with



his wise and self-righteous friends: God's ways cannot be understood by man.

God's holiness must not be merely understood in terms of the "Wholly Other Being", the "En Sof" — the Infinite, essentially incomprehensible to finite man, and his moral perfection. There is also an element of קנאה zealotry, as part of his attributes. As such He is intolerant of the moral and religious backsliding of Israel. Moreover, He is a devouring fire, אש אכלה (Deut. 4:24). Defilement שקץ, through prohibited food and defilement ערוה through prohibited sexual practices arouses His indignation. Both prohibitions are inextricably bound up with His Holiness<sup>1</sup>.

*Thou art of eyes too pure to behold evil*      טהור עינים מראות רע  
*And that canst not look on mischief.*      והביט אל עמל לא תוכל

Habakkuk 1:13

#### HALLOWING OF TIME AND SPACE; AND KNESSET ISRAEL

##### TIME AND SPACE

It is universally recognized that the institution of the Sabbath wrought a major religious, moral and social revolution. What is not known is that the "hallowing" of the Sabbath was an eloquent protest against pagan myths.

According to mythology, the process of creation, itself a painful upheaval involving a variety of forces engaged in a battle of life and death, ended in the emergence of a "major deity," securing for itself a permanent "holy place," such as pyramids and ziggurats. However, in the biblical account, Creation concludes with sanctification of time: ויברך אלהים את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו — *And He blessed the seventh day and hallowed it* (Gen. 2:2).

This is the first time that the concept קדש — hallowing, appears in the Bible.

Abraham J. Heschel<sup>2</sup> drew the conclusion that the hallowing of time had no merely chronological but also actual priority over the hallowing of space.

In the biblical portion dealing with the construction of a sanctuary — משכן (Ex. 35:1-3), Moses assembles the entire congregation and warns:

<sup>1</sup> It will come as no surprise that Maimonides in his Mishne Torah deals with הלכות and with הלכות מאכלות אסורות as an integral part of Holiness.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Heschel — *Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man*.

*On the seventh day there shall be to you*      ביום השביעי יהיה לכם  
*a holy day, a Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord*      קדש, שבת שבתון לה'  
From the proximity of the divine command to construct a Tabernacle and the renewed exhortation concerning the sanctity of the Sabbath, our Sages learned that the Sabbath day must not be violated even for the sacred duty of erecting a sanctuary. "Furthermore", writes Heschel, "before the Torah was given... the people of Israel were requested to be a *kingdom of priests and a holy people*. Only after the people had stumbled in their quest for a 'concrete deity'... and sinned with the golden calf, only then was allowed them a 'holy place', with special tools to serve the Lord in purity."

#### MYSTERY AND COMMANDMENT

*And ye shall be holy unto me*      והייתם לי קדושים  
*For I, the Lord, am holy*      כי קדוש אני ה'  
*and have you set apart from the peoples*      ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים  
*that ye shall be Mine, (Lev. 20:26).*      להיות לי

To be holy, then, is to be set apart. This setting apart (from the generality) is for some lofty purpose, by following the divine commandments! One will note that whenever this request to be holy is put forward, it is always in the plural, since in the biblical view the individual can aspire to holiness only as an integral part of the community.

Is the "holiness" attached to 'Knesseth Israel' 'metaphysical,' to the same degree as the Sabbath, or the 'ground' on which the Lord chose to reveal Himself, such as in the theophany of the Burning Bush, where Moses is warned: *Draw not nigh hither; put off your shoes, for the place whereon you standest is holy ground* (Ex. 3:5)?

According to Rabbi Soloveitchik the answer is yes and no. "Halachically," he says, "this sanctity stems from the sanctity of the Fathers which reaches us as an inheritance transmitted from generation to generation, from the Patriarch Abraham down to this day;... and sanctity which the Almighty invests in every one of Israel in every generation. The roots of these two portions lie in the two Covenants between God and His people: the first at Horeb (Mt. Sinai) and the second, when the Israelites were about to enter the land...

However, the origin of the sanctity is in the making of the covenant, i.e., in a contract entailing mutual obligations. Sin means that if one party to the agreement fails to meet the conditions of the contract, the agreement becomes null and void."<sup>3</sup>

Mystery and Commandment are inextricably interwoven in the holiness of Knesseth Israel. Thus, R. Ishmael correctly interpreted: *אנשי קודש תהיו לי* — "*holy men you shall be to Me*:" so long as you are holy, you are Mine. It can be stated also thusly: as long as you follow My commandments you are holy; if you breach My covenant you cease being holy.

### THE HOLY — THE PROFANE — THE ABOMINATION

#### WHO SEPARATES THE HOLY AND THE PROFANE

The Aggadah about R. Shimon Bar Yochai and his son, who hid from the Romans in a cave for twelve years, illustrates the Jewish view of holiness. It is told that when they first emerged and saw a man ploughing and sowing, they exclaimed: "They forsake life eternal and engage in life temporal," and whatever they cast their eyes upon was immediately burnt up. Thereupon a Heavenly voice cried out: "Have you emerged to destroy My world", and they were commanded to return to the cave for another twelve months. When they now emerged: wherever Elazar wounded, R. Shimon healed... When later they saw an old man, on the eve of the Sabbath, holding two bundles of myrtle, and were told that *one is for "Remember" and one for "Observe"*, Rabbi Shimon turned to his son and said: "See how precious are the commandments to Israel."

This profound Aggadah seems to indicate that both father and son, living their monastic life as recluses in the cave and engaged in deep meditation and prayer, seeking mystic communion with their Maker,<sup>4</sup> could not at first be reconciled to the daily pursuits of the people. Their concept of "holiness" was stunted. Re-emerging, they learned two important lessons: First, the separation of the two realms of the holy and the profane is only provisional. In fact, the profane can serve as a preliminary stage of the holy. Second, a plain myrtle

3 J. B. Soloveitchik — *On Repentance* p. 43.

4 Tradition has made R. Shimon Bar Yochai the author of the Kabbala.

could, by properly wedding deed and intention, be turned into a mitzvah, a loving commandment, sanctifying the Sabbath in its two aspects by "Remembering" and "Observing" this day.

#### FROM THE HOLY TO ABOMINATION

The holiness of some special days and places contains a mystical quality because they are regarded as belonging to God in a unique way. They possess "holiness" in various degrees. Kadushin<sup>5</sup> called it the "hierarchy of holiness." In rabbinic literature this hierarchy is clearly fixed; however, we discern in biblical sources an ascending and descending order of holiness.

The Sabbath, being divinely blessed and sanctified, tops the hierarchy of holy days; the Holy of Holies, considered the indwelling of God's Glory, leads the hierarchy of holy places.<sup>6</sup> Though all Israelites participate in holiness by virtue of their covenantal relationship, the Levites and the Kohanim do so in ascending order, with the High Priest ministering in the Holy of Holies, at the apex.

Diametrically opposed to the concept of holiness is Levitical "uncleanliness" — *טומאה*, reaching down to its nadir, which the Rabbis designated as the *Avi Avot haTumah הטומאה*.

There are three cardinal sins for which a person should give up his life rather than commit them, and these are connected in the Bible with *טומאה* — defilement. Characteristically, one is idol worship: *Because he has given of his seed to Moloch, to defile My Sanctuary* (Lev. 20:3).

The second is incestuous sexual relations: *That ye do not any of the abominable customs, and ye defile not yourselves therein* (Lev. 18:30).

The third is bloodshed: *For blood polluteth the land... and ye shall not defile the land* (Lev. 35:33–40).

#### YOU SHALL BE HOLY UNTO ME

Rav Huna<sup>7</sup> said: "What means the text: *Ye shall walk after the Lord your God* (Deut. 13:6)?... Has it not been said: *For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire* (Deut. 4:24). But [the meaning is]: to walk after the attributes of

5 Max Kadushin, *Worship and Ethics*, A study in Rabbinic Judaism, Northwestern University Press, 1964, p. 224.

6 Connected with the Temple there is a hierarchical order of sacrifices and objects.

7 Talmud Sotah, 14a.

the Holy One... As He clothed the naked...so shalt thou; as He visiteth the sick... so shalt thou; as the Holy One comforteth mourners, so do thou."

Imitatio dei — the imitation of God in His ethical qualities — has its origin in various biblical passages. Perhaps the best known are the Thirteen Attributes, of which we wrote before, and the injunction repeated a number of times: *You shall be holy, for I the Lord am holy*. It is most significant that this commandment, "to be holy, for I am holy", appears almost exclusively in proximity to prohibitions of illicit sex or forbidden food:

*Ye shall separate between the clean beast and the unclean... and ye shall not make your souls detestable —*

*And ye shall be holy unto Me, for I the Lord am holy.*

Lev. 20:25–26

The chapter dealing with forbidden sexual relations concludes with the same refrain (Lev. 19:1). At first, the proximity of these prohibitions with the exhortation to be holy, seems incomprehensible, but on second thought the connection becomes obvious. Both deal with strictly bodily functions, indeed the two most powerful instincts in man.

#### THE ORGANISMIC UNIT OF MAN

Man can attach himself to the divine in various ways.

This is clear in the realm of emotions. The Jewish mystic, serving God with love (...and thou shalt love...), with fear (*and thou shalt fear Him...*), or with joy (*serve the Lord with joy...*), finds close attachment to his Maker by the free reign of emotion, to the point of ecstasy.

How such attachment can be achieved by sheer intellect is not so easily seen. How can mind raise man to a higher level of spirituality? Rabbi Soloveitchik<sup>8</sup>, the great Talmudist and thinker, has given eloquent expression to this possibility. To him the rule of the intellect is the highest arbiter, within the limits of revealed law, of religion and Halacha itself. "The learning of Torah is an intellectual endeavor. Logic is its authority... The freedom of research in the field of Halachah is most powerful... The Lord has given the Torah to Israel and commanded us to renew and create."

<sup>8</sup> J. B. Soloveitchik, *Ish Halachah, Galui V'Seter* p. 204–207.

But how can man be spiritually elevated by his "detested" biological functions?

Berkovitz<sup>9</sup> referring to the alleged dualism in human nature, the spiritual and the physio-biological, states: "Relationship may only occur between the spiritual personality of man and the manifestation of the Divine Presence. It would seem that the physio-biological component of human nature is incapable of any relationship with the Divine... Most higher religions are unable to make sense of the body. They see in it the seat of evil... What the idealistic zeal of these religions overlooks is that any rejection of the body is a rejection of man himself, of man as God created him..."

The Bible looks askance at any ontological dualism. Thus the profane, though separate from the realm of the holy, is not diametrically opposed to the latter. It stands ready to be turned into the holy. Also, there are certain "abominations," connected with bodily functions, which Israelites are bidden to *abstain from them, because, I the Lord am holy!* That is, one can achieve some degree of saintliness by avoiding them.

It is perhaps one of the jewels in the crown of biblical Judaism that it has found a way of hallowing the two basic drives which man shares with every lowly creature, the instinctual functions of eating and of sex. Being servant to them, or even glorifying them, is sinful, but by turning them into Mitzvot, they can be sanctified. To be "fruitful and multiply," first a blessing, was made a holy obligation. Israel is also commanded (Deut. 14:24):

*Thou shalt eat (the tithe) before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose to cause His name to dwell there, the tithe of the corn, of thy wine... That thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always...*

To eat in order to learn to fear the Lord! This is not a middle position between the ones who glorify the "nature" in man and those "ascetics" who debase it. It is a unique subliminal way of controlling these instincts which either can defile man or permit him to ascend the ladder of holiness.

<sup>9</sup> Eliezer Berkovitz, *God, Man and History*, p. 116.

## JONAH'S RACE TO NINEVEH

BY JEFFREY M. COHEN

The book of Jonah poses so many problems that it is quite amazing that it earned a place at all in the collection of sacred histories, chronicles, and prophetic orations that gained the *imprimatur* of the Rabbis of the first century to be included in the *Kitvei Ha-Kodesh*, the Holy Scriptures.

None of his other prophetic exhortations has been preserved, other than his prosaic sentence of doom: *In forty days time, Nineveh will be overthrown* (Jonah 3:4), a statement which itself was contradicted by subsequent events.

The one other reference to him occurs in II Kings 14:25, in the context of a reference to the King of Israel at that period, Jeroboam II (783–43 BCE): *He restored (הוא השיב) the borders of Israel, from the approach to Hamath to the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the Lord, God of Israel, which he spoke by the hand of His servant Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-Hepher.*

The *Midrash Yonah*,<sup>1</sup> in a conscious attempt to link this solitary reference to Jonah with the events of the prophetic book which bears his name, unconvin-  
cingly interprets the phrase “he restored” as a reference not to the King but to the prophet! *Hu heishiv*, in the eyes of the Midrash, means ‘he brought to repentance (*teshuvah*)’. This has the benefit of enabling the Midrash to provide an explanation of why Jonah chose, at the outset, to run away from his mission:

Why did Jonah flee? Since on a previous occasion, when God sent him “to restore Israel’s (spiritual) boundaries”, his words had a positive effect (as it is written: “He restored the boundaries of Israel...”).

A second time God sent him to announce the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the people repented, so the Holy One, blessed be He, in His

abundant mercy, retracted His harsh sentence and did not destroy it; as a result of which the Jews called Jonah a false prophet!

This Midrash certainly explains Jonah's unwillingness to assume, for a third time, the mantle of prophet. On the previous two occasions his divinely-communicated sentence of destruction had been reversed, as a result of which he himself had become discredited as a ‘prophet of doom’. No wonder he was not eager to try again.

But this Midrash also accounts for why no record has been preserved of the powerfully impressive prophetic utterances which Jonah must have given, in order to have succeeded in moving the people of the northern kingdom of Israel to repentance on those two occasions referred to, the second of which even secured the continued existence of Jerusalem and the Temple itself. The averting of such a crisis surely justified full publicity, not total silence!

Even if we are disinclined to accept the authority and authenticity of this late midrashic tradition, originating in the 8th century midrashic work, *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* (see Ch. 10), the basic problem remains: How was it that a rebellious spirit like Jonah could have been chosen by God in the first place. The inevitable assumption that God must have required an established, experienced and eloquent prophet, with a proven track-record, in order to undertake such a hazardous mission of entering a heathen city and converting it to repentance, in turn provokes the question, why then do we have no record, in our biblical tradition, of the earlier prophecies and speeches of that necessarily impressive preacher?

