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מיצבו קנו ס ק ה ז"ל

ADAM'S SIN

BY JOSIAH DERBY

I.

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as recounted in Chapters two and three of Genesis[1] has been understood generally in the same way by both Judaism and Christianity. Briefly put, God grants Adam permission to eat the fruit of all the trees of the Garden, but specifically forbids him to eat the fruit of "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil."[2] Eve, in Adam's absence, is pursuaded by the serpent to diregard this prohibition, eats of the fruit, and gives it to Adam who also eats it. Thereby they both disobey God's direct commandment committing an unforgivable sin.

For Judaism the disobedience of God's will by Adam and Eve was no different from the violation of other divine commandments by human beings, except that the price they paid was unusual and direct.[3] Their punishment was unusual not only in its form but in its duration. For unlike other transgressions which could be atoned for and then forgiven, this sin could not. Although punishment becomes a continuous part of their lives and is visited forever upon their descendants,[4] nevertheless beyond transgression and punishment Adam's sin plays little or no role in Jewish theology.

1 All chapter and verse citations are from Genesis unless otherwise noted. Chapter I will not be discussed here, except for a tangential referenee inasmuch as it does not concern itself with what transpired in the Garden of Eden. We are not concerned here with the source analysis by modern Bible scholars of these three chapters.

2 2:17. This is the aceepted literal English translation of the corresponding Hebrew. The "tree of life", 2:9, is not included in this prohibition nor is it mentioned again until the very end of the story, 3:22. More about this later.

3 3:16–18.

4 This is not stated speeifically in God's eurse (3:16–19), yet it appears to be implicit in that God addresses "the woman" and "the man" as generies, before they assume individuality through proper names. Nevertheless, unlike Christianity, Judaism did not make this consequence an integral part of its theology.

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For Christianity, however, this story could well be regarded as the keystone of its theology. The whole divine and tragic drama, which is the core of Christian faith, became necessary only because of Adam's wilful disobedience. Through his defiant act Adam fell from God's grace, losing his immortal status and transmitting his sin and mortality to his progeny forever. "Hereditary sin is incurred at conception by every human being as a result of the original sinful choice of the first man, Adam."[5] From the point of view of this construction of the story one might infer that had there been no sin there would have been no punishment; that is to say, Adam and Eve and their progeny would have remained forever in the enjoyable environment of the Garden of Eden, nakedly and innocently roaming its glens in peaceful harmony with all the other animals, and perhaps even holding social conversations with them.

It is astonishing that the commentators, ancient and modern, failed to question the text more closely than they did. The only troublesome problem with which Bible scholars of all times wrestled was the fact that neither Eve nor Adam dropped dead the minute they took a bite of the forbidden fruit. Had not God said that "on the day you eat from it you shall surely die"?[6] We do not know how long Eve lived after this event, but the Bible states that Adam died at the age of 930 (5:5). Cassuto[7] summarizes several of the proposed solutions, invalidating each in turn: "on the day" was only intended by God as an exaggerated threat; that God had compassion upon Adam and Eve and did not carry out the literal meaning of His sentence; that they will lose their immortality immediately. However, Cassuto's own offering neither solves the problem nor does it add any deeper understanding of the text. E. A. Speiser imposes his own solution upon the text by simply translating: "For the moment you eat of it, you shall be doomed to death." A far more imaginative and instructive suggestion was offered by the rabbis in the Midrash:[8] By the word "day" God was referring to a day in His time-frame, namely one thousand years,[9] which was to have been Adam's life-span (in the view of the author of this midrash); and Adam voluntarily gave up

5 *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 10, p. 776 ff.

6 2:17 We shall discuss this key statement at greater length further on.

7 M.D. Cassutto *From Adam To Noah* (Hebrew) Jerusalem 1953, p. 51.

8 Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* Vol. I, p. 82.

9 Psalm 90:40.

seventy years of his life to King David. Hence, Adam died at age nine hundred and thirty.

Modern scholars have also debated the meaning of "The tree of knowledge of good and evil." Most of the ancients assumed that the Hebrew text was to be taken literally, but modern scholars have offered a variety of interpretations which Gordis[10] summarizes in his definitive study of this phrase. Gordis argues most persuasively that "the tree of knowledge represents sexual consciousness."[11] However, Gordis maintains the traditional interpretation of the Garden of Eden story insisting that "the basic theme of the Paradise narrative" is "the concept of man's sin."[12]

II.

Setting aside all preconceived views and interpretations of this keystone myth of Western civilization, let us examine the text more thoroughly.

The thoughtful Hebrew reader will notice that the word *adam* is consistently used as a common noun, almost always with the prefixed definite article: *ha-adam*. Only after they had eaten from the forbidden fruit and were expelled from the Garden does the woman become a person with a name, Eve, and the *adam* becomes Adam.

Ha-adam is everywhere translated as "The Man."[13] To be sure, elsewhere in the Bible the common use of *adam* denotes the human species in its present state of evolution as *homo sapiens*. But does that mean that the text here is consistent with this usage? As will be demonstrated, there are ample indications in the careful telling of the Garden of Eden story that a different view of what the *adam* was is intended.

Why are we not told how old God made the *adam* when He created him? Was

10 The Knowledge of Good and Evil in The Old Testament and The Dead Sea Scrolls in Robert Gordis, *Poets, Prophets and Sages,* pp. 198 ff. For additional bibliography see J.B. Russell *The Devil,* Cornell U. Press, 1977, p. 182, Note 6.

11 *ibid* p. 203.

12 *ibid,* p. 209, note 10, at the end.

13 Speiser, op. cit. p. 14 translates into 2:7 the phrase *et ha-adam* simply by "man", noting the MT *adam*. He also suggests that a better translation for *adam* would be "earthling" implying the etymological derivative of *adam*.

he like a new-born babe? From the text we derive the impression that physically he was a mature being, and so was "the woman." The Midrash pinpoints the age of the *adam* as twenty.[14] For the traditional approach the age of the *adam* is not relevant to the events in the Garden. Yet, as will be shown here, the failure to indicate the age must have been deliberate.

On the matter of the intellectual maturity of the *adam* scholars disagree. Cassuto[15] and others claim that prior to eating the prohibited fruit the *adam* was like "an innocent babe" who had no knowledge whatever. If so, would a just God hold an innocent, unknowing child responsible for disobeying a command he could not understand? The Jewish tradition[16] on the other hand, and many modern scholars assume that *adam* was "a paragon of perfection, endowed with transcendental wisdom, strength and beauty."[17] One could justly ask whether a man with such qualities would indeed risk his life to obtain "knowledge" which he already possesses, or would disobey a direct order from his Creator beeause he is offered a tempting piece of fruit by his wife. With nothing to gain and everything to lose even a man with a lesser degree of wisdom would surely resist this rather insignificant temptation. So how does a man with moral perfection disobey God? One would assume that, unlike Cassuto's "innocent babe," Gordis's "paragon of perfection" would already possess "sexual consciousness"[18] which, according to him, is what one acquires from "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Why, then, did the *adam* need it or want it? One could argue that the *adam* did not know what the tree had to offer, and his curiosity was aroused beyond control by God's strange warning. But would a man of even ordinary intelligence risk so much just to satisfy his curiosity?

Why were the *adam* and "his woman" (2:25) not ashamed in their nakedness prior to their sin, but apparently were ashamed immediately thereafter (3:7)? If one says that the phrase *v'ishto* (2:25) should be translated "and his wife," and, of course, husband and wife can be naked in each other's presence, then, with no one around (except the animals) why did they cover themselves? The fact is that

14 Ber. Rab. (English) Soneino Press, 1939, Ch. 14, par. 7.

15 Cassuto, op. eit. p. 82.

16 Ber. Rab., Ch. 11, par. 2; so also Philo and Maimonides.

17 Gordis, op. cit. p. 201, notes 16 and 17 for further references.

18 Gordis, op. cit. p. 203.

3:7 specifically states that only after their sin did they realize that they were naked. Can we accept the notion that a man with "transcendental wisdom" does not know that he is naked, nor understands the concept of nakedness?

Another question: Why does the text involve the serpent? Could not Eve have given herself the same assurance that the sly serpent gave her, namely, that nothing would really happen if she ate the fruit which looked so enticing? Modern Bible scholars tell us that the serpent's presence in the biblical account of this myth is a carryover from related Semitic counterparts.[19] As the Hebraic monotheistic theology caused basic changes in its transcription of the Semitic creation myth, it could have done the same here and eliminated the intermediary altogether, placing the onus completely on Eve.[20] Indeed, unlike most ancient myths and legends, the Bible carefully separates the animal kingdom from the human. Nowhere in the Bible except here and in the story of Balaam and his mule[21] does man communicate directly with an animal. But there is an essential and telling difference between these two instances. In the latter case the text is very careful to point out that the conversation between Balaam and the mule he was riding did not happen naturally. It required a special act of God to achieve this.[22] In the Garden of Eden no such intervention by God takes place. The text makes it appear that the conversation between Eve and the serpent was a natural thing. No one is surprised.[23]

One might also ask at this point why did not the serpent himself eat of the delectable fruit that would have made him *like God knowing good and evil* (3:5)? The answer to this question is a piece of this jigsaw puzzle which will shortly be put together to form a new picture of this entire story.

The traditional interpretation of the events in the Garden of Eden as being the first and fateful episode in the history of the human race is based upon the notion

19 Gordis, op. cit. For a more eomplete outline of the Semitic creation myths see Adrien Janis Bledstein: "Thc Gcnesis of Humans: The Garden of Eden Revisited," *Judaism*, Spring 1977.

20 On the ctymology of the name *Havvah* (Eve), see Cassuto, op. cit. p. 114.

21 Numbers 22:28 ff.

22 *ibid*, 22:28.

23 The Rabbis also seem to accept this as natural, while they saw the Balaam incident as an intrusion into the order of nature. In their reluctanee to aseribe the status of a divine miracle to this incident they declared that the mule's ability to speak only at that moment was created by God in the final moments of the process of creation. Pirke Avot 5:9.

that "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was planted in the Garden by God to test man.[24] If this is so, why does the text conceal this fact from us? Would it not have been more instructive for man to know that God intended the tree to test man's resistance to temptation?The Bible specifically tells us in advance that God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was only a test (22:1). Why with Abraham and not with Adam?

One final question. If the consequence of this sin was to be death, why was the Tree of Life not included in the prohibition? One could infer from the reference in the text to the two trees that they were close together (2:9). It might be argued that Adam was unaware of the special nature of the Tree of Life. Yet he might already have eaten from it randomly. In fact, this was the reason for his expulsion from the Garden (3:22). Another answer to this question proposes that the Tree of Life confers immortality only if one eats from it continuously (like a one-a-day vitamin). This is patently illogical if not absurd. Aside from the fact that whatever Semitic mythology might say about similar trees, the Bible does not qualify it in any way. On the contrary, the wording of the story of the expulsion implies that a single bite might be sufficient to invest the eater with immortality.

III.

Let us now endeavor to put together the pieces of the jigsaw which will answer all of these questions. The questions that have been posed above demolish the universal interpretation of this myth. We must perforce look for another interpretation, however strange and radical it might appear.

From the discussion above it is clear that from the point of view of the text the *adam* was neither an "innocent babe" nor a mature human being with "transcendental wisdom." What was he then?

This suggests – together with all the questions posed above – that the *adam* was essentially an animal, but with one vital difference, namely, that of all the

24 To be sure, traditional theology would have it that through His omniscience God knew in advance what Adam would do, as He knows in advance everything that will happen in the Universe. What may seem to be a charade for God becomes a terrifying and agonizing experience for man. For the view of Christian theology and Satan's rôle in Adam's "fall" see J. B. Russell, op. cit. Ch. 6.

animals in the Garden, he alone has the potential of becoming a *homo sapiens*. And he does that by eating the fruit of *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

Notice, the *adam* is at home among the other animals of the Garden.[25] He is naturally naked even as they are, and equally unaware of that fact or of its implications. The text introduces the serpent for two reasons: (a) to stress further the animal nature of the *adam* ("the woman" in this case) by showing "the woman" holding what appears to be a natural conversation with the serpent and (b) in order to explain, later in the story, the uniqueness of the serpent, that unlike all other animals who walk on all fours, it slithers along the ground.[26] The serpent does not eat of the tree because that will not change his nature. For that reason the tree is not forbidden to him nor to the other animals. He cannot become "like God knowing good and evil." His eyes will not be opened to see his nakedness. This can only happen to the *adam* (and to "the woman").