The above Midrash may well have preserved a tradition which provides an answer to his question, namely, that Jonah was indeed dubbed a ‘false prophet’ by the people of his day. It might have been for a reason similar to the one suggested by the Midrash, namely, that some details of his prophetic statements — possibly those containing his own personal and over-zealous embellishments of the awesome penalties in store for the wicked — were not subsequently fulfilled, giving an excuse therefore for his enemies (and which prophet did not have them?) to brand him in that way. These, and other personal, shortcomings — to which we will presently allude — might account for his unpopularity and why his speeches were not preserved.

Jonah is not presented as a particularly engaging, sociable or sympathetic personality. It is true that at times of personal crisis he is quite capable of

<sup>1</sup> See, J. D. Eisenstein, *Ozar Midrashim* (N.Y. 1915), 217–222.

great passion, sensitivity and grace of language, as is clear from his majestic plea to God from the belly of the fish (ch. 2), but he generally disregards sentiment, and speaks in a brusque, concise and inelegant style. This comes over in his dealings with the sailors (1:9) and when expressing his frustrations to God (4:2–3, 8, 9). Significantly, he totally ignores God's question, *Do you do well to be so angry?* (4:4), and when a similar question is asked later, *Do you do well to be so angry over the gourd?* (4:9), Jonah does not feel that he owes God the courtesy of an explanation, but merely a self-vindictory outburst: *I do well to be angry, even to death.* Viewed in this light, the fact that Jonah does not even see the need to offer any thanksgiving to God for his miraculous rescue from the fish (though he had solemnly promised to offer such sacrifices if delivered; see 2:10) takes on an added significance.

Indeed, the abrupt ending of the book may also be accounted for, given the short-tempered, introversive nature of Jonah. It ends with God asking Jonah a question which is rhetorical to the extent that it is God's final and incontrovertible argument for saving the Ninevites. Yet, in this situation — where Jonah, as much as the Ninevites, is on trial — even God's rhetorical questions call for a *response*. Would we not have expected Jonah at this point to acknowledge that he has been in the wrong all along, and that man must always pursue mercy in the same way as does God? That, surely, is the expected denouement of a story which began with the prophet scorning a mission of mercy, and which should have ended with his having embraced it! The abrupt end suggests, however, that Jonah, true to form, simply did not have the grace to acknowledge the error of his ways; or, alternately, he *did* answer God, but his answer was totally inappropriate and too offensive to be recorded.

The abruptness of Jonah's speech is nowhere more in evidence than in the formula of the prophecy announced to Nineveh: *In another forty days, Nineveh will be overthrown* (3:4). This phraseology — a mere five words in the Hebrew — smacks rather of Jonah's authorship than of God's! An examination of all the passages in the Torah where God warns of the consequences of evil, and in the later books when He speaks his warning through prophetic intermediaries, will demonstrate that He never employs such an unqualified, peremptory sentence of doom. The rewards for obedience or repentance are always included (or implied) together with the consequences of continued waywardness. In the very first warning given to Pharaoh it is made clear that,

*if you refuse to let Israel (my first-born) go, then (— viz. only then) will I slay your first-born*" (Ex. 4:23) — a form of warning which was repeated in the case of the majority of the ten plagues (see Ex. 7:27; 9:2, 17; 10:4), and understood by Pharaoh, by inference, with regard to the rest. The second paragraph of the *Shema*, with its promise of reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience (Dt. 11:13, 16), may be regarded as God's favoured formulation, indeed as the paradigm.

An assumption that the five-word prophecy of doom was Jonah's, not God's formulation, explains why, although God told Jonah (3:2) to "go to Nineveh and make the proclamation *which I shall give you*" (N.E.B.: "Denounce it in the words I give you"), yet nowhere is it stated that God actually gave Jonah a formula of proclamation! Only his journey to Nineveh was "according to the word of the Lord" (v. 3), *not* the message he gave!

Chapter 3 vv. 3–4 are traditionally translated:

...now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days journey מוהלך  
שלוש ימים. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey מוהלך  
יום אחד, and he proclaimed and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will  
be overthrown."

This rendering is based on the assumption that the measurements of distance refer to the actual dimensions of the city of Nineveh, namely, that it was such a great city that it took a full three days to walk from one end of it to the other. This leaves unexplained why Jonah uttered his proclamation after having traversed a single day's journey, that is but one third of the way into the city.

Better sense is made if we assume that the term *mahalakh* ('journey') refers, not to the diameter or length of Nineveh, but to the distance from where the prophet was (after having been spewed out of the fish; 2:11) *in order to reach* Nineveh.

We are told in these verses that it was a full three days journey, thus providing God with plenty of time in which to communicate to Jonah a carefully-worded message of impending doom *unless the Ninevites change their ways*. (A parallel to this divine approach of delaying a disclosure for three days is provided by the *Akedah*, when Abraham was not told the precise



mountain which was to be his destination until he actually came across it on the third day.<sup>2</sup>

Jonah, in his typical hasty manner conjures up another subtle plan to pre-empt God, to avoid having to give a message with a built-in promise of mercy for repentance. Jonah decides to cover that three-day journey in one day, and to arrive there even before God has a chance to transmit His proclamation to the prophet. This, we suggest, is the meaning of v. 4, which we render, "And Jonah began to enter city *after* but a single day's journey." He had raced pell-mell, and, by having achieved this objective, he was able to utter *his own* prophecy of doom without any built-in conditions.

Only by rendering the verse in this way can we make sense of the opening verb *va-yachel*, "And Jonah *began* to enter the city..." If he had *already* penetrated the city, a distance of a day's journey, the expression "*began to enter*" is hardly appropriate.

If our reconstruction of events is correct, this would explain quite clearly why Jonah was dubbed (on the evidence of the Midrash) a 'false prophet'. He was false because he gave his *own* uncompromising prophecy, hoping thereby that the Ninevites would regard it as a *fait accompli* and be petrified into inaction.

To Jonah's great surprise, God could still achieve His purpose, with the result that Jonah's five words, rather than create mere panic, generated a unique demonstration of penitence.

The episode of the gourd may now be viewed as reflecting God's well-attested method of dealing tit-for-tat with those who challenge Him. Just as Jonah thought to frustrate God's will by accelerating the natural, and covering a three-days' journey in one, so did God adopt the identical approach — though with a much more impressive and dramatic employment of the supernatural — by accelerating the growth and decay of that tree, likewise, in the course of a single day!

Jonah's way of responding — or ignoring — God was inexcusable; and his way of communicating with men would have clearly won him few friends. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Midrash should have left us with a tradition that Jonah was called a 'false prophet'. This is possibly a late justification for

2 See Gen. 22:2, *On one of the mountains*, and v. 4.

the fact that none of his earlier speeches have been preserved. And the main reason why this should have happened was nothing more than as a result of the unpopularity of a man who simply could not communicate with others, and was so tightly wrapped up in his own zeal and piety that it nearly strangled him.

\* \* \*

In the light of the above, we may well pose the question why, indeed, was the book of Jonah included in the canon of *Kitvei Ha-Kodesh*, sacred literature? To answer this question we have to take account of the prime mover behind the very act of canonisation, and the circumstances which motivated its introduction.

It is beyond doubt that Rabban Gamliel of Jabneh played a key role in fixing the canon (circa 90 CE); and his purpose thereby was to prevent the infiltration of sectarian, particularly Christian, writings into the Jewish fold. Gamliel's period coincided with the greatest expansion of Christian ideas and the dissemination of the Gospels far and wide. It was such a consideration which prompted Gamliel to introduce a 'prayer against heretics' into the *Amidah*, in order to ensure that the latter could no longer fraternise with the faithful in their synagogues; and it was probably the same fear which actually prompted that sage to standardise Jewish liturgy by making the thrice-daily *Amidah* obligatory.

It is not stretching the imagination too far, therefore, to suggest that it was for precisely the same reason that Gamliel, when fixing the Hebrew canon, determined to include the story of Jonah. No more convenient literary tradition could be employed, to further the cause of separation between Jew and Gentile than this story which tells of a prophet's unwillingness — and the lengths to which he went — to avoid bringing the gentile city of Nineveh into proximity with the word of God.

While it is true that Jonah is not shown in a good light in the book itself, yet it is more than likely that Gamliel's sympathies lay squarely with the prophet. Had Jonah lived in Gamliel's period, when Judaism was sorely threatened by Romans and gentiles, his legacy of prophetic writings would certainly have

been preserved and treasured, and his place in Jewish history, as *the* exponent of Jewish nationalism, would have been definitely assured.

\* \* \*

While all sorts of homiletical and exegetical theories have been adduced to account for the selection of the *Parashat 'Arayot* (Forbidden Relationships; Lev. ch. 18) as the Reading of the Law for Yom Kippur afternoon<sup>3</sup> as well as the choice of Jonah as haphtarah, *both* may be accounted for quite simply in the light of our above exposition.

Both the *Arayot* and Jonah served an identical purpose, namely, to draw attention to the moral and spiritual exclusiveness of Israel, and the dangers attendant upon her fraternisation with the *goyyim*. On Yom Kippur the special relationship and historic covenant which exists between God and Israel is a central argument in our plea for mercy, and the need to stress our superior moral stature over the nations would certainly have been felt in that context.

What better portion to read, therefore, than *Parashat 'Arayot*, which highlights in several verses the importance of Israel remaining morally exclusive and adopting a posture of spiritual and social detachment:

"After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do, and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; *neither shall ye walk in their statutes.*"

(Lev. 18:3)

"Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these things *the nations are defiled* which I cast out from before you."

(v. 24)

"For all these abominations have the men of the land done that were before you."

(v. 27)

"Therefore shall ye keep My charge, that ye do not any of these abominable customs which were done before you"

(v. 30)

The inappropriateness of the *'Arayot* section as a Reading for Yom Kippur afternoon, when forbidden sexual liaisons are furthest from most people's minds, is frequently pointed out. But, the message of this Torah Reading is, in fact, identical with that of Jonah. In a word, it is the doctrine of *exclusivism*. Jonah was uncompromising in his efforts to leave the heathens to their own devices and their own fate. His philosophy was that Israel has no interest at all in their spiritual welfare. We have to keep aloof, and to regard them as a historic and contemporary source of defilement.

Jonah is the most passionate proponent of such a blunt, pashtanic exegesis of *Parashat 'Arayot*. The Rabbis who not only included Jonah into the Canon, but also prescribed it for the holiest day of the year, as *haphtarah* accompanying *Parashat 'Arayot*, clearly viewed them together as a most potent and useful polemical and political demonstration of the principle of religious and national exclusivism.



*Jonah observing Nineveh (from an old Dutch Bible)*

<sup>3</sup> See Chaim Abramowitz, "Maftir Jonah", *Dor le Dor*, XIV No. 1 (Fall 1985), pp. 3-10.

# QUESTIONS BY THE SERPENT AND THE ASS

## Analysis and Parallels with Classroom Teaching

BY RONALD T. HYMAN

### PART I

Of the many animals mentioned in the Tanakh only two of them — the serpent and the ass — speak. What is more, both animals ask questions. The serpent at the beginning of Chapter 3 of Genesis asks the first question in the Tanakh, even before God or any human being. Indeed, although the two animals each speak only briefly and each only twice, they are well known for the questions they ask. It is through questions that they both initiate their respective exchanges with Eve and Balaam.

The purpose of this article is to examine the questions by the serpent and the ass and to seek parallels for modern classroom teaching. Therefore, it is appropriate at the outset to justify the idea of using questions from the Tanakh for such a purpose. First, it is an old technique to clarify and explain ideas by using analogies and parallel cases. This technique is prevalent in the Tanakh itself. For example, Psalm 1 states that a person who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates day and night is “like a tree planted by the streams of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf does not wither.” This analogy, likening a person to a tree, clarifies the psalmist’s points with its aptness and power. The parallel itself “plants” the psalmist’s idea in our minds. In a similar way, I shall use the exchanges initiated by the serpent and the ass as parallels with the hope of furthering the understanding of classroom teaching and gaining insights.

Second, I am intrigued by the use of animal questions in the Tanakh. The novelty of these questions is attractive in the first place. Then upon examination of the questions, a wealth of ideas and parallels emerge. Third, one impor-

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tant way to understand the present is to look to the past as recorded in the most revered book of our civilization.

My perspective is pedagogical, not theological or moral. I focus on the nature of the interaction between teacher and student. It is with these points in mind that I shall analyze the serpent’s and ass’s questions from a pedagogical perspective by using the concept of *interaction pattern, intent, fielding, congruence, and tactical clustering*. I shall use the analysis of the questions as the basis for the parallels with teaching, an interaction to which questions are essential.

### INTERACTION PATTERN

To aid in analyzing the question by the serpent in Genesis 3:1–5 and then the questions by the ass in Numbers 22:28–30 let us set each in turn in dialogue form.

*Serpent:* Did God really say, “You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?”

*Woman:* We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, “You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die.”

*Serpent:* You are not going to die, God knows that as soon as you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, who knows good and bad.

It is easy to recognize that this Biblical episode consists of an initiating question, an immediate response, and then a reaction by the questioner to the response. The serpent’s two utterances above are all that he says in the entire Tanakh. Yet, the question and the reaction suffice to concretize the serpent’s strong negative reputation. What is important to recognize is that this structural pattern of “question, response, reaction by questioner” is a common one in pedagogical interaction. The researchers and authors of *The Language of the Classroom* indicate it as the most frequent pattern<sup>1</sup> or “cycle” as they call it, occurring between teacher and student.

In the like manner, let us turn to Chapter 22 of Numbers, the only other scene in the Tanakh where an animal speaks.

*Ass:* What have I done to you that you have beaten me three times?

<sup>1</sup> Arno Bellack, et al., *The Language of the Classroom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1966), p. 198.

*Balaam:* You have made a mockery of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I'd kill you.

*Ass:* Am I not your ass that you have been riding on all along until this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?

*Balaam:* No.

As with the exchange between the serpent and Eve, it is easy to recognize the pattern of this exchange between the ass and Balaam. The structural pattern is a question, a response, two questions without a break between them, and a response. That is, according to the researchers, we have a question-response cycle followed by another question-response cycle.<sup>2</sup> The question-response cycle is the second most frequent pattern in a classroom interaction.<sup>3</sup>

## INTENT

### MANIPULATIVE QUESTIONS

But we must look beyond cycle structure in our search for parallels with classroom teaching. Ordinarily in conversation we conceive of a question as a device for seeking information from the respondents. That is, the intent or purpose of the question is to elicit information not known by the questioner.<sup>4</sup> The serpent's question, however, does not fulfill the discovery purpose. We know this because the narrator of the scene in the Garden of Eden alerts us in 3:1 to the fact that the serpent is a shrewd (ערום) creature. Indeed, the serpent is "the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made." In this way, the introduction to the exchange between the serpent and the woman gives a clue as to the intent of the serpent. The serpent is not seeking information about the garden from the woman; he is attempting to trap her. Or, as the woman

2 The two questions without an interruption followed by a response constitute a question-response cycle. See Bellack, p. 195.