Did the second century sage, Rabbi Judah, have this in mind when he drew the following inference from the Hebrew phrase, *nefesh hayyah* (2:7): God gave the *adam* a tail like an animal, but changed His mind and removed it for the sake of Adam's dignity.[27]

Isaac Koler[28] in presenting a new interpretation of the celebrated crux in 1:26 (*let us make man in our image after our likeness*) contends that had the text intended to convey the idea that the *adam* was a creature radically and totally different from the animal kingdom, it surely would have accorded this supreme act of creation a separate day and not put him together with the animals on the sixth day. Adducing additional arguments Koler concludes that the *adam* was akin to the animals.

Thus, the *adam* was an animal, albeit a superior one, a hominid, for he alone can become *homo sapiens*. That is, he alone has the potential of attaining the awareness of self. The capacity to see the self apart from the environment is the

25 On the *adam* giving names to the animals (2:20) we will comment further in this essay.

26 The rabbis claim that prior to this incident the serpent was also a quadruped.

27 Ber. Rab. Sec. 14, par. 12.

28 *Bet Mikra* (Hebrew), publication of the Israel Society for Biblical Research, Jerusalem, 5743 Nisan–Sivan, pp. 233 ff.

hallmark of the human, of *homo sapiens.*[29]

There are three fundamental manifestations of self-awareness in man which set him apart from the lower species: a) consciousness of time;[30] b) consciousness of his own sexuality and its consequences; c) consciousness of death and of his own possible death. It should be noted here that the young child is animal-like to the extent that not until it has reached certain degrees of maturity does it begin to manifest each of these aspects of the human.[31] Ultimately, civilization is possible only because of man's response to his consciousness of these three basic factors in his life. "The most terrible fact that the evolution of the large brain allowed us to learn is *the fact of our personal mortality.* Think of how much the architecture of human culture and cultural traditions, how much of human religion, for example, arises from and attempts to deal with that terrible fact which we have come to learn as a result of the complex structure of our brain."[32]

IV.

It is thus that the Garden of Eden story must be read rather than in its traditional interpretation. Only this approach gives coherence and consistency to the story and resolves the many problems which the text poses. What we have here, then, is not an account of man's "fall", of sin and eternal punishment, but rather a statement by the ancient monotheistic Hebrew tradition of how man acquired those basic characteristics that distinguish him from other living creatures; and it tells this story in its own unique and remarkable fashion.

29 See for example, Donald R. Griffin: *The Question of Animal Awareness,* Rockefeller University Press, New York 1976. Anthropologists differ as to whether self-awareness is a result of the evolutionary development of the cortex, or represents a quantum jump, a discontinuity in the evolutionary proeess. Certain primates seem to possess lower aspects of self-awareness.

30 B. Avodah Zarah 8a – Adam is seen here as having been created without an awareness of time.

31 Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Philogeny,* Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge 1977.See also Maria H. Nagy, "The Child's View of Death" in *The Meaning of Death,* Herman Feifel ed., McGraw Hill, N.Y. 1959. According to Nagy the child does not begin to understand death until about the age of nine. See also Alan Devoe; *This fascinating Animal World,* McGraw Hill, N.Y. p. 109 f.

32 Stephen Jay Gould, "Breaking Tradition With Darwin," *New York Times Magazine Section,* November 20, 1983.

The awareness of sexuality comes to the *adam* and the *ishah* by eating the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The moment they eat it their eyes are opened and they "know" that they are naked (3:7)[33] There can be no other intent on the part of the text than to state in these words that the *adam* and the *ishah* suddenly become aware of the special function of certain parts of their bodies, which they immediately covered.

A very fine but basic point is made by the text which must not be overlooked, namely, that the *ishah* does not cover herself, having eaten first. Her eyes are opened only after they had both eaten. The text introduces a word which might appear redundant, *imah* – "with her" – but which emphasizes the thought that only in each other's presence could they appreciate their sexuality.[34]

As Gordis has so effectively demonstrated, the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" represents sexual consciousness. But the definition of this tree goes beyond that: it is also intimately connected with the concept of death.[35] "On the day you eat from it you shall surely die." We have already shown above that all the suggestions by ancient and modern scholars to resolve the problem this text raises are inadequate. It is the view of this writer that a better translation of this language (and perhaps the only interpretation the text had intended) should be: "on the day you eat from it you will surely become *aware of death."* Certainly, it is this translation that conforms to the hypothesis presented here.

Accepting this new approach we are left with the same question that troubled us when it was posited that the *adam* was an "innocent babe" or "a paragon of perfection." For here, too, how could God issue a command involving the concepts of sex and of death to a hominid? The answer lies in a re-evaluation of the first half of 2:16.

33 They "knew" – *vayed'u* – is the same root used immediately after the events in the Garden to introduce the first sexual act of Adam and Eve as human beings (4:1). According to Ber. Rab. sec. 19, par. 3 Adam and Eve had sexual relations prior to their eating of the fruit of the tree. If it is so, they acted only as animals do when they cohabit, without any consciousness of the meaning of this activity.

34 In Judaism life is *tov,* good, and death is *ra,* evil. Viz. Deut. 30:15. As Gordis has abundantly shown in a number of his writings proper sex is a positive value in Judaism. It is not beyond credibility that in the phrase "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil" the word "good" implies sexuality and the word "evil" implies death or mortality.

35 Gen. 12:20, 28:6; Is. 45:11; Jer. 39:11; Job 36:32; Esther 4:5; I Chr. 22:12; II Chr. 19:9.

All versions translate this passage as follows: *And the Lord God commanded the man saying...* But, if this were so the Hebrew text should read *va'ytzav... et ha-adam* and not *al ha-adam*. Why does the text create a problem when it could have simply used the proper accusative, *et*? To be sure, there are a number of instances in the Bible where *et* and *al* appear to be used interchangeably. But that does not mean that it is so in this instance. Taken as it is, *va'ytzav...al* is not a direct address; it is a pronouncement concerning something or someone. In addition to this usage of *al* in 2:16 there are eight other passages in the Bible with this usage.[36] In all of these instances *al* is used as a statement of indirect address. It should also be noted that in 2:16 the *va'ytzav...al* concludes with the infinitive absolute: *akhol tokhel,* and the next verse, which continues God's pronouncement, concludes with another infinitive absolute: *mot tamut*. The first infinitive absolute is translated by both Speiser and the old JPS as "you may eat freely," but the *mot tamut* reads "you will surely die." The new JPS and Speiser render the same phrase by "you shall be doomed to death." If *va'ytzav al* is a command, then how does *akhol tokhel* mean "you *may* eat freely?" Furthermore, how can you assume different connotations for two infinitive absolutes used together in one thought structure?

Going a step further, the word *ki* in 2:17 is here given its common meaning "for", implying cause. Hence, the error that tradition fell into assuming that death would result from the eating of the fruit. However, an equally common usage of *ki* is to introduce a situation or condition.[37] In such cases it is rendered as "if" or "when".

This analysis of 2:16, 17, leads us to the conclusion that these verses involve neither command nor punishment but a statement concerning the consequences that would ensue should the *adam* perform a certain act. The implication of these verses is, therefore, quite clear: the *adam* may eat from all the fruit of the Garden, like all the animals, and will remain like them unless he eats from tree of the knowledge of good and evil in which case he will become aware of death (and of sexuality). That is how the *adam* becomes man.

There is no question here of violating God's commandment or of succumbing to temptation. The *ishah* may have permitted herself to be persuaded by the serpent to eat the fruit, but the *adam* eats it without question, without pause for thought. The *adam* must eat the fruit otherwise he does not become Adam.

36 For example, Deut. 19:1 ff.

37 Gordis, op. cit. p. 200.

V.

This thesis may be challenged by several questions from the text itself. How could a non-intelligent hominid give names to all the other living creatures as indicated in 2:19, 20?[37] What knowledge did a hominid have in order to be able "to till it (the Garden) and to guard it"?[38] And what about the punishments meted out to the three actors in this drama, the serpent, the *ishah* and the *adam* (3:14–19)? And what shall be done with 1:27 and 5:1?

The solution to these problems and the validity of this entire interpretation of the Garden of Eden story become apparent when they are seen within the larger context of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. If the Bible is a history of Israel, then these chapters are totally irrelevant to that history, except insofar as they portray Israel's God as the creator of all and His insistence upon an ethical and moral humanity.[39] They are not even background history (except for 11:26–32 which introduces Abraham and his family), as is the rest of Genesis.

When examined carefully one finds that these eleven chapters constitute in essence an aetiology of the world and of human civilization. The compilers of these chapters put together a collection of traditions from their own ethnic and cultural background as well as from the Semitic world generally in order to provide answers to many basic questions. Such a compilation could well serve as a textbook for students to teach them how things came to be what they are.

First and foremost, of course, was the necessity of answering the inevitable question of who created the world and how was it done, an answer that would derive from the Hebraic monotheistic viewpoint. How was man created and in what form? (There were two answers to this question, and both were included in this "textbook"). How did man come to be so different from all other living species? Why does man have to toil for his sustenance while the animals find

38 The new JPS and Speiser translate *l'shamrah* – "to tend it." The old JPS reads for this "to keep." See also Cassuto, op. cit. p. 80 for his attempt to resolve the question raised by the point that the Garden needed no tending.

39 See Rashi's comment on 1:1 quoting R. Yitzhak that the Torah might well have begun with Exodus 12:1, this being the first commandment given by God to Israel as a people.

theirs everywhere? Why does a woman experience so much pain in childbirth while the animals give birth without any evidence of suffering? How did the animals get their names? Why is the snake not a quadruped like other animals? How did the human family become separated into different nations with different languages? When did prayer begin? Who was the first musician, the first worker with metals? What happened long ago in the early generations of man? How long did people live in those days?

To be sure, nothing in the Bible – and certainly not in these eleven chapters – is cut-and-dried. There is always much more than meets the reader's eye. The Bible may tell a simple story but it does it with consummate artistry that conceals in its depths the ultimate truths of the human condition.

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TEHILLIM: THE BOOK OF PSALMS

BY HAIM GEVARYAHU

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PSALMS, WRITTEN WHEN AND BY WHOM

Since we have almost no authentic historical sources, scholars have proposed many contradictory theories from Duhm who thought that not even one Psalm was written during the time of the first Temple to Kaufmann and Engell who decided that except for 137 all Psalms derive from the First Commonwealth.[1]

The מגלת ספר — *megilat sefer*[2] of Psalm 40:8, and the *mikhtam* of other Psalms, pose three mysteries:

The names of the poets.

The time when written.

The time when collected as a group and when canonized.

These three mysteries may never have solutions.

The fact is that all the Psalms were written by poets who wanted to remain anonymous. Poets, prophets, sages in biblical times in Israel as well as in Akkadian, Aramaic, Phoenician, and Assyrian cultures were so modest that they omitted their names. For example, the poems of Homer were anonymous. All that is known about him – except for his name preserved in oral tradition – is legendary, without historical foundation. Likewise the Babylonian, Assyrian, Phoenician literature remained anonymous throughout all their history.[3]

1 A good summary of the history of Psalm study is N.M. Sarna in the prolegomenon to the new edition of M. Buttenwieser, *The Psalms,* KTAV, 1969.

2 I translate מגלת ספר as a leather scroll. Others prefer to translate it as papyrus scroll.

3 Cf. Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," *JCS* t6 (1962), pp. 59ff.

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But in Hebrew and Greek literature there occurred a great change in the sixth and fifth centuries when oral traditions about the names of the prophets began to be collected. The result of their effort is seen in the headings of the prophetic and wisdom literature.[4]

It seems that the first collections of the psalmic literature started in a much earlier period than the collection of the prophetic and wisdom literature. In the headings of prophetic and wisdom books there seems to be an interest in authorship while in the Psalms there is very little. The collection of the Psalms was made in an earlier period when the concept of authorship was still non-existent or at least not well developed.

Although in the psalmic headings a number of persons are mentioned that had some relationship to the preservation of the psalmic literature, they were originally not understood as authors. In the Masoretic version twelve persons are mentioned, including David, Asaph, Sons of Korah, Moses the man of the Lord, Solomon, Heman the Ezrahite, Etan the Ezrahite, and two others, Mahlot and Jeduthun which may be either persons or names of instruments or melodies. In addition, in the LXX, prophets are mentioned in connection with a few Psalms. They are Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Haggai and Zachariah. For example, Psalm 64 (65 according to MT) has this heading: *To the end, a Psalm of David, a hymn of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.* Also in 147 (MT 148) it says: *Psalm of David, Haggai and Zechariah.* There is also one Psalm attributed to Jonadab the head of the Rehabite clan (cf. LXX Ps. 71). At the same time the Syriac (Peshitta) relates many Psalms to various prophets and even to other personalities such as Judah Maccabeus. But the LXX preserves an authentic tradition based on an old Hebrew *vorlage.*

The question arises: what was the character and the function of these persons mentioned in the Hebrew and Greek versions regarding the history of the transmission of the psalmic literature?

I tried by comparative study of Akkadian colophons to examine the character of the persons mentioned in connection with literary texts. The persons mentioned in Akkadian colophons appear as follows:

4 Cf. my recent study on titles and superscriptions which I identify as colophons in *Vetus Testamentum supplementum,* 26 (1975), papers of the 8th International Congress of Old Testament Study in Edinburgh, 1974.

a. In most of the colophons the name of the copyist-scribe is mentioned together with his genealogy.

b. Less often but still frequently the name of the owner of the tablet is given together with the copyist's name.

c. At times even the name of the proof reader is mentioned.

Below are two colophons from the Assyrian period on hymnic texts. The first is colophon No. 44 from the corpus of Babylonian and Assyrian colophons edited by Herman Hunger.[5]

> Song of incantation to Nininsina. It has 59 lines. Original from Nippur and Babylon. Written according to the wording of an inscribed tablet of Iquisa-Ninkarrak, son of Ninurta-bāni. Written by Bēl-aha-iddina, junior scribe, son of Ninurta-uballissu, royal scribe. Checked by Marduk-balāssu-ēres. By Assur, do not erase my written name! (Month...), 19th day, eponym of Assur-aha-iddina.

This colophon tells us:

That the text was copied from a *vorlage* of a tablet owned by a person named Iquisa-Ninkarrak.

The text was copied by a young scribe with the name Bēl-aha-iddina.

The name of the proof reader was Marduk-balāssu-ēres.

It is interesting that the name of the poet-author was never given. The owner here was a respected private person.

In our second colophon we have the same and additional interesting phenomena. This is No. 87 in the Hunger collection.

> Incantation: "the King went out" (catch-line).
> Written, collated and... according to its original.
> Copy of an old wooden writing board, property of Anu and Antu.
> Tablet of Anu-aha-usabsi, son of Kidin-Ani, descendant of Ekur-zakir, conjurer of Anu and Antu, sesgallu-priest at the rēs-sanctuary, astrologer, from Uruk. Written by his son Anu-balāssuiqbi. For his learning, for long duration of his days, for his life and for establishing of his position he has written it and deposited it in Uruk in the rēs-sanctuary, the temple of his lords. He who worships Anu and Antu must not steal it!

5 Dr. Hunger, my friend, the founder of Akkadian colophon study, was so kind as to translate these colophons for this study.

Uruk, month..., day..., 61st year, Antiochos being king of all lands.

We see from such a study, that in many colophons the owner is the temple or the temple library of the king, especially in the case of Assurbanipal who had the greatest library in biblical times.

In many tablets the colophonist tells that it was copied from very old wood tablets or copied from texts compiled by old ummanu (sages).

Now let us turn to the Book of Psalms.

In the heading of Psalm 88 no less than eight items of information are offered: *A song. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. To the choirmaster: according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.* In this detailed heading we cannot identify positively the name of the copyist-scribe or that of the proof reader. It could be that such is involved, but we can not be sure. We must take into consideration that there are a few differences between the biblical and the Akkadian system of colophons.

The Babylonian tablet was preserved in its original form together with the name of the copyist, the owner, and the proof reader.

On the other hand, the biblical literature, including Psalm 88, was transmitted from generation to generation by many scribes and copyists without saving the dates and names of the chain of transmitters. We have only the colophon which kept these names. That is at the end of the Greek additions to the Book of Esther.[6]

> In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus — who said he was a priest — and Levitas, and Ptolemy his son deposited the preceding Letter of Purim, which they said really exists and had been translated by Lysimaehus (son of) Ptolemy, (a member) of the Jerusalem community.

It is also impossible to conceive of the Sons of Korah and the name of Heman the Ezrahite as authors. This is according to the ancient practice of not giving the names of authors. Therefore, we can identify them as one-time owners, or as the very early owners of this text. The colophonist wanted to tell us that it was once in the possession of well known, highly respected persons, and therefore these Psalms enjoy the "authority of antiquity.[7]

6 Translated by Bickerman, *JBL,* 44, p. 362.

7 I borrow this term from William Hallo who uses it in his study of Akkadian literature.

We can also conclude that the term le-David did not intend to identify him as the author-creator of the poems so designated, but only to describe some Davidic relationship to the Psalm. These relationships could have many forms: by David, for David, to David, in honor of David, in the style of David, in royal style.

In this way we can understand the colophons of the LXX to Psalms 64 and 147 and others where prophets are mentioned. Of course there cannot be three authors of one Psalm; David, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; or David, Haggai, and Zechariah. It seems to me that the colophonist tells us that these are important Psalms based on the authority of antiquity because they were copied from a *vorlage* that was owned at times by David and the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah.

This is also the meaning of the heading of Psalm 90: תפלה למשה איש האלהים *A prayer of Moses the man of God,* and of Habakkuk 3: תפלה לחבקוק הנביא *A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet.*

The thrust of such remarks is that all of these men are to be seen as ancient owners, not necessarily authors. This interpretation of le- David does not necessarily exclude the possibility that King David composed a few Psalms. Old traditions verify David as a gifted poet. I only wish to state that the term le-David originally did not have the meaning "written by David." It rather corresponds to the Ugaritic usage as in *lb'l* or *lkrt* translated by Dietrich and Loretz, *gehörig* —belonging.

Later, in the time of the Second Commonwealth the term le-David was understood as "by David" and 73 Psalms were attributed to David as author by the Masoretic tradition and many more by the LXX and other versions. The high point in this "Davidation" of the psalmic literature is given by the apocryphal Psalm in the Dead Sea Psalm Scroll.[8] "And David the son of Jesse was wise and a light like the light of the sun and a scribe... and he wrote 3600 Psalms."

HOW THEY ENTERED THE CANON

Now let us consider the manner of the collection of these inscriptions and the persons who guarded, collected, copied, and transmitted the Psalms for future generations.

8 As translated by Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalm Scroll,* 1967.

Historically there are times when men are aroused to collect the documents of their cultural heritage.

We must assume that small units of Psalms were already collected in the period of the First Commonwealth. It seems that the process of adding small collections to larger ones and the larger ones to a book of Psalms took place before the Maccabean period. But we must admit that the whole story of this process will never be told. It will remain an unsolved mystery.

We may wonder that only four sources were preserved which provide some insight into the history of the collection and the canonization of the Book of Psalms.

The first bit of information is preserved in the Second Book of the Maccabees 2:13: "...it is also told in the records and in Nehemiah's memoirs how he collected the books about the Kings, the writings of the prophets and the writings of David..."

The second important source is the doxologies at the end of each of the first four of the five books of Psalms, and especially the concluding colophonic remark at the end of the second book. Cf. Ps. 72:19 כלו תפלות דוד בן־ישי *The prayers of David son of Jesse are finished.* The practice in antiquity and today has been to mark the end of a text in a similar way. Such a remark is equivalent to "the end" and was especially necessary in antiquity when texts were written on clay or on wood tablets. The most common Akkadian term is *qati* meaning the end of the text or *ul qati* meaning it is not the end (that is, there is more to come on a subsequent tablet). For example, here is colophon No. 15 again from the Hunger collection:

> The End. Third tablet (of the series beginning) "When the gods were man." It has 390 lines. Total 1245 lines for all three tablets. Written by Ku-Aya, junior scribe. Month Ayyaru, (...th day), 12th year of king Ammisadūqa.

It should also be noted that ancient Egyptian copyists used to make the following concluding remark: "This has come to its end, from its beginning to its end like that which was found in writing."

The most important source for the history of collection and canonization is the Greek colophon in the heading of the apocalyptic Psalm 151. The text reads as follows: *houtos ho psalmos idiografos eis Dauid kai eksothen tou arithmóu.* "This is a genuine Psalm of David, although supernumerary (outside the 150)." That means there already existed the fixed number of Psalms. But the translator found another Psalm with a claim to the "authority of antiquity."

A fantastic number of 3600 poems composed by David is mentioned in an apocalyptic Qumran Psalm in which is also said: *wyktb dwd...thlym,* "and David wrote... tehilim." Here we have the oldest recorded Hebrew name of the psalmic book.

In the second part of the Second Temple period Psalms are well known, often quoted as a source of inspired holy writings. R.C. Leonard states correctly: "The canonical status of the Psalter is more firmly established than that of any other book of the Hagiographa."[9] This high status of the Psalms is reflected in Jewish and Christian sources (cf. Lukas 24:44). It may be noted that very often the term *'sefer'* was applied to the Book of Tehillim.[10]

We have taken into account the fact that in the Qumran Psalm Scroll the order of the Psalms is different from the Masoretic and other ancient versions. We may accept the supposition of Skehan that the order of Qumran Psalms was made for liturgical purposes while the traditional order was already established.[11]

I have presented the principal existing sources for the history of the completion of the Book of Psalms. This would indicate that the following theories may be sheer speculation: 1) that the Book of Psalms was canonized together with the "writings" at the Jamnia Synod at the end of the first century C.E., and 2) the theory of S. Zeitlin that they were canonized in the enclave of Hananiah ben Hezekiah a few years before the destruction of the second Temple. Both of these suggested dates are not supported by the evidence as shown by the recently published book of S. Leiman, *The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence for the Canonization of Hebrew Scripture.*[12] Consequently it is worthwhile to respond to the call of James Sanders[13] to further the study of canon criticism in the light of the discovery of the Qumran Psalm Scroll.

9 Leonard, *Origin of Canonicity of the Old Testament,* dissertation at Boston University, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1972.

10 Sources are quoted in S. Leiman, *The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence for the Canonization of Hebrew Scripture.*

11 Skehan, *A Liturgic Complex in 11QPSa",* CBQ, 1973, pp. 175–205.

12 Leiman, op. cit.

13 Sanders, *Torah and Canon,* Fortress Press, 1972. Also "The Qumran Psalms Scroll (11-QPSa) Renewed", *On Language, Culture, and Religion:* in Honor of Eugene A. Nida, 1974.

However, we must remember the fact that the modesty of the ancient scribes who arranged the book kept them from telling about themselves and the method of their work. Therefore, the new effort may perhaps give us some new insight, but we will be unable to tell the whole story. What the ancient scribes withheld even the most brilliant scholar may not be able to discover.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I must admit that the most we have been able to do was to catch a glimpse of the divine drama of the origin, growth, and preservation of the psalmic literature.

We may surmise that probably hundreds or thousands of poems like that of *megillat sefer* in Psalm 40 were written but did not survive. Only a few and probably the best were preserved and even the best ones needed luck. We may cite a talmudic observation that even a *sefer torah* in the ark needs *mazal* in order to be read. B. Childs may be right in feeling that the formation of the titles stemmed from a pietist circle of Jews whose interest was particularly focused on the nurture of the spiritual life.[14] Deuteronomy 20:19 compared the tree of the field to a man, and so is a book like man, having a life story.