3 Bellack, p. 198.

4 Several good examples of discovering information occur later in Genesis. In 24:15 Abraham's servant asks Rebekkah at the well, "Whose daughter are you, tell me, please?" In 29:4, Jacob asks the shepherds, "My brothers, where are you from?" He subsequently also asks, "Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?" and "Is there peace with him?" In 37:15, young Joseph is looking for his brothers in Shechem. As he wanders in a field, a man asks Joseph, "What are you seeking?"

confirms later on in 3:13 when she realizes what has happened, the serpent's intent as initiator of the exchange was to beguile, entice, deceive, and tempt her.<sup>5</sup>

Though Eve (the woman gets her name as Eve later in 3:20) is the one who offers Adam fruit of the tree, it is the serpent whom God punishes first and most severely for breaking His commandment. The serpent is punished because he is the instigator of the eating of the forbidden fruit. What is important for us to realize here is that the instigator of the trap (deception or beguilement) begins with a question — a question which does not seek to discover information but a question with a manipulative intent.

Note here also that the serpent never asks Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; nor does he offer a reward or plead with her. He only asks about God's commandment and afterwards comments on the response to his question. He manifests his shrewdness first by the type of question he asks and then by his negative reaction to Eve's response. That is to say, the question sets a trap for Eve and the reaction contradicts the content of her response. The serpent begins his reaction by commenting, "You are not going to die." In this way, he states that the penalty of death, which God attached to His prohibition against eating from the tree of knowledge, will not be enforced (See 2:17). The serpent then goes on to specify what the consequence for eating the forbidden fruit will be. He gives a positive consequence, not a negative one: "Your eyes will be opened and you will be like God who knows good and bad." The choice of eating or not eating the forbidden fruit must now be made based on different reasons because Eve need not fear dying if she eats the fruit.

The serpent's trap question<sup>6</sup> has several characteristics for us to note. First, there is a clue by the narrator (that the serpent is the shrewdest of all the wild beasts) that something different or special is about to follow. Second, Eve of-

5 The Hebrew word is *הַשְׁעִיף* from the root *נָשָׂא* which only appears several times in the entire Tanakh and only in Genesis 3:13 in the entire Pentateuch.

6 The serpent's trap question is quite similar in form to the trap question Joseph springs on his brothers in Genesis 42:7. For a lengthier treatment of Joseph's question see Ronald T. Hyman, "Questions in the Joseph Story: The Effects and their Implications for Teaching," *Religious Education*, 79 (1984): 437-455. See also Jonah 4:9 and Genesis 3:9 for two other possible trap questions.

fers a response which says more than is needed or solicited. We can picture Eve standing in the Garden and wondering how to answer after being caught off guard by the serpent's unexpected question. We can also picture the "shrewdest of all the wild beasts" waiting for Eve to take the bait from his trap. Specifically, Eve responds not with a simple Yes or No which is all that the structure of the serpent's question requests. Rather, Eve volunteers information not at all requested by the serpent. As a matter of fact, her reply even says more than what God commanded Adam in 2:17 regarding the fruit of the trees in the garden. (Eve adds a prohibition of touching the fruit of the tree of knowledge in addition to being forbidden to eat from it). Third, the serpent reacts immediately to drive home his point; he thereby confirms that the intent of his question is not to discover information but to lead Eve and Adam to eat the forbidden fruit.

The content and meaning of the exchange and the context in which the exchange takes place are obviously significant aspects. It is precisely on these theological and moral aspects of the Garden of Eden scene that Biblical commentators for centuries have had much to say. Nevertheless, for our present, focused on the pedagogical perspective, we shall now turn again to the questions by the ass in order to analyze their intent and to compare them with the intent of the serpent's question.

At first glance, the ass's initial question seeks information from Balaam regarding the beating she has received at the hands of her rider. The ass seeks an explanation from Balaam for hitting her three times. Balaam responds accordingly, saying in effect, "I beat you because you mocked me." He goes on to show his anger even more strongly by claiming that he would kill the ass if he had a sword.

#### LEADING QUESTIONS

At this point, the ass questions Balaam again. In light of Balaam's first response, the new questions, and Balaam's second response, we can understand not only the intent of the two new questions but also the intent of the initial question. The new questions are of the type classified as leading questions. That is to say, they are questions which lead the respondent to answer in the way the questioner wishes. Leading questions are structured to require a yes

or no response and may appear in the positive or negative form (for example, "Joseph was not an Egyptian. Was he?" and "Joseph was Jacob's son. Wasn't he?"). The negative leading question is the more common of the two types and it provides a strong clue to the respondent as to the intent of the question. In both types, the effect is for the questioner to make a statement and to ask the respondent to affirm it.

Since a leading question encourages a particular response, it functions as a declarative statement while maintaining its interrogative form. As such, the questions in the second cycle are in essence telling Balaam that there is a message he has missed. The context indicates that the ass is saying, "Look, I am your trustworthy ass which you always have ridden without any trouble. It's not my usual behavior to cause you trouble (that is, to turn aside off the road, to cause your leg to be crushed against the wall, and to lie down to the ground under you)." In short, the ass is telling Balaam that she does not deserve the three beatings he gave her. She is criticizing Balaam in no uncertain terms here. When she speaks for the second time, she uses two non-ambiguous questions to chastise Balaam verbally, and now he responds quite differently. He simply says, "No." Balaam has perceived the message.

#### ASTONISHMENT

With this understanding in mind, we must return to the initial question to infer again the ass's intent. The structural form of the first question leads Balaam to provide an explanation for the three beatings. However, in light of the follow-up questions, we know that the ass did not intend Balaam to offer an explanation, for if she did, there would be no need for the follow-up questions. The actual intent of the opening question is either to express astonishment or to express criticism. (Perhaps it is to express both astonishment and criticism together). The first possibility — to express astonishment<sup>7</sup> — arises because the ass is surprised that Balaam has hit her three times. She believes

<sup>7</sup> For a fuller treatment of the expressive/emotive question see Ronald T. Hyman, "Questions and the Book of Ruth," *Hebrew Studies*, 24 (1983): 17-25 and Ronald T. Hyman, "Questions and Changing Identity in the Book of Ruth," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 39 (1984): 189-201. See specifically Ruth 1:19 as well as Genesis 37:30.



that she had no choice but to avoid the Angel of the Lord. Indeed, as an animal loyal to her master, she did what she did precisely to protect Balaam. Therefore, the beating was not deserved. For this reason her question is not an inquiry though it is in interrogative form using the word "what" (מה עשיתי לך). The ass's question is an exclamation similar to what a parent says to a child who breaks several dinner dishes: "What have you done?"<sup>8</sup>

#### CRITICISM

The second possible intent of the ass's first question is to criticize Balaam. The ass uses the interrogative form to make a critical/corrective statement.<sup>9</sup> That is, though the structure of the question requests an explanation, the context and the tone of the question show that the ass is being critical of Balaam for striking her. She intends to chastise Balaam verbally and get him to correct his behavior now and in the future. A question which performs this function is therefore called a critical/corrective question. We need to transform such a question in several ways in order to arrive at a statement which explicitly expresses the speaker's intent. The ass's critical/corrective question should be read as: "I have done nothing to you to cause you to beat me three times. You should not have beaten me!"

8 A good Biblical example of an astonishment question which uses the Hebrew Interrogative word for "what" (מה) occurs in Genesis 42:28. Joseph's brothers, on their trip back to Canaan, stop at a lodging place. When they open their sacks of grain to feed their animals, they notice that the money they paid Joseph is in their sacks. Their hearts pound, they tremble, they look at each other, and they say, "What is this that God has done to us?" A good post-Biblical example of the use of "what" to show an expressive/emotional feeling occurs in the Passover Haggadah at the very beginning of the well known Four Questions, *The Ma Nishtanah*.

9 A similar critical/corrective question occurs in Genesis 42:1. Jacob confronts his sons who are sitting around while the famine threatens the lives of the entire tribe. Jacob says, "Why do you look upon one another?" Jacob is not seeking an explanation from his sons for their passivity. On the contrary, he is chastising them. He then directs them to go down to Egypt to buy corn. Jacob wants action, not an explanation. Similarly, Cain is critical of God when He asks about Abel. Cain says, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). For a fuller treatment of the critical/corrective question see Ronald T. Hyman, "Questions and the Book of Ruth," *Hebrew Studies*, 24 (1983) 17:25. For other critical/corrective questions similar to the one by the ass, see Jonah 1:6, Jonah 4:2, and Exodus 14:11.

This interpretation of the ass's question is justified in light of the Angel of Lord's question and remark in Numbers 22:32-33. Here the Angel paraphrases the ass's first question and uses "what" (על מה) again: "What [reason] did you have for smiting your ass three times?" The Angel does not expect a response and so continues immediately to explain the ass's behavior when seeing the angel before her on the road. The Angel is criticizing Balaam and showing him just why he erred. It is at this point that Balaam in verse 34 explicitly acknowledges his wrongdoing. In short, though the ass's question uses "what" and though it appears in the interrogative form, the intent is not to inquire but to criticize/correct.

Balaam, however, responds to the form of the ass's first question rather than the intent, whether that intent is astonishment, criticism/correction, or both combined. Therefore, he offers an explanation to the ass for beating her. He misunderstands the first question because the intent is somewhat ambiguous when the ass uses the "what" question rather than the leading yes/no type question. When the ass changes the form of her question while keeping her intent the same, Balaam finally gets her message.

In other words, it is only because Balaam misinterprets the intent of the first question that the ass needs to ask some follow-up question.<sup>10</sup> To make sure he understands her points, the ass now asks two leading critical/corrective questions. The second reply by Balaam is terse and indicates that Balaam now understands what the ass is saying to him. Now that Balaam understands, God opens his eyes to allow him to see what the ass has seen. Balaam bows his head and falls on his face because he realizes that he has sinned. He confirms this explicitly in 22:34 when he says to the Angel of the Lord, "I have sinned."

10 It is instructive here to contrast Moses with Balaam. When the children of Israel in Exodus 14:11-12 are critical of Moses, they ask three questions: "Because there were no graves in Egypt has thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore has thou dealt with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt. Is not this the word we spoke unto thee in Egypt, saying: Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." Moses immediately understands the Israelites' negative message and seeks to calm their fears. Moses, the leader, understands his people.

## FIELDING AND CONGRUENCE

Having examined the intent of the animals' questions, let us look again at what the animals and humans say in Genesis and Numbers with the help of two more concepts. The first concept is called "fielding the response to a question," or, for short "fielding". That is to say, let us examine how the serpent fields (that is, treats or handles) Eve's response to his question and then contrast our findings with how the ass "fields" Balaam's responses. In examining the fielding done by the animals we shall also use the concept of congruence, that is, the match or agreement between question and response.

## FORM

We begin with the idea that when someone asks a question he has an idea of what to expect regarding the form of the response as well as the type of information to be contained in that response. For example, suppose that the host at a dinner table asks, "Do you want cream in your coffee?" He expects a *Yes/No response* because the *form* of the question he has asked requires it. (He will accept a "Maybe" but only temporarily). If the dinner guest replies, "Cream comes from milk and is commonly added to coffee to cool it and alter its flavor," then the response is incongruent. That is, the response does not match the expected form. It is incongruent in that the guest *constructs his own response* rather than answering with a simple Yes or No. We know this from the phrasing of the question and the phrasing of the response. Anyone who understands the question and response also understands what form of response is expected by the questioner and what form of response is offered by the respondent. Knowledge of language guides us here.

## MEANING

Also, in the illustrative question above about coffee, the host expects the guest to give a preference about cream. We know this by an understanding of the *meaning* of the question. Despite the host's expectation of a response giving a *preference* about cream, the guest's response gives a modified and pragmatic *definition* of cream. Thus, the response is incongruent for a second reason, too. That is to say, the response does not offer the expected informa-

tion, in addition to not fulfilling the expectation in regard to form. However, even if the response were congruent in only one way but not congruent in the other way, it would still be considered incongruent.

Furthermore, in addition to form and to meaning (type of information) we must consider the *intent* of the question. For example, suppose the host says, "Why don't we all have dessert now with our coffee?" The intent should be clear to the sensitive guest. The host is *not requesting a statement* giving an explanation for not having dessert despite his use of the words "why" and "don't". Rather, the host's intent is *to announce or direct* that dessert and coffee will be served shortly. If a guest says in response to the host's question, "Because it's only 8 o'clock," then the response is incongruent. The guest has misunderstood the performative intent of the host and has responded as if the host sought information. In short, if the response matches the question, it is congruent. But if the actual response does not match the expected response in any one of the three ways (that is, form, type of information, or intent), then the response is incongruent.

In the episode in Genesis, the serpent asks Eve a question and receives an incongruent response. The question calls for a Yes/No response, but Eve does not give one. She can simply reply Yes or No to the serpent's question about eating from the tree. Instead of a Yes or No, Eve constructs her own response. Also, she adds information which was not even solicited by the serpent (see above). The serpent fields Eve's incongruent response by asserting that the penalty God has announced for eating the forbidden fruit will not occur. He does not comment at all on Eve's added prohibition. Nor does the serpent criticize Eve for the incongruent response. Rather, he just proceeds to announce a different consequence if Adam and Eve disobey God.

In the episode in Numbers, the ass fields responses differently from the serpent. Balaam's first response is incongruent in that he misunderstands the intent of the ass's question. Since the ass intends to express astonishment, or criticism, or both, the expectation is that Balaam will be apologetic in some way. But Balaam offers an explanation and tells what he would do if he had a sword. The ass fields Balaam's incongruent response by asking two more questions which have a clearer intent. The ass does not comment at all on Balaam's incongruent response. Rather, she continues to ask questions and



centenarii, as it is written: עֹבֵר לְסוֹחֵר, 400 shekels of silver at the going merchants' rate."

#### FIELD SCENARIO

We now come to the "field" scenario: Ephron was a shrewd businessman. It seems that he was relying on his own Hittite code of laws. This specified that if a buyer purchased all of the seller's property, the seller becomes *free* of feudal levies which he had to bear as long as he held on to any part of the land. Now, Abraham was only interested in a burial place for his wife Sarah, and he wished to buy only a corner of the field, not the entire field. Ephron refused to divide his property, and thus Abraham was forced to buy the entire field. The concluding words recording the sale read almost like a legal deed, leaving no loopholes. Consistent with Hittite real estate deals, even the trees become part of the transaction.

Let us read the passage. We shall start with verse 8. Note the emphases in the following verses: "Let him sell me the cave of Machpelah which is *at the edge of his land*" (v. 9). Apparently, Abraham is not interested in purchasing the entire field; all he wants is a corner of the field — a burial place. So Ephron answered Abraham: "No, my lord, hear me: *I sell you the field and the cave that is in it*" (v.11). Whereupon Abraham pays 400 shekels for the field, the burial cave and even for the trees on the land: "So Ephron's land — *the field with its cave and all the trees* within the confines of the field passed to Abraham as his possession" (v. 17).

#### POSSESSION CLAIM

We now come to the third version of this sale, the "possession" approach: Several questions should be raised in introducing this scenario: Why does Abraham address the children of Heth with the beginning words: גַּר וְחוֹשֵׁב אֲנִי *I am a stranger and sojourner with you*. What difference does it make if he is a resident alien or a member of the tribe in a matter of a business deal? Secondly, why does Abraham ask the people of the land to intercede for him with Ephron? Why couldn't Abraham come directly to Ephron to initiate the purchase of the land? The answer lies in the meaning of the phrase used by Abraham three times in this chapter: אַחֲזוּת קֶבֶר.

אַחֲזוּת means a possession, a property — an estate that will belong to the

purchaser permanently. The stumbling block in this case was: The Hittite tribe *forbade selling* its land to *an outsider*. And Abraham was an outsider — a resident alien. How will he purchase a piece of land that will become eventually a family burial plot? And so he begins: "I am a stranger and sojourner with you..." (v.4).

Abraham first approaches the children of Heth to purchase the burial cave, but they refuse (vs. 4–6). Thereupon, Abraham turns to the עַם הָאָרֶץ (v. 7) to intercede for him with Ephron, the owner of the land.

Who were the עַם הָאָרֶץ? Not necessarily "the people of the land" and certainly not the "boor or ignoramus" as the phrase is usually applied today. According to an insightful interpretation of Judge Mayer Sulzberger in his thesis *The Am Ha-Aretz, the Ancient Hebrew Parliament*, (Philadelphia, 1910), the Am Ha-aretz means: The Council of the Hittites. What Abraham wishes to attain is the assent of the local Hittite Council to allow him to purchase the land, even as a resident alien.

Abraham pleads intensely for that privilege, since he wishes the land as a permanent possession. אַחֲזוּת קֶבֶר is mentioned three times by Abraham in the transaction, because he meant it to become the permanent family plot. Ultimately, the sale is carried through and the field passed to Abraham as a permanent possession. אַחֲזוּת קֶבֶר — a permanent possession. וַיִּקֶּם הַשְּׂדֵה וְהַמְעָרָה אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ לְאַבְרָהָם לְאַחֲזוּת קֶבֶר.

The acquisition of the double cave — מערת המכפלה — is not the only purchase recorded in the Bible. There are two additional instances where land was bought:

*And Jacob arrived safe in the city of Shechem, ...and he encamped before the city. And he bought the parcel of land where he pitched his tent from the children of Hamor for a hundred pieces of money.*  
(Genesis 33:18–19).

Shechem is today the city of Nablus.

The third instance is the purchase of the field which eventually became the בית המקדש, the place where Solomon built the temple (II Sam. 24:18–21).

## FOUR REPETITIONS IN THE SONG OF SONGS

BY BENJAMIN J. SEGAL

Many are the overviews of the Song of Songs. Seen as allegory, drama, literary collection, reworked pagan material, et al., the Song's inherent worth has left all efforts at interpretation to pale before the beauty of the text itself. While the present article approaches the Song as literature, not accepting dramatic or pagan theories, it should be noted that an allegoric approach could be consonant with the view presented, but only on the basis of first achieving an integrated overview independent of the allegory and only then proceeding to the representational interpretation. (Such was the approach, for example, of Ibn Ezra). The details of the Song are to be explained first; allegory afterward. We do not here approach the latter topic.

In attempting (and failing) to sub-divide the Song of Songs on the basis of terminology, R. Kessler concluded: "It almost looks as if somebody would have sprinkled repetitions throughout the Song in a planned way."<sup>1</sup> Kessler raises a fascinating question: Is a "plan" indicated? Given the tendency of a number of scholars to find in repetition one of the primary indications of the Song's unity<sup>2</sup> and/or one of the author's important literary techniques,<sup>3</sup> certainly an exploration of the possibility that a "plan" is indicated is in order.

The attempt to discover meaning through repetitions is reflected in Biblical commentary from its earliest stages. In fact, this approach predominates

1 Kessler, R., "Some Poetical and Structural Features of the Song of Songs," *Leads University Oriental Society Monograph Series VIII* (1957), p.49.

2 e.g., Rowley, H. H., "The Interpretation of the Song of Songs", in *The Servant of the Lord*, second edition (Oxford, 1965) (cf. p. 222) and Murphy, R. E., "The Unity of the Song of Songs", *Vetus Testamentum*, XXIX, 4 (1979).

3 e.g., Exum, J. C., "A Literary and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs," *Z.A.W.*, LXXXV (1973) (p. 49) and Cook, A. S., *The Root of the Thing: A Study of Job and the Song of Songs* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1968).

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within early religious commentary, particularly as found in the Jewish homiletic and heuristic literature known as *midrash*.<sup>4</sup> Jacob, for example, is said to have been justly punished when Laban "deceived" him, giving him Leah, not Rachel, in marriage (Genesis 29:25), because Jacob "deceived" his father (the same root is used  $\eta-\mu-\gamma$ , in reference to stealing Esau's blessing, (Genesis 27:35)).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Tamar's use of *hakker na*,  $\eta\kappa\kappa\eta\ \eta\alpha$ , "see if you recognize" (Genesis 38:25) to Judah is seen as God's way of recalling to him the use of the identical phrase when the brothers sent Joseph's bloody coat to Jacob (Genesis 37:32).<sup>6</sup> This careful attention paid to word repetition typified early Jewish commentary. The non-application of this approach to the Song of Songs can only be attributed to the early universal acceptance of the Song as an allegory within Judaism, limiting practically all commentary to that assumption.

This sensitivity to the possible implications of a repetition of a word or phrase is reflected in countless modern commentaries on all books of the Bible. We deal here, however, not with a single repetition, but with repetitions as pattern, and in that regard, we note in particular the sensitivity shown to the same by Martin Buber. In an essay on Biblical narrative, Buber articulated his approach to a repeated word or root. — "By 'guide word' we mean a word or a root which is repeated within a text (or consecutive texts, or a series of texts) in a meaningful pattern; one who carefully traces these repetitions will find one level of meaning of the text deciphered, clarified or at least more fully revealed.... The variations of the (stem) word often intensify the dynamic effect of the repetition. I say 'dynamic' because the variation patterns interrelate to create a growing movement as it were. One viewing the text as a whole can sense waves moving to and fro between them...."<sup>7</sup>

4 See Strack, Hermann L., *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1931.

5 *Midrash Tanhuma, Vayyetzai*, 11 (Vilna: ed. Buber), p. 152.

6 *Bereshit* (Genesis) *Rabbah* 85:11 (on Genesis 38:25).

7 "The Use of the Guide Word in Biblical Stories" [Heb.], reprinted in *Darkoh shel Miqra'*, (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1964), p. 284 — translated here from the Hebrew. The German terms coined were *leitwort* and *motivwort*. cf. the comments of Weiss, Meir, *The Bible and Modern Literary Theory* [Heb.], (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1967), pp. 24–26. cf. the extensive treatment of this technique in Alter, Robert, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), chapter 5, "The Technique of Repetition."



Buber proposed, then, that patterns of repetition might hold within them a clue to the meaning of a section or a story. We here propose to explore such a possibility for the Song of Songs (a work of poetry, whereas Buber's comments related to narrative), through concentration on a limited number of such repetitions. (That the number of repetitions in the Song of Songs is usual, and that the book has its own special coloring has been amply demonstrated elsewhere. The reader is referred to previous summations of these repetitions).<sup>8</sup>

We here cite four examples of term repetition, with an indication of the probable significance in each case. These examples are meant to illustrate the author's reliance upon repetition as a key to the meaning of the Song. The examples chosen are not necessarily the most important phrases within the Song.<sup>9</sup> Rather, the criteria for choice were the number of repetitions, the scattered use throughout the poem, and the varying implications of the repetitions.

#### אָם — EIM

1. The term 'eim (mother) אָם appears in seven verses at different locations within the Song, and, as is the case with guide words, the implications thereof are understood only in terms of all the uses. In 3:4 the woman longs to bring her lover to her mother's house, the chamber of *horati* הורתי (which we can translate temporarily as "she who conceived me"). In 6:9 he acknowledges her attachment to her mother, the word 'eim set parallel to *yoladettah* יולדתה "she who bore her." In 8:2 she restates her desire to bring him to her mother's house, this time the word 'eim defined as *telamedei* תלמידי (who taught me = my teacher).<sup>10</sup> Within this repeated emphasis on her attachment to her mother

8 cf. especially Murphy, *op. cit.* See Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 222, n. 11, for a listing of sources accepting the quantity of repetitions (and the uniformity of style) as sufficient proof of unity. Note also Cook, A. S., *op. cit.*, who shows great sensitivity to most repetitions. (cf. his comments, pp. 138, 140, on the terms "black", "dove", "lock" and "seal").

9 The single most important repetition in the Song is clearly of the pseudo-root *sh-l-m*, the treatment of which appears in our "The Theme of the Song of Songs," *Dor le Dor* XV, 2, Winter 1986/7.

10 Cf. Gordis, Robert, *The Song of Songs* (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1954), p. 96. Gordis suggests the added possibility that the word was added by a scribe who misunderstood the root meaning of *horati*. The emendation *teiledeni*, "who bore me," is an example of non-desirable reductionism. Rather than scribal error or later misinterpretation, this word completes the word play and two-fold definition of the term 'eim.

and her desire to bring her lover to her mother's house is developed, therefore, a double entendre. *Horati* of 3:4 is interpreted twice, as reflecting two separate roots: as "she who conceived me" (root: *h-r-h*, הרה) in 6:9, and as "she who instructed me" (root: *yrh*, ירה) in 8:2. The word thus brilliantly plays back upon itself. In her role as she who gives birth, the mother serves as instructor, as model, for her daughter.

The other uses of 'eim can be understood in this light. 1:6 now reads ironically, as her brothers, with whom she has great conflict, are termed her "mother's sons." When first read, the verse appears innocent. Subsequent reading reveals the irony in the use of the term "mother's sons" for the brothers, in that the brothers really do not understand the message which the woman had received from her mother.

In verse 3:11, the "Girls of Zion" are told to go look at Solomon's true glory: the crown with which his *mother* crowned him. The use there is also most precise. In the immediately preceding verses, the "Girls of Jerusalem" are looking at all the "wrong" things about Solomon: the glitter, the gold, and the sexual prowess and achievements. Verse 11 draws their attention to a different world (which is also one of the reasons they are addressed differently: "Girls of Zion," as opposed to "Girls of Jerusalem"). This verse (11) is the true glory and purpose of love, the model of which is marriage and motherhood. Solomon's greatest achievement is the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day!

We therefore understand that when she expresses her desire that her lover be as a brother to her, 8:1, one who "nursed at my mother's breasts," that she seeks one who is a true "son" of her mother, who "imbibes" her mother's nourishment: the model of childbearing is the desired lesson. Finally, in 8:5 she brings the message more directly to him, via a first and only reference to his mother. It is true love with commitment that has led to his own very existence, she states, and this kind of relationship is her model as well. — *Under the apple tree I roused you — it was there your mother conceived you; there she who bore you conceived you.*

The use of 'eim is most subtle, and offers us not the main theme of the Song (which is clearly the nature of love), but a secondary motif. Never does the woman refer to herself directly in terms of motherhood. The theme's cir-

cumspet usage and repetition confirm the view that in her mother she has a role model, but a role to which she aspires at some time in the future. It is a secondary theme of the Song, one discovered through tracing the recurrent use of the term 'eim.

# שושנה — SHOSHANNAH

2. The word *shoshannah*, שושנה "lily",<sup>11</sup> is employed eight times in the Song. As in the case of other words ('eim, as mentioned above, and other terms, such as *kerem*, כרם "vineyard"), the first use of this image seems "innocent": in 2:1,2, he declares in response to her use of this image (*I am the lily of the valleys*) that she is unique, a *lily among the thorns*. However, the next appearance alerts the reader to the possibility that "lily" might be a guide-word. There, in 2:16, she labels her love as "he who browses" (or alternatively, "feeds his flocks" — *ro'eh* רועה can be intransitive or causative) among the lilies. The verse would seem symbolically to transport him, and possibly his mouth, to her person.

In fact, this process continues, and the lily becomes a dynamic word, a symbol which physically transports the lovers to ever greater levels of physical intimacy. In 4:5 her breasts are likened to fawns *browsing among the lilies*, imagery which carries their physical contact to even more intimate planes. This process is enhanced in 5:13, as his lips are equated to lilies.

This, in turn, paves the way to one of the most impressive double entendres employed in the Song of Songs. In 6:2f., in response to the request from the Girls of Jerusalem for help in locating her lover for her, the woman indicates that he has gone down to his garden *to browse in the gardens and to pick lilies*. Furthermore, she there declares that she belongs to her beloved, *he who browses among the lilies*. To the women who hear her response, she is merely indicating a location. (They "hear" *ro'eh* as pasturing the sheep among the lilies). At the same time she is recalling to herself moments of great physical

11 We translate "lily" out of deference to the traditional translations, although it is clear, as Pope has pointed out, that a flower of pink color is required. — Pope, Marvin H., *Song of Songs* (New York, Doubleday, Anchor Bible, 1977), p. 541.

intimacy, for that is the implication of the term for her.<sup>12</sup> Thus we can understand the logical progression of 6:3 — *I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine, he, who browses among the lilies*. The last phrase represents her recollection of intimate moments. (This is further demonstrated by the later substitution of what now can be understood as a parallel phrase: *I am my beloved's and his desire is for me* — (7:11).