We are indebted to gener itions of scribes, levites, priests, *'anawim*, and pietists who saved and guarded the Psalms for us until they were included in the "mainstream" of the national literature.

14 B. Childs, *JSS* 16 (1971) p. 149.

THE ART OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE – II

BY PINCHAS DORON

In the last issue of Dor Le Dor (Vol. XVII, No. 1), Professor Doron presented some of the characteristics of biblical narration, such as the 'Minimum Principle,' 'Simplicity of Style,' 'Stories Interconnected.' In this issue he presents some of the reasons for the excellence of biblical narration.

Apart from the simplicity of style and narrative in the biblical story we also find a simplicity of religious-ethical concepts of the Bible. When Balaam came to praise the Jewish People, the greatest of his praises is: *For there is no enchantment among Jacob, nor divination in Israel* (Num. 23:23). In those days all peoples were preoccupied with all kinds of magic. This is attested to by the many thousands of Akkadian and Ugaritic tablets containing magical texts discovered by archaeologists. Jewish monotheism rid mankind of the very complicated system of multitude of gods and the "science" of magic for explaining the world. Instead monotheism posited one God, and prophecy as an agency of the one God. In this manner monotheistic religion succeeded in explaining the world, nature and man in a much simpler and clearer way than the complicated explanations of magic and idolatry.

This intellectual progress achieved by the Jewish religion is another reason for the superiority of biblical narratives over those of other nations. Other peoples' legends, such as Babylonian, Hindu or Greek, can be beautiful, and at times even profound. But they are so caught up in mythological matters and superstitions that it is very hard to understand them in their originals. Even Homer's works are not understood without extensive commentaries. The biblical story, on the other hand, does not hover in the world of fantasy and magic, but draws life realistically. The vast majority of biblical narratives are within the realm of nature. Even miraculous events like the splitting of the Red Sea and bringing down manna

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from heaven are told in such realistic terms and with such simplicity that some scholars have attempted to explain them as natural phenomena.[1]

The unity of God gives all the stories in the Bible a common framework and a fixed criterion. The various characters in each story act and are judged according to whether they obey or disobey God. God's unity is also the reason why almost the entire Bible, with the exception of a very few books, is one long story, – God being one of the two major actors in this long story. In sum we may say: the simplicity and clarity of the *weltanschauung* of the biblical narrative is one of its basic characteristics.

CLASSLESSNESS

Another trait that gives the biblical narrative a general-humanistic character is, what one might call, its "classlessness," i.e. it is not created by, nor does it address itself to any one special class in society. True, the general audience of a biblical story would be the farmers and shepherds of Israel and other workers. But these are working people, who are the vast majority of the population of *any* country in the world.

The great classics wherein other nations of antiquity recorded their histories came from the circles of nobles, princes and royal courts.[2] The life-line of such circles was warfare for the sake of warfare as a sport. The free time between one war and another was spent in war games or banqueting. Such preoccupation and the life style connected with it, are limited to a very small circle of people. Hence such works could never become "the book of the people" as did the Bible.[3] Biblical narratives were recorded for the general population. They are *above* any social classes which gives them their general human character.

True, we find many accounts of wars in the Former Prophets (Joshua—Kings), but those wars were not for the sake of pleasure in warfare, but unavoidable or necessary for the welfare of an entire people. In Israel, too, there were royal courts and circles of nobles who pursued luxuries, but the prophets rebuked them for these very pursuits and predicted their downfall.[4] However, kingship in Israel

1 Cf. for example the works of Immanuel Velikovsky *Ages in Chaos* and *Worlds in Collision*.
2 See above under 4.
3 Cf. *Omanut ha-Sipur* p. 35.
4 E.g. Amos 6:1–7.

was always of a "popular" nature.[5] Even after being anointed as king, Saul went back to farming; David was a shepherd when anointed; Rechab and Baanah intending to kill Ish-boshet, had easy access to his very bedroom;[6] a simple woman could put her case before the king of Israel without any introduction or audience.[7] Two harlots could have their case judged directly by the king.

CALMNESS AND RESERVE

Another characteristic of biblical narratives is calmness and great reserve in telling their stories. Our forefathers had undoubtedly as strong desires and inclinations as we do. In the prophets, in Psalms,[8] in the blessings of Jacob and Moses and in the Song of Moses,[9] one finds strong expressions of various emotions such as: love, revenge, hatred, mourning, faith and despair. Yet they are expressed in calm terms. The events related can arouse powerful emotions, but the form in which they are related is calm and reserved.

A good example of the above tendency is to compare "The Binding of Isaac" (Gen. 22) to later imitations and elaborations of this theme. "The Binding of Isaac" is surely a heartrending story. When one reads in Midrash Rabbah and the type of ballads called "Akedah" (Binding) of the Middle Ages, one senses to what extent of sentimental outpouring this topic can move a poet. These elements are gently hinted at by the biblical narrator: *Your son, your only one, the one you love, Isaac.* This ascending scale is there to heighten the emotions, as the rabbis perceived.[10] Twice we are told: *And both walked together* (22:6, 8). Indeed, they walked together but the father is full of anxiety, whereas the son walks innocently, knowing nothing. Again we read (verse 7): *Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt-offering?* Here the boy begins to worry. Yet all is suggested only in hints: the father's concern, his despair and complete surrender to God; the boy's innocence and later his growing anxiety – all these are inherent in the action itself, but not related explicitly.

5 I use "popular" in the sense that the king was always close and accessible to the "populace".
6 II Sam., 4:5–6.
7 Cf. II Kings, 6:26–30.
8 E.g. in Psalms 58:11; 137:7–9 and others.
9 Gen. 49; Deut. 33 and 32 respectively.
10 See Rashi on Gen. 22:2.

MODESTY

Another trait of the biblical narrative is its modesty and lack of deliberate sexual arousal. There is no intention to satisfy sexual curiosity or active sexual fantasies. This fact is all the more prominent in stories with erotic content. For example, the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7–20), is developed in the Midrash[11] into an erotic romance (on the part of Potiphar's wife only). Echoes of the Midrash can be found later in the Koran and in Islamic tradition. "Joseph and Zelicha" is the name of a number of famous romantic stories in Persian literature.[12] Also European literature has made the most of this topic. But, if we look at the biblical story we are amazed. The physical attributes of the woman are not alluded to in a single word! Joseph's handsomeness *is* mentioned, because it is an integral part of the story explaining why Potiphar's wife set her sights on him. The narrator dismisses the entire incident in a dozen verses and without *any* erotic detail whatever! A modern writer would have made at least a short novel out of this ineident, with plenty of explicit sexual detail.

Similarly, in the incidents of Lot and his two daughters, and Tamar and Judah (Gen. 19:30–38 and Gen. chapter 38), we find no erotic descriptions at all! Lot's daughters find it necessary to make their father drunk, because they believe that with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah the world has returned to chaos as during the Flood, and *there is no man in the world to come upon us, as is the way of the world* (19:31). Faced with extinction of the human race, they do not shrink from the most immoral of deeds; just like Tamar, they do not cover up their deed. The older daughter's son is called Moab, namely: "from father."[13] Both the stories, of the daughters of Lot, and of Tamar and Judah, come to teach us that a woman will obtain her natural right of motherhood at any price!

One cannot explain away sexual reticence in the biblical narrative with the theory that, on account of the divine origins of the Bible, unsuitable parts were excised from it. Firstly, there are no signs of excision. Secondly, Canticles, which contains a goodly measure of sexuality compared to the rest of the Bible was not

11 Cf. Bereshit Rabbah chapter 87; Tanchuma on Gen. 39 and Yalkut Shimoni 145–146.

12 Cf. *Omanut ha-sipur*, p. 38.

13 The younger daughter called her son Ben Ami "son of my people", thus exhibiting a greater degree of modesty, for which she was eomplimcnted by the rabbis and rewarded in the ume of Moses, as stressed by Rashi on Deut. 2:9.

excised. Goitein believes that restraint in avoiding sensual arousal as a means of spicing up a story is congruent with the psychology of biblical man, who was generally a farmer. Preoccupation with sexual relations and base language, are signs of urban culture. The Israelite farmer wanted mostly a good wife, who literally would be a "help-mate." He, of course, knew of cases in which a woman paid attention to another man; or that a man of power could bring home another man's wife if he desired her; or that in a house full of many siblings of opposite sexes there could develop sexual relations not sanctioned by society. But precisely the stories about Joseph and Potiphar's wife, David and Bath-sheba (II Sam. 11) Amnon and Tamar (II Sam. 13) show that the narrator is more interested in the social and moral ramifications of these incidents than in the actual sexual relationships, whose existence is self-evident, but does not interest him in particular.[14]

OBJECTIVITY

Another distinguishing trait of the biblical story is its lack of favoritism, its complete objectivity and justice toward both sides. There is not, generally speaking, a completely wicked or a completely righteous person. Even Ahab, who is addicted to evil, has some positive traits. Esau, too, is not the typical evil man. Just as the biblical narrator doesn't usually describe thoughts and emotions, but makes them inherent in the actions of the characters, so also does he not praise or deplore. He simply tells his story and the reader must arrive at his own conclusions.

The Bible relates, at all times, both the strengths and the weaknesses of its heroes. Abraham, who on the one hand reached the pinnacle of human faith in God during the binding of Isaac episode, asks: *How shall I know that I will inherit it?* when God promises him *I am the Lord who took you out of Ur Kasdim to give you this land to inherit it"* (Gen. 15:7–8).[15] Abraham has other human weaknesses. On the one hand he and his 318 servants fight courageously and victoriously four mighty kings of the East, (Chapter 14), yet on the other he twice delivers his wife into the hands of hostile kings, Abimelech and Pharaoh, out of

14 Cf. *Omanut ha-Sipur*, p. 40.

15 Of course the rabbis try to mitigate this apparent lack of faith. See Rashi Gen. 15:6 who explains that *How shall I know?* means: By what *merit* shall I deserve to inherit it?

fear for his own life (Gen. 12, 20). He also allows Sarah to humble Hagar (Gen. 16:6).

Other major biblical heroes, too, have human weaknesses and moral flaws in their character. Jacob cheats both Esau and Laban; David has relations with Bath-sheba and then has Uriah killed; Saul destroys an entire city of priests due to his paranoia (I Sam., 11).

However, one should consider that in emphasizing weaknesses and faults of biblical characters, their very weaknesses help us to understand their strengths; and because of these weaknesses they emerge as *real people*, not vague idealizations.

THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN COVENANTS AND THE HOLOCAUST

BY SIDNEY BREITBART

Dedicated to the memories of my brother Abraham and my grandson Michael Kaplan.

INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this paper, the complete details and manifestations of the Jewish or Christian covenants will not be discussed. The diseussion will restrict itself only to such features which illuminate the difference in the relations of the Christian covenant vis-a-vis the Jewish covenant, especially the interpretation of the Jewish covenant, as previously developed by the author in "Problem of the Theodicy,"[1] as it relates to the Holocaust.

THE JEWISH COVENANT

What is the essential way of understanding the Jewish covenant? In the traditional view it is chosenness, which establishes a fundamental relationship between God and Israel. The relationship, however, has much greater implications than the word "chosen." Rather than confer special privileges, the term "chosen" imposes extra obligations and responsibilities. This term is also subject to three differing interpretations:

1. God chose the Jews because of their merit.
2. God chose the Jews by Grace.
3. It was the Jews who chose God [and, therefore, God had no alternative but to choose them].