The final use of lilies (7:4) occurs, appropriately, in the dance of the Shulammitte. As is detailed elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> this dance is a fantasy of the man's sexual desire, in which he initially carefully avoids terms previously used of the woman, and only slowly proceeds to a reidentification of the "image" with her. It is appropriate that the first term within this fantasy to relate in any way to previous descriptions of the woman is the lily, for it has become a symbol of sexual intimacy.

# בושם — BOSEM

3. "Spice" — *bosem* בושם — is introduced relatively late in the Song, but this delay serves a specific purpose. Particular spices had been mentioned earlier (e.g. 1:13, 14; 4:6). *Bosem* first appears in 4:10 and 4:14. There, as a general term covering all spices, it is used as the last of the long list of spices which describes her exquisite charms. The immediately following uses of 4:16 and 5:1 take advantage of this "summarizing" term in the invitation to (4:16), and appreciation of (5:1), the rapture of sexual fulfillment in love.

Subsequently, the term *bosem* serves as a symbol and reminder of that moment. The spices are part of the same double-edged verse (6:2) in which the woman locates the man for the Girls of Jerusalem while recalling their secret intimacy, as mentioned above. He has gone down to his garden, to the bed of spices (all terms from 5:1!). Immediately before, his cheeks (see below on the import of the mouth and its surrounding features in the Song) had been compared to those beds of spices (5:13). Most telling is the last verse of the

12 The verse takes advantage of other terms which have also gained symbolic value to her and which are heard as mere locations by the girls — the garden (from 5:1), spice (4:14; 5:1) and *ro'eh* (4:5).

13 See our article on the pseudo-root *sh-l-m*, which is connected, of course, to the implication of the Shulammitte. See note 9 above.

Song of Songs. Previously the woman could only call to the man to set out swiftly across the "cleft" mountains (2:17), a reflection, at that point in the Song, of their separation and/or their difficulties in getting together. At the end of the Song she calls upon him to flee quickly across the "mountains of spices," a recollection of their moment of greatest intimacy and a clear invitation to draw close (as opposed to the advice to bide one's time in 2:17). *Bosem*, then, the symbol which was reserved for the section of physical ecstasy, serves as the central word for the final, joyous invitation of the Song of Songs.

#### MOUTH

4. The terms for the mouth, the parts thereof and the adjacent facial features are many in the Song. We shall here illustrate the implications of the mouth through the use of one term, *heikh*, חֵיךְ palate, which is used three times in the Song. The first appearance is once again seemingly "innocent," as the woman indicates that the apple is sweet to her palate. The apple tree in that context (2:3) is being used as a symbol of her lover. The second use of palate ("*his palate is sweetness*" — 5:16) leads one to suspect that the combined imagery serves to draw the two lovers together in an intimate kiss. This, in turn, is confirmed by the third and final use, in 7:10 ("*your palate, like the best wine*"), which is a clear reference to the kisses mentioned in verse 1:2 ("*let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for better is your love than wine*"). The palate, then, with its sensitivity to sweetness, comes to symbolize the intimate kiss.

Indeed, one notes that only in the case of the mouth is a wide variety of terms used in the Song (mouth, lips, tongue, teeth, cheeks, palate, organ of speech — 4:3, with possible use of other terms as well). This exception to the rule, the use of a wide variety of terms rather than one root, may well prove the rule, i.e., that there is meaningfulness in repetition. This very variety emphasizes and isolates the mouth, perhaps reflecting the author's desire to involve all aspects of the mouth in the intimate contact that exists between the two lovers. Partial testimony to this effort is found in the fact that all mentions of the mouth are "framed" by the kiss. The kiss is specifically mentioned in the very beginning of the book, in 1:2, and again only in 8:1 and then —

there is no further mention of the mouth.<sup>14</sup>

One also notes, then, the appropriateness of the use of "palate" in 5:16. Her description of her lover, proceeding from 5:10 through 5:15, is in fact complete. She had moved, as do all the love descriptions in the Song (with the marked and purposeful exception of the Shulammitte) from the top (his head) down. The description of the palate, then, would seem to be out of place. It is only when one appreciates the centrality of the mouth that one can understand that the palate in 5:6 is an appropriate parallel phrase to "his entirety," a symbol for the whole person, and not part of his body.<sup>15</sup>

We find, then, in the four repetitions noted — *'eim*, *shoshannah*, *bosem* and *heikh* — examples of the use of "guide words", terms which in repetition effect the meaning of each other's use of the term and which, taken together, serve as primary indications of the meaning of the work as a whole. It is further suggested that studying other repetitions (*yayin* — wine; *kerem* — vineyard; *tappuah* — apple; *havi'* — bring; et al.) will reveal complementary and supplementary levels of meaning of the Song as a whole.

14 Medieval commentators were sensitive to the "extraneous" inclusion of "mouth", in addition to "kisses" in 1:2. (Both Rashi and Ibn-Ezra take the inclusion to imply mouth-to-mouth kisses).

15 The centrality of the mouth also explains its absence elsewhere. The description of the woman, 6:7, stops right above the lips (cf. the parallel description, 4.2f.). The subsequent description of the Shulammitte, 7:5f., avoids the mouth. Both omissions are resolved in the climax of the Shulammitte vision. At that point (verses 9 and 10), the man identifies his longings, which have been mirrored in the Shulammitte fantasy-of-desire, with true physical longings for his lover. It is therefore most appropriate that there the palate finally reappears, and the lips, omitted before, are finally stirred (7:10).

## DOR LE DOR DINNER LECTURE

The Knesset was the site this year of the opening session of the 35th annual convention of the Israeli branch of the World Jewish Bible Center. More than 500 persons attended this event, which was dedicated to the centennial birthday of David Ben Gurion, one of the founders of the Israel Bible Society.

The English-language section of the World Jewish Bible Society, comprised mainly of friends and readers of "Dor le Dor," held an "American-style" dinner at the Windmill Hotel — with the evening focused on a lecture by the doyen of Israeli guides, Professor Zeev Vilnay. Professor Vilnay, author of the famous tour guide on Israel, spoke to a packed audience on "The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in the Negev." Phillip Ratner, the new immigrant artist from the USA, came in person to make a special presentation of one of his paintings to Professor Vilnay.



From left to right: Prof. Haim Gevaryahu, chairman, Israel Society for Biblical Research; Prof. Zeev Vilnay, lecturer; Dr. Louis Katzoff, editor Dor le Dor; Dr. Joshua Adler, managing editor; S. J. Kreutner, vice-chairman, World Jewish Bible Center.

## THUS THEY STRIPPED THE EGYPTIANS

BY JULIUS B. MOSTER

In Ex. 12:35, as the Israelites are about to depart from Egypt, they are instructed to ask the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold, and clothing

*And the Lord had disposed the Egyptians favorably toward the people, and they let them have their request; thus they stripped the Egyptians.*

"Stripped" is frequently rendered "spoiled", "despoiled", or "plundered". All of these give the Israelites a disparaging image. Furthermore, the Bible itself is also discredited, for the text appears to approve, even commend, an unwarranted violent reaction to a generous act.

Apologists usually explain the gifts as payment for property left behind or as compensation for centuries of servitude. But this does not account for the Israelites' ungracious behavior. If payment was voluntary, what grounds did Israel have for responding with aggressiveness? Hertz<sup>1</sup> presents a somewhat better argument. He prefers a translation of "...saved the Egyptians." By accepting their gifts, the Israelites saved the Egyptians from a lifetime of guilty memories. The problem with this midrash is that there is no basis for it in the Exodus text, which goes out of its way (repeats again and again) to pound home the message of Egypt's ruthless mistreatment of its Israelite slaves. More in line with their "cruel exploiter" role is the rationalization that the Egyptians would have given gifts to their former victims for only one reason: Because it was in their own best interest to do so.

At the time, the Egyptians were overwhelmingly preoccupied with the problem of ridding themselves of a devastating plague. Therefore, it is logical to assume that their gifts had something to do with this major concern. In Biblical times, what did people do when they were confronted with a plague?

1 Hertz, J. H., *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, London: Soncino Press, 1965, pp. 217–218.

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For the answer, let us look at evidence from an impeccable source — the Bible itself. The Bible contains many stories of plagues, and some of these relate in detail the steps required to effect a cure.

In I Sam. 5–6, the Philistines captured the Ark of God and took it to Ashdod. Subsequently, God plagued the city with hemorrhoids (the Septaguint adds: “and mice”). When the Ark was moved to the other four principal Philistine cities, each of them suffered the same plagues. In desperation the victims turned to their wise men for advice. They realized that they must return the Ark to its proper home but wanted to know the correct procedure for doing so. The wise men responded:

*If you are going to send the Ark of the God of Israel away, do not send it away without anything; you must also pay an indemnity to Him. Then you will be healed... otherwise His hand will not turn away from you” (6:3).*

So the Philistines returned the Ark together with gifts of five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice, one pair from each of their five principedoms.

We learn from this “medical passage” that the curing of a plague required two essential steps: First, the wrong that generated the plague in the first place had to be set right; and second, gifts had to be given to the party that was wronged.

In Genesis there are three so-called “sister-wife” narratives which deal with plagues. The middle one (Gen. 20) contains the most detailed for our purpose. Here, Abraham sojourns in the Philistine city of Gerar. He is afraid the Philistines may kill him in order to possess his beautiful wife, so he tells her to identify herself as his sister.

The king of Gerar, Abimelech, has Sarah brought to him. But before he approaches her, God, in a dream, threatens him with death because he has taken a married woman. Abimelech proclaims his innocence, and blames Abraham and Sarah

*(4) ...He said, O Lord, will You slay people even though innocent? (5) He himself said to me, ‘She is my sister!’ And she also said, ‘He is my brother’. When I did his, my heart was blameless and my hands are clean.*

God agrees with Abimelech, but in order to maintain his blamelessness God informs him that he must

*(7) ...restore the man’s wife — since he is a prophet, he will intercede for you — to save your life. If you fail to restore her, know that you shall die, you and all that are yours.*

Abimelech, not only restores Sarah to Abraham but, in addition, gives them both substantial gifts. Abraham then prays to God, and God heals Abimelech and his household. (Note how Abraham’s intercession for Abimelech parallels Moses’s intercession for Pharaoh. Several of the ten plagues are terminated after Moses “cried” or “pleaded” to God on Egypt’s behalf<sup>2</sup>. In 12:32, when Pharaoh finally lets Israel go to worship the Lord, he asks Moses “to bring a blessing upon me also!”).

Immediately after Abimelech is made aware of his predicament, he becomes very antagonistic towards Abraham and Sarah. But when God explains that only through Abraham’s intercession can he be cured, the king becomes favorably disposed towards them. This ties in neatly with Ex. 12:36. We can thus deduce that what is meant by “the Lord had disposed the Egyptians favorably towards the people” is that He made the Egyptians finally (after ten plagues) realize that they were being punished because of their refusal to let the Israelites depart; and just as Abimelech freed Sarah and gave gifts, so the Egyptians freed the Israelites and gave gifts.

But the giving of gifts by Abimelech was not the final step. God had not instructed him to give gifts. Obviously the king had meant them to be an inducement to Abraham to intercede with God on his behalf. Because the gifts were so substantial, we can assume that Abimelech wanted to make sure they would be satisfactory to Abraham. Thus, there was a third and fourth step in the curing procedure. In addition to “righting the wrong” and “giving gifts”, the gifts had to be accepted by the abused party, and the latter had to intercede with his God on behalf of the gift-giver.

Applying the above to Ex. 12:36, we can conclude the following: God disposed the Egyptians favourably towards the Israelites by alerting them to the cause of the disaster that had ravaged them. To eradicate the plague they had to make amends to their Israelite slaves. This involved a four-step procedure:

1. The Israelites had to be set free.
2. The Egyptians had to give gifts to the Israelites.

<sup>2</sup> We have reason to assume that this was done by Moses.



3. The gifts had to be accepted by the Israelites.
4. The Israelites had to intercede with God on behalf of the Egyptians.

Of particular interest to us is the third step. The lifting of the plague was contingent upon the gifts being accepted by the Israelites. What did the Israelites strip from the Egyptians? Not the gifts! Not their guilty conscience! By accepting the gifts the Israelites *stripped* the Egyptians of the *plague*!

### חג שמח

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## BOOK REVIEW

BY CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

*RECIPES FOR BETTER LIVING* by Morris Mandel and Chaim U. Lipschitz, Jerusalem, 1985.

Many have turned to the Bible for its historical background of our People, or for its moral and universalistic elements, or for a variety of other reasons. Dr. Mandel and Rabbi Lipschitz have taken a very pragmatic approach and sought ways of what the Bible can do for any individual who, in times of duress, needs help or encouragement. Looking through the Scriptures with the trained eye of a psychologist who has had years of experience in advising young people through the columns of the Jewish Press coupled with the experiences of a Rabbi, the authors produced a book which, at times, would prove valuable to everyone.

An even cursory look at the "recipes," or chapter headings, will give one an idea of the extent of human experience for which help and solace can be found in the wisdom of the Written Law in the Bible and in the Oral Law of the Talmud. The need for self control, fear of aging, dread of loneliness, agony of rejection, are but few of the thirty "recipes" they have given us.

As an example, the chapter on Aging opens with the encouraging quotation from Job: "With the old is wisdom, and the length of days is for understanding". In dissecting the trepidation many experience when faced with approaching old age, they offer comforting examples of longevity through continued activity, and the reverence and respect the Bible holds for the aged. Reading their "recipe" and its concluding advice from Ecclesiastes 11:8 — *If a man lives many years, let him rejoice in all of them.*

This example illustrates the procedure they follow throughout the book. The pertinent quotes, designed to soothe one's spirit, are taken liberally from the Scripture, the Talmud and post-Talmudic Sages to our days. Most of them include references to their source, but there are many passages printed as if they were quotations without any source references, or at best, *a poet said*.

The book is one that should be available to be used in times of need and read as preventive medicine before the need arises.

## FISH IN BIBLE AND MIDRASH

BY S. P. TOPEROFF

The Hebrew for fish is often found in the Bible both in the masculine Dag and feminine Dagah, and they are derived either from the root דגה, to multiply, increase, (Genesis 48:16), or דג, a denominative verb meaning to catch fish, as in Jeremiah 16:16 *Behold I will send for many fishers... and they will fish them.*

Apart from Tanin, (תנין) Leviathan (לריתן) and Rahab, (רהב), mythical sea-monsters, at times used symbolically against nations, the Bible employs the word Dag as a generic term referring to all types of fish. It should be noted that even the story of Jonah does not specifically mention the name of the fish that swallowed him but simply informs us that it was a "dag gadol," a big fish, presumably either a whale or a shark, either of which could hold a human being.