1 Sidney Breitbart, "Problem of the Theodicy", Summer edition of *Dor Le Dor*, Jerusalem, 1987.

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The idea of chosenness by Grace was given classical articulation by the prophets, who also maintained that it implied duty rather than privilege (Amos 3:2). On the other hand, Judah Halevi favors the merit principle. He claims that the Jewish people were endowed with a special religious faculty, first given to Adam, and then bequeathed through a line of chosen representatives to all of Israel.[2]

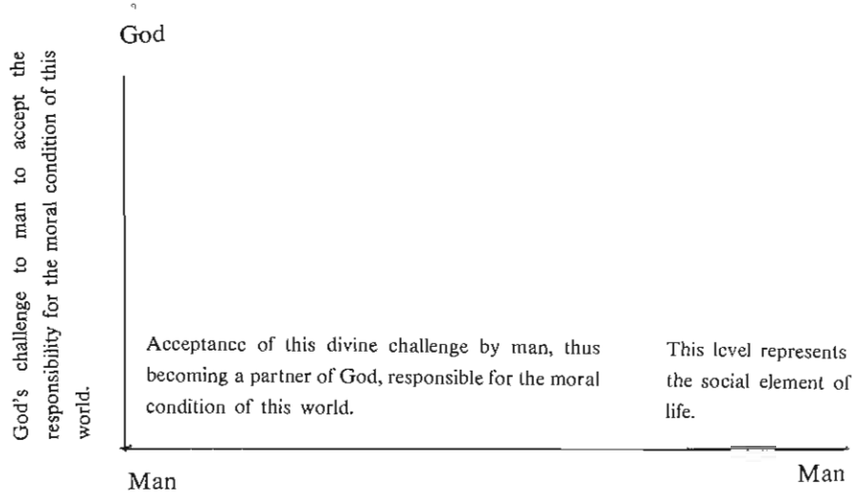
The formulation of a third, new approach to the Jewish covenant has become necessary since the Holocaust in order to overcome the problems arising out of the present and traditional understanding of the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people. I suggest that the divine-human covenant covers two different spheres of contribution and responsibility, each characteristic to the specific partner. In this view, God as the Creator endowed all human beings with free will and freedom of choice and also challenged man to accept the responsibility of existence, with particular emphasis on responsibility for the moral condition of the world which represents God's contribution to the covenant. The human task is then to complete the covenant by accepting God's challenge. This acceptance translates into responsibility to become moral agents and, indeed, partners of God. The Torah, in expressing the sacredness of duty, provides the inescapable moral obligation and by its laws acts as a guide to moral perfection, and teaches the discipline which helps prevent immoral and evil acts.

The covenant is a relational category. In the context of the Jewish tradition, the covenant delineates the relations between man and God and between man and man. As such, the covenant constitutes the very essence of religious phenomena. In Paul Ramsey's formulation, "Never imagine that you have rightly grasped a biblical idea until you have reduced it to a corollary of the idea of 'covenant'."[3] The point is that the religious view, as opposed to the philosophical view, lies not in apprehending God as He is in Himself, but in grasping the relation that exists between God and man.

The third conception of the Jewish covenant may be represented in a grid of vertical and horizontal components:

2 Isaac Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, (Philadelphia, 1940) pp. 162–163.

3 Paul Ramsey, "Elements of a Biblical Political Theory," *Journal of Religion*, Vol. XXIX, No. 5 (1949) p. 258.



The above diagram expresses God's involvement in the totality of the life of the individual (not merely his "spiritual" side), His involvement in the community (the "political") aspect of life and the *necessity for human cooperation for the fulfillment of the divine purpose in history*. Thus, man needs God, as God needs man. One serves God by serving his fellow men.

The horizontal level of relationship is the path through which Judaism is fulfilled on the vertical level. The purpose of the covenant is to establish a better world, a just and moral society which is strongly enunciated in the writings of the prophets and finds expression in rabbinic literature as well. Without the emphasis on the horizontal level of man-man relationship, the vertical component between God and man is greatly diminished. This is observed in the precept that when man acts unjustly toward another man, he must first obtain forgiveness from the injured party before God would forgive him.

In the words of Isaiah 58: 6, 7.

4 Alfred Jospe, "The Jewish Image of the Jew", in *Great Jewish Ideas* —Bnai Brith Book Series, p. 8.

5 Sidney Breitbart, "The Story of Adam & Eve: The Creation of the Moral and Spiritual Man" *The Torch*, (Fall 1962) p. 30.

6 James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, (New York, 1981), p. 45.

7 Michael Grant, *St. Paul*, Charles Scribner's Sons, (New York, 1976) p. 48.

> *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the fetters of wickedness, to undo the bands of yoke, and let the oppressed go free... Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor... to thy house, when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him.*

That is, work to establish a more just and moral society. Thus, it is up to man to make the covenant work and to realize the dream of eventual redemption. The statement from Psalms 115: *The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the children of men* conforms well to this concept of covenant and confirms it. The Jewish acceptance of the responsibility of existence, in its broadest sense, means what Judaism figuratively calls *ol Malkhut Shamayim* (the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven), a responsibility which is freely chosen by the Jewish people. The Jewish image of the Jew is thus embodied in what is called a "value stance," a specific attitude toward life and the world. This flows from the acceptance of the challenge of God which gives birth to the *responsible* element of freedom. Without this, man is free to master others; with this man is free to master only himself.

In the prophet's message, nothing that has a bearing upon good and evil is small or trite in the eyes of God. The prophet's eye is directed to the contemporary scene; the society and its conduct are the main themes of his speeches. His true greatness is his ability to hold God and man in a single thought. As Leo Baeck put it, Judaism demands moral affirmation of man's relation to the world by will and deed, and the world is the field of life's task.[4]

While Christians may see in Judaism an ethnic component to the exclusion of everybody else, universalism and ethnicity are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The totality of all ethnic groups composes universality. Indeed, this universalistic realization is exactly what Judaism envisions for the messianic era. The principle that the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come similarly argues that the Jewish ethos constitutes a universal concept. The divine challenge to man to accept the responsibility for the moral condition of this world, first presented to Adam, is available to every person. Thus, the covenant in Judaism always carried universal implications. Indeed, since no other religious outlook sees itself as a partner of God through the acceptance of the divinely assigned responsibility for this world, the Jews become a unique people.

THE CHRISTIAN COVENANT

What is the Christian view of the Christian covenant? Since Christianity grounds itself in Jewish Scriptures, its covenant also represents the fundamental category in its theological discourse. However, since Christianity understands the covenant differently, it represents on its fundamental level the points of difference between Judaism and Christianity. The essence of Christianity's covenant is soteriological, the doctrine of salvation through belief in its savior.

Before we proceed any further, it is necessary to point out that Christianity is not the religion of Jesus, but is the religion about Jesus. The historical aspect of Jesus' life traditionally has occupied very little importance in Christianity, which puts its emphasis on the meaning of the death of Jesus and his resurrection, mainly found in Paul's teachings. Christianity at the same time refers to the teachings of Jesus which were essentially Jewish.

There are several major aspects of the Christian covenant which differentiates it from the Jewish one.

Let us first consider the reduction of the status of the Law, since this was the main cause for the separation of the two faiths, and, in my view, is mainly responsible for the possibility of the Holocaust. Paul himself actually realized that his abandonment of the Law represented a paradox because the Law, as he claims, does not save, but nevertheless must have been an integral part of God's overall plan. Paul tried to answer this by claiming that God gave the Law so that the Jews can sin and therefore have the need for Christ. This, however, presents another problem. If the Gentiles can be saved by God through Christ, why would God select the Jews to make them slaves of sin by giving the Torah to them, thus requiring God to sacrifice His son to redeem the Jews? This is completely incomprehensible on the part of a God of wisdom. The Jews could not have been guilty of sin on account of the Law because their actions were not volitional or free, inasmuch as their actions were a part of God's plan. Why not send Christ before the giving of the Law and thus save all people equally? God could have sent Jesus earlier at the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, or at the time of the Flood, when evil was very prevalent. Why would He want to wait to give the Torah, which, according to Paul, demanded the sacrifice of His son to save the world? To eliminate this paradox, one must assume that Jesus was not sent to eliminate the Law, as indeed Jesus himself states in Matthew 5:18. *Remember*

that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point, not the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with – not until the end of all things.

Paul realized that if the Law saved, then Jesus died in vain. It was, therefore, necessary for him to address this problem. His solution was to replace the substance of the Hebrew Bible by faith in Jesus, by a new covenant of faith. As a result of this move, the relational status of the people of Israel was abrogated. Paul's claim is radically weakened, however, by the point that God, being God, cannot abrogate a covenant because such action would introduce problems of the arbitrariness on the part of God so that the Christian covenant itself could also be changed in the future. The implications of this extend to theological readings of modern history, as well. Thus, the involuntary dispersion of the Jews which, in the Christian view, was the result of God's condemnation of the Jews for rejecting Jesus and for deicide, was ended by the reestablishment of the State of Israel. If we were to accept Paul's logic, then the place of the Jews has been, in fact, restored.

The Christian covenant refers to the Law as remaining unfulfilled in the old covenant and conceives of the new covenant as providing its ultimate fulfillment. The reason the old covenant if unfulfilled, Christianity claims, is simply that man is incapable of fulfilling the Law.[7] What is required, therefore, is the transformation of man into a being capable of being placed in an authentic salvatory relation to God. Paul claimed that: *All that the Law can do is to make man conscious of sin* (Romans 3:20). Is the consciousness of sin a bad thing? And the people who were not under the Law, didn't they ever sin? *If it had not been for the Law, I should never have learned what sin was... for sin is lifeless without law* (Romans 7:7–8). The example he uses is, *Thou shalt not covet,* which *led me to all sorts of covetous ways* (Romans 7:7–8). This may be interpreted to mean that if there were no "Law", he could covet and not have it considered a sin. Brought to its logical conclusion, one could commit all kinds of evil acts and not sin because the Law is no longer operative. Paul claimed that the Law does not rest on faith. By contrast, Jewish tradition considers the event at Sinai, when God offered the Torah and the Jewish people said, *We will do and we will listen,* to be an unparalleled act of faith.

The old covenant is seen by the Christians as concerned with the external behavior of men, which is only a part of man's life. This criticism is unjust because in the Jewish view, it is precisely through the behavior of man that the

God-man relationship is realized. The basic concern of Christianity is the vertical element of the covenant which *neutralizes the horizontal element, which is of such import to the Jewish view, and which results in the elimination of man to man responsibility.* Essentially, what is at stake here is Christianity's replacement of deed by the concept of creed. To put it differently, Christianity preaches the redemption of man from the world of sin, while Judaism urges the redemption of this world from sin through the action of man.

A Christian can achieve individual salvation through faith alone, irrespective of his behavioral pattern (whosoever believes in Jesus has eternal life). A Jew contributes to the redemption of the community, not to individual salvation, through his deeds. While Paul does not minimize the importance of good behavior, it is his judgment that this is only a derivative of faith. Paul's teachings of man's freedom from the Law had given man the license to practice unethical behavior. Paul's doctrine of Grace, through the expiatory death of Christ, seemed to the Jews to strike at the root of all morality, by paralyzing the human will. Albert Schweitzer observed, "Paul arrives at the idea of a faith which rejects not only the works of the Law, but works in general. He thus closes the pathway to a theory of ethics."[8]

Faith is not sufficient to guarantee justice and does not inculcate good morals, because immoral acts are found forgiven in the faith itself, in the atoning death of Jesus; that is to say, "there was virtually no such thing as a distinctive Christian moral system.[9] Paul looks to the inspiration of Christ to make the fruits of the spirit flower in the soul. Where, then, is there a need for a code of conduct?"[10]

Christianity lost sight of the revelatory sense of community demonstrated at Sinai, since it separated itself from the Synagogue. The Church's interpretation of the Christ event became more and more individualistic in the negative sense of the term. It turned to an I–God relationship in which people believed they could reach full communion with God without achieving communion with the rest of humanity. The result was a *loss of responsibility for the human family.* Christianity had lost sight of that notion of salvation which is ultimately communal.

8 Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul, the Apostle,* (London, 2nd ed. 1953), p. 225.

9 Michael Grant, *St. Paul,* p. 97.

10 Ibid, p. 97.

In light of the preceding discussion, I suggest that the difference in the two religious views of the covenant made the Holocaust a possibility, if not an inevitability. Without the Christian view of limiting the covenant to the vertical element and eliminating the importance of the horizontal element, the Holocaust could not have happened. Through its omission of the teaching of the moral relationship and social obligations of justice among humans as a necessary religious duty, an omission that is implicit in the Christian view of the covenant, the latter has promoted an indifference to and even cooperation with retrograde forces culminating in the Holocaust.