The first mention of the fish in the sea in the Bible is found in Genesis 1:28 where God blesses man... in having dominion over the fish of the sea. The Patriarch Jacob blesses Ephraim and Menasseh with these words: וידגו לרב, and let them grow into a multitude (Genesis 48:16). Rashi comments: like fish which are fruitful and multiply (Berachot 20a).

That the waters of the sea abound with shoals of fish is confirmed by the Torah which records that the Israelites in the wilderness pined and craved for the fish they acquired in Egypt חנם, for nothing (Numbers 11:5). One commentator, (Abarbanel) explains the word *chinam* literally and adds: "The Nile waters overflowed; all one had to do was to dig a hole which was filled by the waters of the river. When the Nile receded the fish remained in the pits. In this way they eat them free of charge."

The Great Sea, the Mediterranean, also teemed with many fish as we learn

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from the Prophet Ezekiel: *And there shall be a very great multitude of fish* (47:9-10).

An interesting parallel to the link between the fish and propagation of species is found in the term נון (Aram. נונא). Compare Psalm 72:17 ינון שמו which is translated by the Hebrew lexicon BDB, as "let his name be propagated."

### IN THE TALMUD

The same word is used in the Talmud to mean fish as we find in Nedarim 54b: "The succession of letters Nun, Samech Ayin serves as an intimation 'fish is a remedy for the eyes'. (נונא סמא לעינים).

The Talmud confirms that Babylonia with its many rivers and ponds was well stocked with fish. Thus the Rabbis record that on a certain day "everybody was engaged in fishing and they brought in the fish on Pesach week, and the sage Rava allowed them to put the fish in salt (because there was more than enough for the peoples' requirements)" (Moed Katan 11a).

In another instance we have learnt that if one stops up a pond from a stream on the eve of a Festival so that no fish can come in and on the Festival morning he finds fish therein, they are permitted to be eaten during the Festival as the fish must have been in the channel before the commencement of the Festival (Beza 25a).

The popularity of fish was so marked that it even entered the vocabulary of Jewish law and custom. This may be due to a favourite expression of the Rabbis who often refer to the yam haTalmud ים התלמוד, the "sea of the Talmud." As the oceans are unfathomable, so are the words of Torah. One cannot fully plumb the depths of Rabbinical wisdom. If this be true of the waters of the ocean, the fish too must receive recognition, and serve symbolically as a message for man. For example, the Tashlich ceremony is observed on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashannah (if it is a weekday), and young and old congregate at the edge of a river or stretch of running water, preferably containing fish. This teaches us that as fish are caught in nets so human beings succumb to the pitfalls of life. This custom reminds us of the classical parable of Rabbi Akiva who, undaunted by the harsh decree of Hadrian not to teach Torah in public, continued to spread the exposition of Torah. When his colleagues remonstrated with him not to

endanger his life he replied with the following parable: A fox saw fish moving to and fro in the water. The sly fox suggested to the fish that they leave the insecurity of the water and come on dry land where they would be safe from the nets of fishermen. The fish promptly replied: If we are in danger in the water which is our natural habitat, how much more so on dry land where we would automatically perish. The Torah is our life element, continued R. Akiva, we cannot survive without it (Berachot 61b).

Rabban Gamliel the Elder analysed the characteristic qualities of his disciples by comparing them to different types of fish. An unclean fish is a poor youth who studies Torah and is without understanding. A clean fish is a rich youth who studies Torah and has understanding. A fish from the Jordan is a scholar who studies Torah and has not the talent for give and take. A fish from the Great Sea (Mediterranean) is a scholar who studies Torah and has the talent for give and take (Avot D'R. Nathan, Chapter 40, Goldin Edition).

In this connection it should be noted that one school teacher who had a fish pond, attracted his pupils to attend lessons regularly by rewarding them with fish dishes (Ta'anith 24a).

#### FISHING EQUIPMENT

We have seen from the foregoing that fish was very familiar to every section of the people including the scholar. The question arises, does the Bible enlighten us on how the fish were caught? It is interesting to record that the Bible mentions a variety of implements used for fishing. We have the *Choach* (חֹחַ), a hook or ring in the jaw of large fish as the crocodile (Job 40:26).

*Chakah* (חֻקָּה), fish-hook (Job 40:25). *Michmoret* (מִכְמֹרֶת), fishing-net (Isaiah 19:8, Habakuk 1:15). *Cherem* (חֶרֶם), net (Micah 7:2, Ezekiel 26:5, 32:3). *Tsiltsal Dagim* (צִלְצַל דָּגִים), fish-spears of barbed irons (Job 40:31).

The Talmud also enumerates a variety of fishing tackle by name. We also learn that it was permitted during the Festival week to fish with an angle in the Sea of Tiberias, and the Rabbis add that it was allowed to fish by means of nets and traps (Bava Kama 81b). All this points to the fact that many Jews practised fishing. But the Talmud mentions one by name, Poda, who it is reported, told the teacher Rav: "Broil the fish with its brother (salt), plunge it into its father (water), eat it with its son (sauce) and drink after it its father (water)" (Moed Katan 11a). In a striking passage we have an early example of

fishing provided by the Testament of The Twelve Patriarchs which records the last words of the twelve sons of Jacob, written probably at the end of the second century B.C.E. Zebulun proclaims: I was the first to make a boat to sail upon the sea... and I let down a rudder and I stretched a sail and sailed along the shore catching fish for the house of my father and through compassion I shared my catch with every stranger — if there were aged I boiled the fish and dressed them well and offered them to all men and the Lord satisfied me with an abundance of fish.

#### HONORING THE SABBATH AND FESTIVAL

Because fish was in plentiful supply, and meat in early days was considered a luxury, beyond the reach of the poor, fish became the staple diet of Jews. Till this day we connect fish with the Sabbath and Festival as we see from the following extract: He who possesses a manah (a hundred shekel) should buy a measure of vegetables for his pot; if he possesses ten manah he should buy a quantity of fish for his pot; if he possesses fifty manah he may buy a quantity of meat for his pot. May they have their dish of vegetables or fish every Friday for the Sabbath (Hullin 84a).

In this connection the following story is apt: A pious man in Rome was accustomed to honour the Sabbath and Festival. On the afternoon before the Day of Atonement he went to the market and found only one fish for sale. Now the Governor's servant was standing there and they bid against each other for the fish. Eventually the Jew bought it at a denarius a pound. At dinner the Governor asked why there was no fish. When he was informed about the Jew and his purchase, the Governor accused the Jew of having a hidden treasure belonging to the king. The Jew pleaded that as the Day of Atonement is the Sabbath of Sabbaths and must be honoured, he felt impelled to spend much money to acquire the fish. Thereupon the Governor acquitted him. There is a happy ending to the story. The Almighty rewarded the Jewish tailor and prepared for him a precious pearl in the fish, and on the proceeds of the pearl the Jew lived happily for the rest of his life (Pesikta Rabbati 11a).

Regarding the honouring of the Sabbath with food, the Rabbis are of the opinion that a poor man may accept charity in order to make the Sabbath a delight. In answer to the query what food should he purchase, the Rabbis reply: — fish hash (Pesachim 112a).

## NAMES OF FISH

Though we have stated that 'dag' דג is generally used for many types of fish, the Rabbis do specifically mention by name a number of fish. We have the *Shibbuta*, probably mullet or carp; Rava salted a *Shibbuta* for the Sabbath (Kiddushin 41a); *Kilbith*, supposed to be a stickleback (Avodah Zara 39b). The Rabbis also mention a group of small fish some of which cannot be identified, as *Sultanith* (a kind of anchovy), *Aphiz*, *Colias*, *Scomber*, *Sword-fish*, *Anthias*, *Tunny*, *Zahanta*, *Shefarnuna*, *Kedashnuna* and *Kevarnuna* (Avodah Zara 39a).

We cannot conclude the review without some reference to the Jewish dietary laws according to which only fish which have fins and scales are permitted to be eaten (Leviticus 11:9 and Deuteronomy 14:9). The Talmud deduces that when fish has scales, it invariably has fins and is therefore permitted. Since this principle was established, new rivers and lakes have been discovered with countless species of new fish, none the less not a single fish has been found having scales without fins. It is also reported that the only fish that fisherman regard as non-poisonous are those with fins and scales.

It is not our purpose to dilate on the dietary laws; we shall refer only to one historical fact which proves the efficacy of traditional law. 'When David Rahabi came to India and found some people whom he rightly thought to be Jews though they were scarcely distinguishable from their Indian environment, it was not the Shema which proved that they belonged to the House of Israel but the fact that they eschewed fish that lacked fins and scales,' (Rabbinic Anthology, Montefiore and Lowe p. XCVI). The same authors quote William Radcliffe who, in his book 'Fishing from earliest times', blames Jews for lacking the sporting spirit; they caught fish by the net, they did not play with the rod. Lowe adds these significant words, "the word 'hook' occurs in the Bible only as a metaphor of cruelty or as an instrument used by foreigners. In Rabbinical times the hook which entered the mouth of the fish typified cruelty and with it was compared the terrible disease of croup which similarly attacks and chokes infants. This was the 'evil net' of Ecclesiastes 9:12" (Ibid p. XCII).

## DYNAMICS OF THE DIVINE HUMAN INTERACTION

BY AVI RABINOWITZ

It must have been with feelings of great anxiety that Jacob fled from his father's house. With an unsure future ahead and a vengeful brother behind, Jacob was greatly in need of assurance. He wished not only to escape to safety and to find a place of refuge, he also greatly desired to return home one day to be reunited with his beloved parents.

At the close of his first day as a fugitive, Jacob searched for a place to rest the night. His mind tumultuous with surging emotions, fear and hope, Jacob chose stones for his pillow and fell asleep. The record of what then transpired is that of a profound mystical encounter with God. (Genesis: 28:15) God stood beside him and said: ...*Behold; I am with thee, and will guard thee in all that you go, and I shall return you to this land, for I shall not leave you...*

It is obvious that the content of this vision was calculated to reassure Jacob, and we can be sure that it succeeded in this. Upon awakening, in recognition of the divine origin of his vision, Jacob raises a monument to God, and renames the area "Beth-El", "The House of God". What follows, however, is not so easily understood.

וידר יעקב נדר לאמר: אם יהיה אלהים עמדי ושמרני בדרך הזה אשר אנכי הולך, ונחן לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבוש, ושבתי בשלום אל בית אבי, והיה ה' לי לאלהים.

*And Jacob vowed a vow, saying: If God will be with me, and will guard me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and I will return in peace to my father's house, then shall the Lord be my God.*

This seems to be a conditional vow — certainly not what we expect from Jacob after receiving a divine revelation! The vow seems to imply that Jacob's acceptance of God as his Lord is here being made conditional on God's future action on Jacob's behalf! That Jacob is here proposing a crass "deal" with

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God is preposterous. There must be some other explanation for Jacob's choice of phraseology. We can indeed reach a clearer understanding of his intent if we take note of the fact that the alleged "deal" is not addressed *to God*; rather it is actually a resolution which Jacob accepts *on himself*.

#### JACOB'S INTENT

Jacob was probably well aware that his anxiety and unsettled state of mind of the previous night might have provided fertile ground for the generation of spurious "visions" — especially visions purporting to be divine assurances regarding all his fears and hopes. Thus, perhaps Jacob felt that he could accept his mystical experience as a true encounter with the One God only if the promises he dreamed were actually realized later on. If they did not materialize, Jacob would be forced to dismiss his experience as an hallucination, and attribute the voice which had communicated with him as a figment of his wish fulfillment.

According to the Zohar:\* (a) "This is naught but the house of God": the phraseology 'naught but' is used to indicate doubt. (b) "Rabbi Yehuda said: if God promised him all this, why did not Jacob believe in it — and say 'if...'? Answer: For the following reason. Jacob said, 'it was a dream, and how can one tell if a dream is truth or not? If it is realized in actuality, only then it is true' — and it was with this in mind that he said 'if God..."

#### SELF-FULFILLING SKEPTICISM

In the ancient Near-East, where thousands of pagan religions, sects, and cults reigned, such ready skepticism as to the verity of a seeming mystical vision seems quite commendable. Nevertheless, one also expects that a spiritually well-developed personage of Jacob's stature would immediately recognize the Divine in a true communication from God. Had not his grandfather Abraham recognized the Divine even in the seemingly pagan call to bring his child as a sacrifice?

Perhaps the Bible is here indicating to us a certain flaw on Jacob's part. Indeed, we can see an implied criticism of Jacob's response, and also an interesting insight into the nature of the Divine interaction with Man — in the

\* Genesis 28, 75. (In the old printed editions, p. 149, side two, p. 150, side two).

close parallel between the words in Jacob's vow and the tragic events to follow. At many junctures of Biblical narrative, two seemingly unrelated accounts are juxtaposed intentionally in order to manifest a causal relationship between the two which might otherwise remain unapparent. Occasionally two widely separated narratives are shown by the Bible to be closely related in actuality by employing parallel phraseology in both accounts. It is the latter literary device which will be analyzed in our context.

Ironically, God had promised Jacob protection, yet Jacob considered his life to have been filled with tragedy. Note Jacob's words to Pharaoh *מעט ורעים היו ימי שני חיי* *few and evil have been the days of the years of my life* (Genesis 47:9).

What then had become of God's promise of protection? Had Jacob's skepticism then actually been warranted? The Bible states clearly that God had indeed been the Promiser, and God had indeed kept Jacob safe from danger, free of starvation during severe famine, etc., as promised. What then is the tragedy from which Jacob suffered so? The Bible underscores the fact that to Jacob the tragedy of his life was the disappearance of his beloved son Joseph, together with the heartbreakingly suspicious circumstances surrounding both this disappearance and the discovery of the bloodied coat of many colours.

Perhaps we can see here a hint of the dynamics of the Divine-human interaction. Perhaps we are being told that *Jacob's seemingly conditional response actually altered the intended operational meaning of the Divine promise*. The meaning of his interaction with the Divine was left to Jacob to interpret; the conditional element introduced in Jacob's response as a result of his lack of sufficient recognition *of the Divine became an active factor in the actuation of the promise*.