In this covenantal sense, the Holocaust presents a challenge to Christianity far greater than to Judaism. The Holocaust happened in the center of Christian Europe and was perpetrated by Christians. Even in 1944, as the war was nearing its end, a papal nuncio is reported to have said, "There is no innocent blood of Jewish children in the world. All Jewish blood is guilty. You have to die. This is the punishment that has been awaiting you because of deicide."[11]

The unwillingness of the Church to censure such spokesmen during the Holocaust, and its failure, even after the Holocaust, to repent of their role – that is to say, the role of the Church itself – must be carefully considered. Part of these considerations will have to include the ambiguities surrounding Church policy on the question of activisim in different arenas of conflict, e.g., Poland, on the one hand, and Latin America on the other.

The two major factors principally responsible for a Christian theological reappraisal, popularly described as post-Holocaust theology, were the feelings of guilt about the Christian complicity in the Holocaust and the recreation of the State of Israel. According to Paul Van Buren, "...neither of these two events standing alone could have caused such a change. Only when the shock of horror of the Holocaust was coupled with the other, even greater theological shock of the existence of the Jewish State, do we begin to see the first reversals of the Church's teachings about the Jews."[12] That Israel's existence is the greater shock to traditional Christian theology, even beyond the feeling of guilt about the

11 Quoted by Irving Greenberg in "Judaism and Christianity After the Holocaust." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* XII, (Fall, 1975), pp. 525–526.

12 Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton, *The Holocaust: Ideology, Bureaucracy and Genocide,* (New York, 1980), p. 286.

Holocaust, derives from Christian teachings that the Jews were dispersed and abandoned by God when they refused to regard Jesus as the Messiah. The reemergence of the State of Israel is a direct negation of that claim; hence, the necessity for a reevaluation of Christian theology, especially in recognition that Judaism ceased to be a fossilized relic. The assertion that the Church replaced the Jews as the chosen people now comes to be seen as an untenable argument which contained in it genocidal implieations. Any Christian who speaks to a Jew today must do so fully aware that it was his or her tradition which contributed mostly to create the Holocaust.

THE QUESTION OF ANTI-SEMITISM

While it is generally recognized that Christianity did not invent anti-Semitism, the Church certainly developed anti-Semitism for its own purposes to its highest level of justification. What Paul and the entire Christian tradition taught is unmistakably negative: the religion of Judaism is now superseded, the Torah abrogated, the promises fulfilled in the Christian church, the Jews struck with blindness, and whatever remains of the election of Israel rests as a burden upon them in the present age. The masses of the Christian people became thoroughly inculcated with this deeply ingrained teaching about the Jew, which provided the foundation Hitler could use to legitimize his purpose of the extermination of the Jewish people.

At the very beginning of Christianity, when the Temple fell, the idea took hold that this was a sign of God's punishment of the Jewish people for rejecting Jesus.[13] The Jew became the condemned eternal wanderer, despised by God and guilty of deicide. The mark of Cain was upon him. The Jews were the children of the devil and they were evil. For Christianity to establish its own church and to show its superiority, Judaism had to be denigrated and perceived as controlled by Satan.

The historical statements of Church leaders, including popes and leaders as Chrysostom and Augustine, were a continuous litany claiming the evil and perfidy of the Jews. The programs, advocated to eliminate the Jewish evil, consisted of vicious sequences of evil deeds. Martin Luther, for example, said

13 Compare this to the Jewish coneept of this event as the consequence of "causeless hatred" whieh related to the horizontal element of the covenant.

"Jews want to rule the world and already dominate many good Christians; they are arch-criminals, killers of Christ and Christendom; they are a plague, pestilence and pure misfortunes." Among his remedies are: "burning synagogues, burning Jewish homes, since in these Judaism is practiced; confiscating religious books; prohibiting rabbis the teaching of Judaism on the pain of death; prohibiting Jewish travel; prohibiting Jewish money lending and confiscating gold and silver." According to Stohr's *Martin Luther und die Juden,* the essential cause of Luther's hatred is that his entire faith seems threatened by the *mere existence of the Jewish people and its faith.*

Christian teachings and nineteen centuries of being raised in the culture of "Fallen Man" (the fundamental vision of man in Christianity) in addition to the fact that creed, not Law was the most important factor for salvation, became one of the foundations for the Holocaust preparing the masses for such an event. Christianity's teaching that the world is only a vestibule for the next world to be spent with Jesus, in contradistinction to the Jewish view that life in this world is the important consideration for redemption, added to the process of denigrating the man-man facet of the covenant, and thus contributed to the possibility of the Holocaust.

SUMMARY

The occurence of the Holocaust can be traced to the convergence of several elements. The crucial element lies in the Christian view of the covenant as contrasted to the Jewish view. Judaism's view consists of a vertical relationship (God-man), which is refracted in the horizontal (man-man) relationship. The Christian view consists essentially of the vertical view (God-man). Creed is the essential factor, not deed as in Judaism. What is important to the Christian is personal salvation which is achieved by faith only, and not social commitment. Without the horizontal component, man-man relationship can degenerate into radical evil.

BIBLICAL AND TALMUDIC ATTITUDES TOWARD INTERMARRIAGE – I

BY SAMUEL M. STAHL

Much has been written about the prohibitions against intermarriage in classical Jewish literature. Little, however, has centered on the communal perception of Jews who have intermarried. From the beginning, public attitudes toward intermarried Jews have been inconsistent. In some instances, Jews who have intermarried have been named to high positions of stature and authority within the Jewish community. They and their families have been socially integrated into the Jewish world. Other intermarried Jews have been defamed, ostracized, denied religious rights, banished, and even declared dead.

THE BIBLICAL ATTITUDE

Nowhere is this inconsistency in dealing with the intermarried more apparent than in the Bible itself. Some biblical personalities who intermarried suffered no vexations whatsoever. In numerous instances, they maintained their powerful roles as national and tribal leaders. Others were severely censured.

Abraham was the first to raise the issue of intermarriage in the Bible (Gen. 24:1–8). He called his servant and ordered him to swear that he would not take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanite women. The servant was to return to Abraham's native land of Aram-Naharaim to find a wife for Isaac among his own family.

Abraham's concern, echoed later by his son Isaac (Gen. 28:1–2), was typical of many Near Eastern parents at that time. They wanted their children's marriage to take place within the family group and not with outsiders.[1] Such en-

1 Louis M. Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and Talmud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 145.

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dogamous marriages were contracted by numerous biblical personalities. Abraham wed his half sister (Gen. 20:12). Nahor, his brother, married his niece (Gen. 11:29). Esau and Jacob married cousins (Gen. 28:9 and 29:12). Moses' father, Amram, married his aunt (Num. 24:59), and Caleb's daughter married her cousin, Athniel (Josh. 1:17).

Sentiments against intermarriage were rooted in this strong preference for finding a mate within the extended family. A person from an outside group who married into the family might bring alien values and foreign practices that could be disturbing to the integrity of the family. The family would then come to look upon such an individual as a disruptive and defiling intruder.

Nomadic groups, even today, in the Middle East, confront intermarriage the same way.[2] Many hope that the children of two brothers will marry. If such a union is not possible, they prefer that a man seek a wife within the large, extended family, or, at least, within the tribe. When these nomadic tribes temporarily move near a more settled people, they do not countenance the marriage of their children with those of the rooted population. Some nomads even impose the death penalty on members of the tribe who violate this code and marry outside their group.

Generally, in the few instances where disapproval of mixed unions is found in Scripture, the community takes no drastic action to demonstrate its opposition. It usually limits itself to a verbal demurrer by family members or by the author of the biblical narrative itself.

ESAU AND SAMSON CRITICIZED

The first to be criticized in the Bible for intermarrying was Esau (Gen. 26:34–35). Objections to his intermarriage and to others grew out of a strong need to keep marriages within the family. At the age of 40, Esau married two Hittite women, Judith and Basemath. The Bible tells us that they were a "bitterness of spirit" to his parents, Isaac and Rebekah. Realizing that his choice of these pagan women displeased them, Esau married again. This time, he wed a family member, Mahalat, who was the daughter of Ishmael, his uncle (Gen. 28:8–9).

2 Raphael Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 36.

Even after the conquest of Canaan, when the tribes of Israel began to live among non-Israelites, the strong desire for Israelite children to marry within the family persisted. Samson fell in love with Delilah, a Philistine woman, and wanted his parents to obtain her as a wife for him. His parents refused by asking: *Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?* (Judges 14:1–3). Yet he married her, in spite of his parents' objections, at a grand event which featured a major banquet. The Bible indirectly criticizes Samson for his intermarriage by demonstrating the far-reaching problems that ensued for him and the nation. Samson at the banquet presented a riddle to thirty associates. At Delilah's cajoling, he told her the solution which she then reported to her associates. Here, her betrayal led to a tragic chain of events. Ultimately, Samson met defeat and death, in spite of his enormous physical prowess; and the Philistine threat to the nation persisted.

Expressing displeasure with the intermarrying party implicitly is found in other scriptural sections, as well. Often, the description of the behavior or fate of one's children is the Bible's subtle way of condemning the failure of a particular biblical personality to marry within the community.

Judah, one of Jacob's sons, separated from his brothers and became involved with a Canaanite, known as Shua. Though the text contains no word of disapproval, imbedded in the narrative is a hint of condemnation. The union of Judah and Shua's daughter produced three sons. Two died and the third remained childless (Gen. 38:3–11; 46:12).[3]

In addition, the son of Shelomith, an Israelite woman, and a nameless Egyptian father, got into a bitter quarrel with an Israelite male in the camp. The product of this mixed union then blasphemed and cursed God's name and was stoned to death (Lev. 24:10–13).

On the other hand, positive sentiments toward biblical heroes who intermarried are conveyed through a glowing account of the favorable outcome of the lives of their children, as is the case of Ephraim and Manasseh, about whom we shall read later.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

REASONS FOR APPREHENSION

One of the main apprehensions of the ancient Israelites was that those who intermarried would not be able to resist the alluring idolatrous practices of their foreign spouses. Solomon married 700 foreign women and kept another 300 concubines (I Kings 11:1–8). They came from Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Zidonite, and Hittite nations. In accordance with the prevailing custom, Solomon took a wife from each of the nearby royal palaces. He wanted to bind these nations to him through these marriages. The Bible condemns Solomon because his wives alienated him from God and attracted him to foreign deities. He even built shrines for his wives' gods where they could bring sacrifices to these objects of their veneration.

During a span of 240 years, Ahab was the only one of 19 kings of Israel who intermarried. He was censured because his alien wife led him to idolatry (I Kings 16:31–33). Ahab had married Jezebel, whose father, Ethbash, was a Zidonite king. He began to worship Baal and even erected an altar for Baal in a pagan shrine he had built in Samaria. He also made the Asherah. Such submission to idolatry provoked God more than the actions of all of his royal predecessors.

The concern that intermarriage would inevitably lead to idolatry was the basis of the first major biblical prohibition against exogamous unions in Deut. 7:2–4. This law forbids marriage with the seven Canaanite nations (Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites).

While some biblical figures like Esau, Samson, Solomon, and Ahab were viewed critically for intermarrying, many more did wed non-Israelites without receiving any open disapproval from their family, their tribe, or the biblical author. Joseph married Asenath, whose father, Poti-phera, was a pagan priest of On (Gen. 41:45). No negative judgment was voiced against Joseph. In fact, the names of the sons of his mixed marriage, Ephraim and Manasseh, are to be invoked when Jews offer special blessings over their children (cf. Gen. 48:20). Such is done today in observant homes on the eves of the Sabbath.

Moses, the preeminent biblical leader, also intermarried without any censure initially. He had taken refuge with Jethro, priest of Midian, who had seven daughters (Ex. 2:15–22). Jethro gave one of his daughters, Zipporah, to Moses for a wife. Nowhere is condemnation leveled against Moses for marrying Zipporah. Furthermore, Zipporah is later depicted as a heroine for circumcising

their son, whom God wanted to slay. She thus spared him from death (Ex. 4:22–26). Only later did his siblings, Aaron and Miriam, criticize Moses for marrying a Cushite woman (Num. 12:1–16). However, it soon becomes evident that the real source of their dissatisfaction with Moses had little to do with his marriage to a Cushite. In actuality, they were jealous of Moses' extraordinary prophetic powers and were disturbed that God seemed to favor Moses over them.

David also married six foreign women (II Samuel 3:1–5) and Scripture records the names of each wife in sequence without any pejorative comment. Similarly Esther became queen to the Persian king, Ahasuerus, and again, no criticism of her action is stated or even implied (Esther 2:15–20).

In general, then, throughout biblical history, intermarriage was not condoned. Yet, a permissive attitude toward it prevailed. Not only did the common people marry out of the community. So did prominent and illustrious leaders of the Israelite tribes and even of the entire nation. Only in the rarest of cases was condemnation expressed or were penalties imposed. The ban on intermarriage was observed all too often in the breach.

This openness toward the intermarried ended in the Second Commonwealth with the decrees of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra was alarmed that the widespread assimilation and intermarriage with pagan nations had diluted the genealogical purity of the Jewish people. He issued a proclamation strictly forbidding intermarriage and asking those males who had already intermarried to separate from their foreign wives and from the children born to these unions (Ezra 9 and 10; Neh. 10:31 and 13:23–25).

In similar fashion, Nehemiah who came later discovered that the tolerant attitude toward intermarriage had produced children of mixed marriages who were ignorant of the Judean tongue. They spoke only the Ashdodian language. Like Ezra, he took an uncompromising position against intermarriage.

As we have noted, in the Pentateuch, Israelites were not allowed to marry members of specific pagan groups, such as the seven Canaanite nations (Deut. 7:1–6), and Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Egypt (Deut. 23:4–9). Ezra and Nehemiah now extended the ban to include all foreigners. By proscribing intermarriage, they hoped to preserve the ethno-religious integrity of the Jewish people.

Ezra and Nehemiah set the tone for all subsequent Jewish attitudes toward intermarriage and the intermarried.

BALAAM'S MISSION – FAILURE OR SUCCESS?

BY JEFFREY M. COHEN

Numbers Chs. 22–24 chronicles the efforts of the Moabite King, Balak, to enlist the aid of the most notable soothsayer of the age, Balaam, to curse the Hebrews and to frustrate thereby their further progress and advance into the region.

It also contains the enigmatic episode of Balaam's ass, which God endows with the power of speech. It is the ass – whose way is obstructed by the angel – that brings home to Balaam that he would not succeed in his purpose, and that his journey would be fruitless.[1]

But Balaam is determined to proceed, and he secures God's permission to continue with his mission on the condition that he utters only the words that God will put into his mouth.[2]

The question raised by several of our commentators is why God allowed Balaam to proceed at all.[3] If his mission was against God's will, then God's answer should have been nothing short of a categorical refusal for him to proceed.

Further, to allow that heathen prophet – bent on Israel's destruction – to become the instrument of her praise, with lyrical tribute and blessing, seems totally incomprehensible! We are so particular in our tradition regarding who is worthy to give another a blessing. We do not accept blessings from just any source. There has to be a loving relationship between donor and recipient – a father to his child, a teacher to his disciple, a priest to his community. This prerequisite of a loving relationship is implied in the final word of the formula of the *Birkat Kohanim,* the priestly blessing: 'He has commanded us to bless His

1 See Nu. 22:32.

2 Nu. 22:20.

3 See, for example, Ibn Ezra on v. 19.

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people *out of love (be'ahavah).*' How then do we explain the anomaly of God allowing Balaam – of all people – to bless Israel?

A simple answer to this question is that Balaam was not actually called upon *to bless* Israel. God makes that quite clear when he first cautions him: *thou shalt not curse the people for they are blessed.*[4] In other words, Balaam's instruction is merely negative: to refrain from cursing Israel. His blessing is not required, because Israel is, in any case, a blessed nation. Furthermore, God's instruction to Balaam is consistently to *speak the word which I shall speak to thee.*[5] He is never actually told 'to bless' the people. Contrast this with the clear instruction given to Moses to tell Aaron and his sons '*thus you shall bless the children of Israel, you shall say to them...*'.

That Balaam's lengthy tribute should not be construed as a 'blessing', but rather as an *acknowledgement* of intrinsic Israelite national qualities and characteristics is also apparent from the recurring employment of the term *mashal, He took up his parable (meshalo).*[7] This replaces the expected term 'blessing', to describe Balaam's praise of Israel. It is only Balak who charges Balaam with having 'blessed' Israel,[8] for that is obviously how it looked from his perspective. The Torah never describes the speeches, however, as blessings.

Another answer to this question might be detected as nestling amid two anomalies in this whole episode. The first is the tragic irony that Balak, as things turned out, had no need of the soothsayer, Balaam, in order to bring Israel to her knees, since what Balaam failed to do – Israel did to herself. The Moabite King so feared Israel that he would not initiate a *physical* confrontation. His hired soothsayer, Balaam, is also frustrated. No enemy can undo this nation, except one: Israel herself! In the very next verse, after Balaam and Balak return home, disconsolate at the failure of their mission, Israel brings a curse upon herself: *And Israel went awhoring after the daughters of Moab.*[9] The king of Moab had not realized that he had a far more effective missile with which to penetrate the armor

4 Nu. 22:12.

5 Nu. 22:20, 35; 23:12.

6 Nu. 6:23.

7 Nu. 23:7, 18; 23:3, 15, 20, 23.

8 Nu. 23:11, 25; 24:10.

9 Ch. 25:1.

of Israel, namely the seductive immorality on his own doorstep. That is the first element of irony underpinning this episode.

The second point to consider is that this whole episode is unique for quite another reason, namely that this is the only time that the Torah hones in to a scene that takes place off-stage, as it were, at a considerable distance from the Israelite camp. It records a conspiracy of which Israel had no knowledge at the time. Only when Moses discloses it later, did Israel learn of the danger to her that had been averted. Only later did Israel learn the contents of all Balaam's prophecies: his unparalleled tribute to her unique relationship with God, God's protective concern for His people, Israel's moral excellence, family loyalty, and spiritual tenacity. But Israel only learned too late the contents of that heathen prophet's speech, mouthing the words which God told him to say, *and thus reflecting God's assessment of Israel's moral potential.* Israel learnt of that only after she had sinned with the daughters of Moab. Only when that chink in her armor had been breached did she become aware that she had, indeed, been clothed in armor.

We are left to speculate on whether Israel would have still succumbed had she been privy to Balaam's insightful assessment of her spiritual potentiality, had she known of the special value and unique destiny with which God, speaking through Balaam, was investing her.

From a psychological point of view, we regard it as apparent that Israel was suffering, at this point, from a sense of collective lethargy, a weariness of spirit, a lack of religious confidence. From her perspective she probably assumed that relations with God had become strained to breaking-point as a result of a succession of unfortunate events: the Golden Calf, the spies, the sentence of death in the desert for the whole adult generation, the rebellion of Korah, the recent death of Aaron,[10] the battles against the Canaanites[11] Amorites[12] and Og, King of Bashan. It would have seemed obvious to them that God was now leaving them to their own devices. Gone was the special relationship; over were the heady days when God wrought miracles to solve Israel's problems. Now they had to rely on their own resourcefulness.

10 Nu. 20:28.
11 Nu. 20:21.
12 Nu. 21:22.

Imagine what encouragement it would have been for the nation to have been able to overhear God speaking through Balaam! What a boost to their confidence, what a challenge for them to justify those divine expectations, what a stimulus and catalyst to impel them heavenwards.

The paradox of this whole episode provides us, then, with the answer to our original question. God certainly did *put words into Balaam's mouth*. But God did not use Balaam, the heathen soothsayer, as a medium of blessing. There was no donor and no recipient of blessing here. There was merely an ironic declamation of the heights to which our people are capable of reaching, if they retain their faith and their confidence, and if they remain constant in their values and their mission. Balaam was the mere oracle testifying to Israel's unique potential, a potential that she was already well on the way to squandering, even before Balaam and Balak had arrived back at their homes.

Now we may understand a little clearer why God allowed Balaam to proceed on his mission and why he was granted the privilege of acting as the oracle to offer that unique assessment of Israel, subsequently recorded in the Torah. It was, in fact, a further touch of bitter irony, a divine reproach of Israel for falling short of her potential and for lowering her moral standards. It was left to Balaam, the heathen, to demonstrate the chasm that then existed between Israel's *potentiality* and the *actuality*.

When we leave ourselves so wide open that even the heathens are motivated to plot the course of our defection; when we, who ought to be the moral and ethical torchbearers to others[14] cannot even see by our own light, then truly we deserve whatever the nations of the world choose to mete out to us.

With hindsight, following the immorality with the daughters of Moab, the word *mashal,* by which Balaam's tributes are consistently described,[15] now takes on a special and bitterly appropriate significance. We have suggested that Balaam was allowed to utter his tribute in order to enable Israel, as well as later students of Torah, to make comparisons, in order to contrast the ideal Israel, at the zenith of her potential – as depicted by Balaam – with the real Israel of that period.

The word *mashal* is perfectly chosen since, at two semantic levels, it conveys

13 Nu. 21:33.
14 *'Or la-goyim,* Is. 42:6; 49:6, *et. al.*
15 See note 7.

both the idea of 'comparison' and 'contrast',[16] on the one hand, and 'by-word' 'insult'[17] on the other. The *mashal* effectively draws a comparison in order to contrast – generally for the worse – a subsequent state of affairs with that of its antecedent[18] – the precise scenario of this whole episode.

Since Balaam was allowed to expose so successfully the raw nerve of our people's spiritual and moral vulnerability, we are left wondering, was his mission such a failure after all?

16 See Brown, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 605.

17 *Loc. cit.* cf. Dt. 28:37; I Kings 9:7; Jer. 24:9; Ps. 44:15; 69:12 *et. al.*

18 Cf. for example the well-known mashal, *the fathers have eaten unripe grapes, but it is the teeth of the children that are set on edge* (Ezek. 18:2).

"WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO ME"

We would like to receive the reactions of our readers to the above question. Your replies should be short and to the point (a few sentences should suffice). Please send in your responses and we will be glad to publish those we find most interesting. Send your responses to Dor Le Dor attention Dr. Joshua J. Adler.

EZEKIEL, THE NEGLECTED PROPHET

BY JOSHUA J. ADLER

There is a rabbinic saying to the effect that everything needs luck including the Torah scroll which is found in the Holy Ark. This remark comes to my mind when I think of the manner in which the Prophet Ezekiel has been treated in many a school or Bible study circle. In my own long career as a student I usually found Ezekiel downgraded by my Bible teachers as well as by the authors who appeared on their reading lists. Even the so called "minor prophets" such as Amos, Hosea and Micah, to mention but three, received considerably more praise and attention than did Ezekiel. In Israeli schools, where Bible is studied from grade two till graduation from high school, not more than a few chapters of Ezekiel's forty eight are required to be taught and in most classes there is frequently no time left to study even those listed in the curriculum.

Surprisingly the prejudice against Ezekiel is not only a modern one. In fact, his was the only prophetic book which was challenged by our sages – the others were not prophets – in that famous Council of Yavne held circa 90 CE., where the book of Ezekiel was nearly excluded from the Bible canon. (The reason was Ezekiel's statements especially about the Temple and its rites which often contradicted other biblical books). The Talmud (Shabbat 13a) credits the efforts of a Hananya ben Hizkiyahu who resolved the contradictions and thus saved the book for posterity.

In addition to the contradictions which the ancient sages noted in Ezekiel's book, modern biblical scholars have found many statements, descriptions and prophecies which diverge from all the other biblical sources in our possession. These, together with Ezekiel's emphasis on ritual and ceremony (rather than on ethics and morality) as well as his peculiar behavior on many occasions seems to have contributed to the negative image Ezekiel has among biblical scholars as well as teachers. The exceptions to what has been stated are the chapters dealing with the heavenly chariot which is especially attractive to mystics; those dealing

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with the vision of the dry bones which are often read at public ceremonies in Zionist circles; and the prophecies about Gog, favored by millenarians.