#### AUGURY OF TRAGEDY

Not only did the inadequate interpretation of God's message, evidenced in Jacob's reply, cause God's promised protection to actuate at a lower level, but Jacob's very own words were transformed into an augury of the tragedy to follow:

1) God promised: *Behold, I am with you*, "הנה אנכי עמך", and Jacob introduced the future tense and conditional: *If God will be with me* "אם יהיה אלהים עמדי". Indeed we are told that after Joseph's disappearance, Jacob



entered into a severe depression, and the spirit of God left him. It was only after he was apprised of the truth about Joseph that the spirit of God remanifested itself to him and only after this did he have an encounter with God: *and the spirit of Jacob lived again* (Genesis 45:27). Instead of the *behold I am with you* "הנה אנכי עמך" of constant presence, the conditional element transformed it to a promise that, ultimately, *I will be with you* "אנכי עמך", despite appearances to the contrary during the time of travail.

2) God promised *I will guard you in all that you go*, and Jacob stipulated: "ושמרני בדרך הזה" *If you guard me in the way*. The potential promise of protection "on the way" "בדרך" was realized, but only ultimately. Jacob's fear of accidents occurring on the way "בדרך" are given substance: Joseph disappeared on the way "בדרך", and he fears that Benjamin will disappear similarly: *and an accident will befall him on the way אשר יקרהו אסון בדרך אשר ילכו בה* (Genesis 42:38).

3) God promised *I shall not leave you* כי לא אעזבך. In accordance with the Psalm 37:25 "נער הייתי גם זקנתי ולא ראיתי צדיק נעזב וזרעו מבקש לחם" we interpret "כי לא אעזבך" — *I shall not leave you* as a promise to provide sustenance (see Rashi). Indeed, Jacob's response was: *אם... ונתן לי לחם*. "אם... ונתן לי לחם" *If God will give me bread to eat*. This stress placed on material worries is reflected in the callous attitude of Joseph's brothers: Immediately after disposing of him they ate bread ... *they took him, and threw him into the pit... and sat down to eat bread*: "ויקחהו וישליכו אותו הבורה... וישבו לאכל לחם". In addition, instead of the promise of *לא אעזבך* serving as a promise of constant sustenance, the desired *bread* — לחם — was acquired at very great cost. Jacob was forced to descend to Egypt for food (Genesis 45:27) *and to his father (Jacob), (Joseph) sent bread* "שלח [יוסף] לחם" thus beginning the process which led to the enslavement of his descendants. Indeed, Joseph informs his brothers that they need not fear his revenge, for he sees God's hand behind the scenes of his drama. It was necessary that he be in Egypt in order to guarantee a supply of food for (Egypt and) his family during the extended famine. Thus, the disappearance of Joseph resulted from Jacob's need for sustenance, and this in turn led to the enslavement of the Jewish people.

4) Jacob's further stipulation, *If... will give me (bread to eat) and clothing* to wear "אם... ונתן לי (לחם לאכל) ובגד ללבוש" can be seen perhaps as part of

his response to the promise of "לא אעזבך" which to him implies not only *bread* but *clothing* as well. Indeed, "*clothing*" figures quite heavily in the Joseph account. The jealousy of Joseph's brothers was kindled by the special mark of favour given to Joseph by his father Jacob — the בגד known as *the coat of many colors*.

*And Israel loved Joseph more than the other sons... and made him a coat of colors... and the others saw that he was beloved of their father from all his brothers, and they hated him.*

Indeed this very coat served as the notice to Jacob that Joseph disappeared. *And they sent the coat of many colors... a wild animal ate him...* At that point, Jacob realized the meaninglessness of בגד as a value to be desired, and he tears his clothes: *and Jacob tore his clothes and put on sackcloth*.

Further, Joseph's troubles in Egypt were also symbolized by "בגד".

The Ishmaelites bought him from the Midianites who had taken Joseph out of the pit, and sold him in Egypt to Potiphar. Potiphar left Joseph in charge of his household and Joseph fulfilled his duties with exemplary honesty. However, the wife of Potiphar desired Joseph and entreated him constantly to sleep with her. Joseph refused each advance. In desperation, "Mrs. Potiphar" one day grabbed his garment "ותחפשהו בבגדו" *she caught him by his garment* and Joseph was forced to flee without it. The "garment" in her hands then served as "evidence" in her frame-up of Joseph and led to his imprisonment for many years.

5) God promised: "והשבתיך אל האדמה הזאת" *I will bring thee back into this land* and Jacob interpreted this through his conditional: *If — I will return to my father's house* as applying to safe return only to his father's home.

Indeed, Jacob does return in safety, *and Jacob came to Isaac his father*, but immediately thereafter the Biblical narrative tells of the beginning of the Joseph episode (the narrative is interrupted only by the genealogy of Esau). Thus, following his "safe return" to "my father's home", Jacob is confronted with the double meaning inherent in his conditional response: Joseph is now in the position of needing divine protection in order to arrange a safe return to his father's home. That Jacob reached home safely is not sufficient any longer for Jacob's peace of mind, he must now hope for the same for his beloved son Joseph. Indeed, in the end it is Jacob who comes to Joseph, rather than Joseph who returns to Jacob: *And Joseph said... my father's house... came to me*.

## CONCLUSION

At that point, when Jacob is proceeding to Egypt to be reunited with the long-lost Joseph, the cycle is closed. All the portents of the response to the dream at Beth-El have been fulfilled, and a new Jacob is ready for the next stage. The new challenge is not long in coming. His depression is lifted in anticipation of the reunion with Joseph.

Possessed once more of the spirit of God, Jacob encounters God in his dream — his first mystical experience since the portentous one at Beth-El. However, a different Jacob responds here to God's challenge.

His acceptance of God is total and unqualified. His answer follows the classical, prototypical declaration of submission to the will of God offered by his grandfather Abraham: his response to God's renewed call is the sublimely simple הנני *I am here, God*.

המשך מעמ' 26 YOUTH CORNER

חוגי תנ"ך: מספר חוגי תנ"ך פועלים ברחבי הארץ: בתל-אביב, אשדוד אלקן-שבות וירושלים, חוגים אשר פועלים בהצלחה ומועברים על-ידי חברים באירגון. בקרית שמונה, חיפה, רעננה ועוד ערים נוספות בארץ, עומדים להיפתח בקרב חוגים נוספים. שבתות חברים: שבתות לימוד תנ"ך בצוותא התקיימו במשך השנה. בפרשת לך-לך התקיימה שבת חברים במדרשת קדומים. בשבת זו נערך חידון תנ"ך ע"י מנחם נריה ורון פלדמן, מופע אור-קולי, סיור במזיאון הישוב. כישור עצמו נערך סיור ע"י אחד ממחיישי המקום.

בשבת פרשת משפטים, נערכה שבת הכנה לקראת התגדול המחזוי בתנ"ך. בשבת זו נטלו חלק כמה מחנכי התנ"ך וסגניהם שסייעו לחברים אשר ניגשו לבחינות החידון השנה. חידונים ושעשועונים בתנ"ך תרמו גם הם לאוירה התנכ"ית ששרתה באותה השבת.

בג' באייר, 2.5.87 תחזיקים אי"ה שבת לנבחני החידון העולמי לתנ"ך לשנת תשמ"ז בקיבוץ שעלבים. פרט לנבחנים יצטרפו מספר חברים מהאירגון לסייע בידם. ובשבת י"ז באייר, 16.5.87, שבת פרשת אמור תחזיקים שבת לחברים באיתמר שבתל-חיים.

## WORDS OF TORAH

*Samson Raphael Hirsch's Commentary on the Torah (Pentateuch),*  
translated into English by his grandson Isaac Levy

## SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY JOSEPH HALPERN

*On Exodus 3:20:* I will stretch forth My hand and smite Egypt with all My wonders — נפלאותי.

פלא is that which occurs outside the natural sequence of cause and effect, and so reveals Him Whose will is not restrained by the ordinary laws which govern the world and nature, but show rather that His will and power restrain and govern these laws of nature. By a miracle proclaimed and accomplished by God, the godliness of the ordinary course of events springs into our eyes. It shows us that the ordinary natural way of things have not only an originator, that not only their origin, but also their continuance, has its root in God. They do not exist and continue because they once came into existence by God, but because, and only as long as God wills them to continue. To teach the godliness of ordinary natural things is the object of miracles.

*On Exodus 7:18:* And the Egyptians will give up drinking water from the river.

ונלאו: They will be brought to see the "negation", to see the impossibility. לא the root of לא the "negation", of being, of existing (in contrast to אל the negation of willing). It is characteristic that the prohibitions in the תורה are in the most instances not expressed with אל, as we should expect, but with לא. It appears that לא תגנוב etc. is a much deeper negation of the evil than אל תגנוב etc. would be. אל would presuppose a will, a desire which becomes suppressed by the prohibition, but לא negates the practice of the evil altogether. If you are a Torah Jew, it will not be your will to do anything which the Torah must then oppose. As a Torah Jew, not only shall you not do it, but as a Jew you will not do it. Thus Rabbi Akiva says that our fathers on Sinai greeted the negative commands of the Torah with the same joyous "Yes" as they did the positive commands. על הן הן ועל לאו הן? (i.e. Will you keep? Yes. Will you not desecrate? Yes. They put the same lively happy energy in carrying out a prohibition as in fulfilling a Mitzva).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

To my regret, in the last few issues of *Dor le Dor* you have published pieces which seek to use the Bible to support personal political views. Now while I agree that the pages of the magazine should be open to all opinions, readers must have the right of rebuttal. I am sorry that the latest exercise of what I believe to be distortion of biblical meaning comes from my good friend Rabbi Yosef Green (Vol. XV, 3).

Taking a simple and natural difference in the script arrangement of Bible poetry, he advances as justification for the writing of three pieces in two separated vertical columns that it is an indication that there can be absolutely no contact or compromise with the enemy. Perhaps a more accurate reason is that in two of his examples there are simply lists of names which are more conveniently written in the form of long vertical lines. With regard to his third piece in that category (Deut. 32), this is made up mostly of shorter verses, in great part with characteristic biblical parallelisms. This also makes it more appropriately written in separated

columns. To cite verse 8 in that song as a biblical support for the idea of no territorial compromise is too fantastic for serious scholarship.

There are also serious flaws on the other side of Rabbi Green's examples. Thus, what will he do with Ex. 15:16 which also sings of God's gift of the Land to the people of Israel. Yet that song is written in continuous lines, which *should* suggest negotiation? Again, what will he do with II Sam. 22, vv. 38ff., where David's song is written in continuous lines, even while he is celebrating the *total* destruction of his enemies?

One of the most threatening signs in our difficult times — in Israel and in other countries — is the combination of Religion and aggressive nationalism. We have to be on guard to prevent such a fusion igniting a spark resulting in a bloodbath. If men of Religion are searching the Bible to support political views, I respectfully suggest that Rabbi Green again consider Ex. 20:22 and Deut. 27:5. It seems to me that here at least we have explicit biblical teaching which points Religion in the direction of peace.

Chaim Pearl

## TWENTY-FOURTH WORLD BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH

Commemorating the 20th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, the international Jewish Youth Bible Contest took as its theme a verse from Joel 4:20: *Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.*

This Bible contest — the 24th one — was the highlight of the 39th Yom Ha-Atzmauth celebration. Thirty-two contestants came to Jerusalem from eighteen countries to participate in this colorful annual event. The Jerusalem Theater was the venue of the contest which was viewed by hundreds of thousands on Israeli television. (Surveys conducted by the Israeli Institute for Social Research indicate that this television program is considered to be the major item of the Israeli Day of Independence).

The contest winner was Yechezkel Schatz, a senior student of the "Amit" Religious Technical School, connected with Bar Ilan University. The second prize was shared by Simcha Haber and Immanuel Moskowitz. All three winners are from Israel.

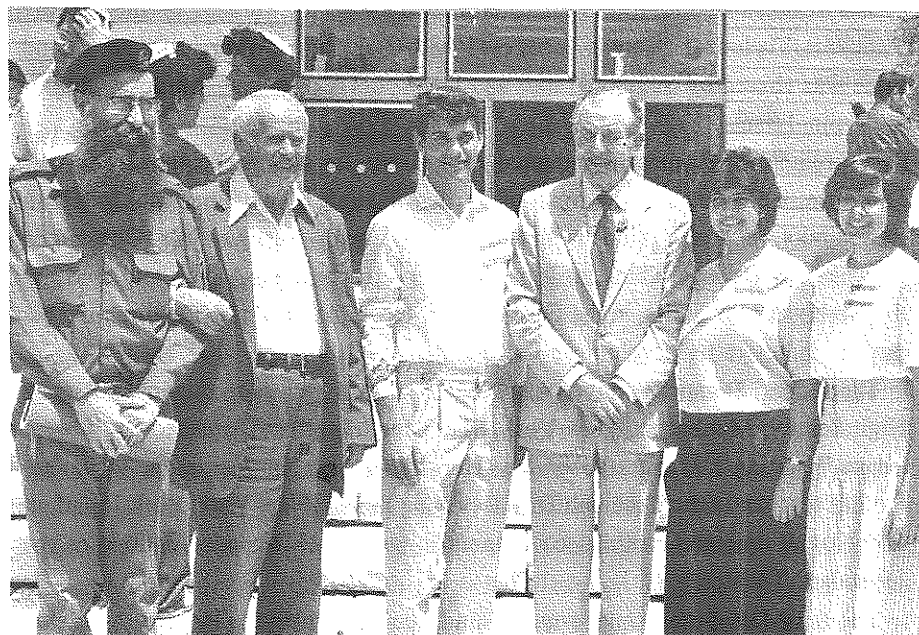
A preliminary contest, conducted exclusively for the participants from the Diaspora, was hosted in the town of Pardess Hanna. Top winner was Jonathan Koschitzky, a senior student at the B'nei Akivah Yeshiva "Or Chaim" in Downsview, Ontario, Canada. Jonathan plans to come on Aliyah and study at the Yeshivah Har Etzion in the Gush Etzion. His father is a manufacturer and his mother is active as a volunteer for the U.J.A.

The second Diaspora winner was Nogah Aharoni, a senior student at Ramaz High School, Manhattan, New York. She plans to come to Israel to do "Sherut Leumi," national voluntary service. Her father is a businessman, while her mother teaches at the Yeshivah Dov Revel in Queens, New York. Both Jonathan and Nogah emerged as third co-winners in the Israel-Diaspora contest at the Jerusalem Theater.

The third Diaspora winner was Neima Greenberg from the Hebrew Academy of Five Towns and Rockaway, New York. Her father is a pediatrician and her mother is a tour operator. Her grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Zvi Kopitzky was the first graduate of Yeshivat Rav Kook, Jerusalem.

The importance of this international event was marked by the attendance of the Prime Minister, Y. Shamir, who presented the final and most difficult question of the contest. The Prime Minister also handed out the prizes at the conclusion of the program. The contest was administered by the Israeli pre-military youth corps, the "Gadna," under the leadership of its commander, Colonel Uri Manos, who opened the event with greetings to the participants and audience. The preparations for this world-wide event were co-ordinated by the Rabbi of "Gadna," Major Shlomo Gabarchek. The distinguished panel of judges was chaired by Dr. Joseph Burg, the longest-serving member of the Knesset, and until recently, the Minister of Religion.

#### WINNERS OF THE DIASPORA CONTEST



From left to right: Chaplain Shlomo Gabarchek, Prof. Haim Gevaryahu, Jonathan Koschitzky, President Chaim Herzog, Nogah Aharoni, Neima Greenberg

#### BIBLE CONTEST PARTICIPANTS — 1987

|                     |                    |                      |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Argentina</i>    | <i>France</i>      | <i>South Africa</i>  |
| Batsheva Grinstein  | Mosh Ben-Abu       | David Fachler        |
| Zev Marinberg       | Tamar Cohen        | Talmon Friedlander   |
| <i>Australia</i>    | <i>Ireland</i>     | Hillel Gluch         |
| Jonathan Liberman   | Mendel Cohen       | <i>Spain</i>         |
| <i>Brasil</i>       | <i>Israel</i>      | Yosef Salama         |
| Lili Davidovitch    | Simcha Haber       | <i>Sweden</i>        |
| <i>Canada</i>       | Emmanuel Moskowitz | Gideon Cohen         |
| Miriam Berkovich    | Yechezkel Schatz   | <i>Uruguay</i>       |
| Jonathan Koschitzky | <i>Mexico</i>      | Mariel Feder         |
| <i>Chile</i>        | Shlomi Gida        | Silvana Sklederovitz |
| Miriam Kreiman      | Tuvia Krotsik      | <i>U.S.A.</i>        |
| <i>Costa Rica</i>   | <i>Panama</i>      | Noga Aharoni         |
| Tabi Goldstein      | Gila Ben-Abu       | Citty Doron          |
| <i>England</i>      | Avraham Malka      | Neima Greenberg      |
| Victor Arotsky      | <i>Peru</i>        | Ethan Fish           |
|                     | Alain Falkon       | Noft Milstein        |



## YOUTH CORNER

*To participants of the World Youth Bible Contests*

For us the saying, "Youth is the future of our people," is no idle slogan. But which youth? We, of the editorial board of Dor le Dor firmly believe that the future of our people lies with youth who study Torah and are dedicated to live by its values.

We, here in Israel, are fortunate to have an organization "NACHAT" (Noar Choyeve Tanach), youth who had participated in the World Bible Contest. Here is a short report, of some of its activities (in Hebrew).

It is our hope that you will emulate this organization, and create branches in your communities, and perhaps join in establishing a world federation of "NACHAT" — נח"ת עולמי.

### סקירה על אירגון נח"ת — נוער חובב תנ"ך

ברית בוגרי החידונים העולמיים לתנ"ך

ת.ד. 7024, ירושלים 91070, טל': 02-245752

אירגון נח"ת הוקם על-ידי ברית בוגרי החידונים העולמיים.

משנסתיימו החידונים חשו החברים ריקנות ורצו המשך לדבר. דבר שיאחד אותם במסגרת משותפת לכולם — האהבה לספר הספרים. כך נוצר והוקם האירגון שמטרתו ומגמתו לאחד בני נוער מהארץ ומהתפוצות סביב התנ"ך. האירגון מאחד בתוכו בני נוער מכל קצוות הארץ והתבל: מארגנטינה, ברזיל ומדינות דרום אמריקה, ארה"ב, אירופה, ישראל ומעור ערים וארצות אחרות נקבצים ובני נוער בעלי נושא משותף והוא: אהבה לספר הספרים.

האירגון מקיים פעילויות שונות, בהן נלמד ספר הספרים בכל דרך אפשרית שתוכל לבטא אהבה זו.

ביטאון: "מלא כף נח"ת" יוצא לאור אחת לחודשיים. בבטאון מובאים מאמרים, שעשועונים ומשחקי תנ"ך הנכתבים על-ידי החברים, וכן סקירה על המתרחש באירגון.

## עשה תורתך קבע

TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

August-September 1987

אלול תשמ"ז

|           |                              |    |    |                            |
|-----------|------------------------------|----|----|----------------------------|
| W         | Psalms 65                    | א  | 26 | תהילים ס"ה                 |
| Th        | Psalms 66                    | ב  | 27 | תהילים ס"ו                 |
| F         | Deuteronomy 16:18-21:29      | ג  | 28 | שפטים                      |
|           | Haftarah: Isaiah 51:12-52:12 | ד  | 29 | הפטרה: ישעיה נ"א, יב"ב, יב |
| S         | Psalms 67                    | ה  | 30 | תהילים ס"ז                 |
| M         | Psalms 68                    | ו  | 31 | תהילים ס"ח                 |
| September |                              |    |    |                            |
| T         | Psalms 69                    | ז  | 1  | תהילים ס"ט                 |
| W         | Psalms 70-71                 | ח  | 2  | תהילים ע"א                 |
| Th        | Psalms 72                    | ט  | 3  | תהילים ע"ב                 |
| F         | Deuteronomy 21:10-25         | י  | 4  | כי תצא                     |
|           | Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-10     | יא | 5  | הפטרה: ישעיה נ"ד, א"י      |
| S         | Psalms 73                    | יב | 6  | תהילים ע"ג                 |
| M         | Psalms 74                    | יג | 7  | תהילים ע"ד                 |
| T         | Psalms 75                    | יד | 8  | תהילים ע"ה                 |
| W         | Psalms 76                    | טו | 9  | תהילים ע"ו                 |
| Th        | Psalms 77                    | טז | 10 | תהילים ע"ז                 |
| F         | Deuteronomy 26:29:8          | יז | 11 | כי תבוא                    |
|           | Haftarah: Isaiah 60:1-22     | יח | 12 | הפטרה: ישעיה ס"א, יכב      |
| S         | Psalms 78                    | יט | 13 | תהילים ע"ח                 |
| M         | Psalms 79                    | כ  | 14 | תהילים ע"ט                 |
| T         | Psalms 80                    | כא | 15 | תהילים פ'                  |
| W         | Psalms 81                    | כב | 16 | תהילים פ"א                 |
| Th        | Psalms 82-83                 | כג | 17 | תהילים פ"ב, פ"ג            |
| F         | Deuteronomy 29:9:31          | כד | 18 | בצביון וילך                |
|           | Haftarah: Isaiah 61:10-63-9  | כה | 19 | הפטרה: ישעיה ס"א, יס"ג, ט  |
| S         | Psalms 84-85                 | כו | 20 | תהילים פ"ד, פ"ה            |
| M         | Psalms 86                    | כז | 21 | תהילים פ"ו                 |
| T         | Psalms 87-88                 | כח | 22 | תהילים פ"ז, פ"ח            |
| W         |                              | כט | 23 | ערב ראש השנה               |



# September-October 1987

|         |                               |    |    |                                   |
|---------|-------------------------------|----|----|-----------------------------------|
| Th      | Genesis 21:1-34               | א  | 24 | ראש השנה בראשית כ"א, א"לד         |
|         | Haftarah: I Samuel 1-2:10     |    |    | הפטרה: שמואל א א"ב, י             |
| F       | Genesis 22:1-24               | ב  | 25 | ראש השנה בראשית כ"ב א"כד          |
|         | Haftarah: Jeremiah 31:2-20    |    |    | הפטרה: ירמיה ל"א, ב"כ             |
| שבת     | Deuteronomy 32                | ג  | 26 | האזינו                            |
|         | Haftarah: Hoseah 14:2-10      |    |    | הפטרה: הושע י"ד, ב"י              |
| S       | Jonah 1                       | ד  | 27 | יונה א'                           |
| M       | Jonah 2                       | ה  | 28 | יונה ב'                           |
| T       | Jonah 3                       | ו  | 29 | יונה ג'                           |
| W       | Jonah 4                       | ז  | 30 | יונה ד'                           |
| October |                               |    |    |                                   |
| Th      | Jonah 4                       | ח  | 1  | יונה ד'                           |
| F       |                               | ט  | 2  | ערב יום כפור                      |
| שבת     | Leviticus 16                  | י  | 3  | יום כפור ויקרא ט"ז                |
|         | Haftarah: 57:14-58:16         |    |    | הפטרה: ישעיה נ"ז, יד"נ"ח, טז      |
| S       | Ecclesiastes 1-2              | יא | 4  | קהלת א"ב'                         |
| M       | Ecclesiastes 3-4              | יב | 5  | קהלת ג"ד'                         |
| T       | Ecclesiastes 5-6              | יג | 6  | קהלת ה"ו'                         |
| W       |                               | יד | 7  | ערב סוכות                         |
| Th      | Leviticus 22:26-23:44         | טו | 8  | סוכות ויקרא כ"ב, כ"ג, ג, מד       |
|         | Haftarah: Zechariah 14        |    |    | הפטרה: זכריה י"ד                  |
| F       | Leviticus 22:26-23:44*        | טז | 9  | סוכות ויקרא כ"ב, כ"ג, ג, מד*      |
|         | Haftarah: I Kings 8:2-21      |    |    | הפטרה: מלכים א ח', ב"כא*          |
| שבת     | Exodus 33:12-34:26            | יז | 10 | שמות ל"ג, יב"ל"ד, כ"ו             |
|         | Haftarah: Ezekiel 38-18-39:16 |    |    | הפטרה: יחזקאל ל"ח, יח"ל"ט, טז     |
| S       | Ecclesiastes 7-8              | יח | 11 | קהלת ז"ח'                         |
| M       | Ecclesiastes 9-10             | יט | 12 | קהלת ט"ז'                         |
| T       | Ecclesiastes 11-12            | כ  | 13 | קהלת י"א י"ב                      |
| W       |                               | כא | 14 | הושענא רבה                        |
| Th      | Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17       | כב | 15 | שמיני עצרת דברים י"ד, כ"ב"ט"ז, יז |
|         | Haftarah: I Kings 8:54-66     |    |    | הפטרה: מלכים א ח', נד"טו          |
| F       | Deuteronomy 33-34**           | כג | 16 | שמחת תורה וזאת הברכה**            |
|         | Haftarah: Joshua I            |    |    | הפטרה: יהושע א**                  |
| שבת     | Genesis: 1-6:8                | כד | 17 | בראשית                            |
|         | Haftarah: Isaiah 42:5-43:10   |    |    | הפטרה: ישעיהו מ"ב, ה"מ"ג, י       |
| S       | Psalms 89                     | כה | 18 | תהילים פ"ט                        |
| M       | Psalms 90-91                  | כו | 19 | תהילים צ"א                        |
| T       | Psalms 92-93                  | כז | 20 | תהילים צ"ב-צ"ג                    |
| W       | Psalms 94                     | כח | 21 | תהילים צ"ד                        |
| Th      | Psalms 95-96                  | כט | 22 | תהילים צ"ה-צ"ו                    |
| F       | Genesis: 6:9-11               | ל  | 23 | נח                                |

\*Only in the Diaspora

\*רק בחוץ לארץ \*\*בישראל רק ביום ה'

## תשרי תשמ"ח

# October-November 1987

## חשוון תשמ"ח

|          |                              |    |    |                               |
|----------|------------------------------|----|----|-------------------------------|
| שבת      | Haftarah: Isaiah 66          | א  | 24 | הפטרה: ישעיה ט"ו              |
| S        | Psalms 97                    | ב  | 25 | תהילים צ"ז                    |
| M        | Psalms 98-99                 | ג  | 26 | תהילים צ"ח-צ"ט                |
| T        | Psalms 100-101               | ד  | 27 | תהילים ק"א                    |
| W        | Psalms 102                   | ה  | 28 | תהילים ק"ב                    |
| Th       | Psalms 103                   | ו  | 29 | תהילים ק"ג                    |
| F        | Genesis 12-17                | ז  | 30 | לך לך                         |
| שבת      | Haftarah: Isaiah 40:27-41:16 | ח  | 31 | הפטרה: ישעיה מ', כ' ד"מ"א, טז |
| November |                              |    |    |                               |
| S        | Psalms 104                   | ט  | 1  | תהילים ק"ד                    |
| M        | Psalms 105                   | י  | 2  | תהילים ק"ה                    |
| T        | Psalms 106                   | יא | 3  | תהילים ק"ו                    |
| W        | Psalms 107                   | יב | 4  | תהילים ק"ז                    |
| Th       | Psalms 108                   | יג | 5  | תהילים ק"ח                    |
| F        | Genesis 18-22                | יד | 6  | וירא                          |
| שבת      | Haftarah: II Kings 4:1-32    | טו | 7  | הפטרה: מלכים ב ד', א"לב       |
| S        | Psalms 109                   | טז | 8  | תהילים ק"ט                    |
| M        | Psalms 110-111               | יז | 9  | תהילים ק"י-קיא                |
| T        | Psalms 112                   | יח | 10 | תהילים קי"ב                   |
| W        | Psalms 113-114               | יט | 11 | תהילים קי"ג-קי"ד              |
| Th       | Psalms 115                   | כ  | 12 | תהילים קט"ו                   |
| F        | Genesis 23-25:18             | כא | 13 | חיי שרה                       |
| שבת      | Haftarah: I Kings 1:1-31     | כב | 14 | הפטרה מלכים א א', א"ל"א       |
| S        | Psalms 116                   | כג | 15 | תהילים קט"ז                   |
| M        | Psalms 117                   | כד | 16 | תהילים קי"ז                   |
| T        | Psalms 118                   | כה | 17 | תהילים קי"ח                   |
| W        | Psalms 119                   | כו | 18 | תהילים קי"ט                   |
| Th       | Psalms 120                   | כז | 19 | תהילים ק"כ                    |
| F        | Genesis 25:19-28:9           | כח | 20 | תולדות                        |
| שבת      | Haftarah: I Samuel 20:18-42  | כט | 21 | הפטרה: שמואל א כ', יח"מב      |



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