Despite the general negativism toward Ezekiel and in contrast to most others, I find reading this book to be an interesting and informative experience. One can both learn and appreciate a great deal from Ezekiel even by reading some of the more "boring" chapters such as 26–28 which speak about the fortress island city of Tyre. In these chapters we learn about the ancient arts of warfare and tactics, boatbuilding and navigation, commerce and the cities which engaged in trade; descriptions which earn Ezekiel praise from many scholars since they give information about these subjects which is not available in other biblical or extra-biblical sources.

Ezekiel may also be attractive for those readers who like off-the-beaten-track characters who are adept at doing unusual things such as fasting for long periods, eating scrolls, lying on their side for over a year without getting up and performing various other extraordinary feats. His performances manage to please the crowds who come to see him even though they completely ignore his messages. Ezekiel himself is aware that they come to listen to his voice and not to his words (Chapter 33). Any Jewish leader, or any sensitive person for that matter, can sympathize with the feelings of the prophet whose message is rejected and who is only thought of as a crowd pleaser and is not taken seriously.

What is also unique about this prophet is his being the first and only spokesman of God who actually lived and preached in the Babylonian exile both before and after the destruction of the Temple. Thus he was able to see at first hand that the Jewish community of Babylonia was not anguishing and suffering in exile, as had often been predicted in the Torah (e.g. Leviticus 26) and by other prophets. In fact, those Jews who had gone into exile with King Jehoachin in 597 BCE were beginning to prosper economically and adjusting quite well to their new environment. Many of the Jews even decided to pursue a policy of assimilation by carrying around with them idols, not because they really believed in them, but in order not to be different from their Babylonian neighbors. This new attitude and behavior on the part of the Jews came as a shock to Ezekiel who as a traditional nationalist had been taught that exile meant suffering and that if the Jews would only repent they would be redeemed and returned to their ancestral homeland. Now that the Jews were not suffering many had no desire to be redeemed or even to remain Jews. This new situation required a radically new

message. As a response to the Jews who declared: *We will be like the nations, like the families of the lands, worshipping wood and stone,* Ezekiel in the name of God called: *As I live... I will reign over you with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with overflowing fury and with a strong hand and outstretched arm and with overflowing fury I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered* (20:33ff.). How different is this message from that which assumes that the Israelites in Babylon did nothing but pine for redemption as portrayed in Psalm 137.

Another novelty in Ezekiel's teaching was his despair that the Israelites as a people would ever repent. He therefore reversed the sequence and instead of insisting that they first do תשובה (penitence) and then be redeemed, he first had redemption and then it would be God Himself who would purify the people without their ever having repented! As we read: *I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries... I will sprinkle clean water upon you... I will cleanse you from all your uncleanliness... I will put My spirit into you. Thus will I cause you to follow My laws and faithfully observe My rule* (36:24 ff.). Where at first Ezekiel thought that Israel's sin and exile would be seen by both Israelites and the nations as the work of God who caused this all to happen, thus increasing everyone's awe for such a God, he now realized that the very opposite was the case. He saw that the very presence of the Jews in exile was a *hillul hashem,* a profanation of God's name, since the nations viewed the exile as a proof of the powerlessness of God rather than of His retributive power: *When they came to the nations* [by their very presence there] *they caused my Name to be profaned in that it was said of them 'These are the people of the Lord, yet they had to leave His Land'... Thus not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for My holy name* ...[in order that] *the nations shall know that I am the Lord when I take you from among the nations... and bring you back to your own land* (36:19 ff.).

Also, in the light of his personal experiences with the Jewish community of Babylon we now better understand his emphasis on rituals, the Temple and the laws of purity. Ezekiel felt he had to stress not the universal principles of ethics and morality but those laws which would preserve Jewish identity and prevent intermarriage and assimilation. The laws of purity, which lessen contacts with non-Jews were one way to halt this process. Another was his vision of the rebuilt Temple with all the ritual and graphic details. These were meant to convince the

Jews that their life in Babylonia would not be permanent and that they would some day be redeemed and return to Eretz Yisrael. However, until the redemption Ezekiel puts the stress on Sabbath observance, which has throughout the ages been that special ingredient which distinguishes Jews from Gentiles and fills their life with spirituality and joy. Thus, Ezekiel may well have been the spiritual father of that famous *bon mot.* "More than Israel has preserved the Sabbath, the Sabbath has preserved Israel."

When reviewing the major teachings of Ezekiel we must mention his doctrine of individual responsibility and repentance which in his time was considered to be rather revolutionary (Chapter 18). We might also point to some of his lesser known views such as his pronouncement that *gerim,* resident aliens or converts, be given land grants (47:22) while, on the other hand, wanting all non-Jewish Temple workers replaced by Levites (44:9). He also envisions the size of the future Jewish State to be smaller than that often mentioned in other parts of the Scriptures yet it is a bit larger than the present day borders of the State of Israel and includes some areas which today make up Southern Syria (Chapter 48). Ezekiel also has something to say about leaders who take advantage of their positions by granting themselves all kinds of financial and legal privileges. There may even be a republican tendency in Ezekiel for he introduces the title of נשיא chief, prince leader, and at times uses it interchangeably with the word king (in 34:24 David is called Nasi). In any case, in his vision of the future Jewish State he sets up limits to the leader's authority and requires that he set a proper example to the people and that he be especially sensitive to the need for justice and righteous conduct (45:8 ff.).

CORRECTION

Inadvertently an omission occurred in Professor Nahum Waldman's article on Gen. 14 appearing in Dor Le Dor, Vol. XVI – 4. On pages 257–258 reference No. 6 should read: Yochanan Muff's "Abraham the Noble Warrior: Patriarchal Politics and Laws of War in Ancient Israel," in Essays in Honor of Yigal Yadin, ed. by Vermes and Jacob Neusner (Allanheld: Osmun Totowa, 1984) 81–107.

The true significance of the horrors inflicted on Job in the book that bears his name has never been finally elucidated. In this issue of Dor Le Dor two diametrically opposed views of the reasons for Job's affliction are explored. The first of our authors suggests that Job was punished for neglecting the ritual aspects of religion, the mitzvoth; the second that he brought disaster on himself by a purely mechanical approach the duties and responsibilities of religion. In the Book of Job itself, both Job and the Lord declare that the affliction was h i n a m, without cause. The Editors believe that their readers will be intrigued that such incompatible interpretations of the one work are still possible so long after it was first presented to the world.

THE PARADIGM OF JOB

SUFFERING AND THE REDEMPTIVE DESTINY OF ISRAEL

BY LAWRENCE COREY

Almost without exception, biblical interpreters contend that the Book of Job "challenged the validity of a doctrine commonly prevalent in the orthodox thought and literature of the ancient world... that the righteous and the wicked receive their just deserts on earth" (Miller & Miller, p. 337). In other words, according to another interpreter, "the Book of Job is a drama dealing with the problem of undeserved suffering" (Wolk, 1942). According to the Christian point of view its message was "whatever suffering befalls the pure in heart they can endure, because their spiritual integrity, the witness of their own conscience, is its own reward and the surest way to find the peace of God" (Miller & Miller, p. 338).

It will be my contention, later supported with biblical evidence, that these points of view are invalid, and that rather than dealing with undeserved suffering, the Book of Job is a meticulous exposition of *deserved* suffering, and a parable of God's relationship to Kenesset Israel, the Holy Community of Israel.

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THE TALMUDIC PERSPECTIVE ON JOB

The definitive talmudic exposition on Job is found in the Tractate *Baba Bathra,* sections 14a–16b. For my purposes, the most pertinent passage is the following Gemara:

> A certain rabbi was sitting before R. Samuel b. Nahamani and in the course of his exposition remarked: "Job never was and never existed, but is only a parable" (15a).

On the basis of this and other data (particularly from Deuteronomy and Isaiah), I propose to show that Job's suffering, rather than being "undeserved," was the punishment for his failure to perform God's *mitzvot,* or "commandments." Moreover, and in a larger sense, I also propose to demonstrate that Job's fall, repentance, salvation and final acceptance into God's favor, is a parable of God's relationship with his Holy Priesthood, the Community of Israel, and in turn its redemptive mission to the *Goyim,* the nations of the world.

THE EVIDENCE OF DEUTERONOMY

As pointed out independently but simultaneously by Wolfers (1985) and Corey (1985) the Book of Job cannot be understood except within the context of certain key biblical passages, especially those in Deuteronomy. These specify the curses God vows to visit upon the Israelites if they fail to perform His commandments. For example:

> *If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all His commandments... thine o x shall be slain before thine eyes... thine a s s shall be violently taken away... thy s h e e p shall be given unto thine enemies... thy s o n s and thy d a u g h t e r s shall be given unto another people... and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed* (Deut. 28:31–33).

Now compare this sequence of punishments for failure to perform God's *mitzvot* with the "first round" of Job's torments:

> *A messenger came to Job, "your o x e n," he said, "were at the plow, with the a s s e s grazing at their side, when the Sabeans swept down on them and carried them off... the fire of God... has burned up all your s h e e p... your s o n s a n d d a u g h t e r s... are dead"* (Job 1:13–19).

Thus, we see that Job's suffering is not only identical with the curses God promises to inflict on those who reject His commandments, but the *order* in which they happen to him is exactly the same as that in Deuteronomy. Moreover, another curse in Deuteronomy states: *Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein* (Deut. 28:30), which compares to *a gale from across the desert came and battered down the four corners of the house.* (Job 1:19). Also compare: *Thou shalt become an astonishment... among all the peoples* (Deut. 28:37) with: *Looking at him, they could not recognize him; they wept aloud and tore their garments and threw dust over their heads* (Job 2:12). The most striking parallel, however, is contained in the passage:

> *The Lord will smite thee... with a sore boil... from the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head* (Deut. 28:35).

compared to:

> *He struck Job down with a sore boil from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head* (Job 2:7).

Other remarkable correspondences occur between Deuteronomy and the poetical portion of the Book of Job, such as:

> *In the morning thou shalt say: Would it were evening! and in the evening thou shalt say: Would it were morn!* (Deut. 28:67).

and Job's complaint over his torments:

> *Lying in bed I wonder, When will it be day? Risen I think, How slowly evening comes!* (Job 7:4).

ANALYSIS OF DEUTERONOMY

These correspondences clearly demonstrate that the afflictions of Job are precisely those reserved for Jews who fail to follow the commandments and statutes of God's Torah. Yet the contradiction seems to be that Job is described as *a sound and honest man who feared God and shunned evil* (Job 1:1). Apparently there is here the message that it is not enough for a Jew to be sound, honest, Godfearing and good (in the sense of shunning evil). Except he performs the *mitzvot,* he falls short of God's grace and, like Job, invites the punishments prescribed for the failure to observe them. In this regard, what the author *omits* from the description of his hero is more relevant than what he includes. Nowhere in the author's description is Job called *mitzvot* observant. It is true that Job himself makes such a claim in Job 23:11, 12 but this cannot be sustained against the author's impartial characterization.

Furthermore, the proof that Job neglected the *mitzvot* is in the very afflictions that he suffered: they are precisely those decreed by God for failure to observe the Torah. Moreover, since the Talmud states that "Moses wrote both his own book *and* the Book of Job" (Baba Bathra 14b), and since it also states that Job was a "parable," it appears that Moses may have written the latter as an illustration of the former.

ISRAEL, JOB, AND THE "SUFFERING SERVANT"

> *See My servant... a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering... struck by God and brought low. Yet he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed... while he was praying all the time for sinners* (Isaiah 52:13; 53:1–12).

Who is the "suffering servant" of Isaiah? Clearly it is the Community of Israel. Consider for example an earlier passage from Isaiah:

> *You, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham my friend. You whom I brought from the confines of the earth and called from the ends of the world; you to whom I have said, 'You are My servant I have chosen you'* (Isaiah 41:8–9).

and then: *Here is My servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have endowed him with My spirit that he may bring true justice to the Gentiles* (Isaiah 42:1); and moreover: *He said to me,: You are My servant Israel, in whom I shall be glorified.* (Isaiah 49:3).

THE REPENTANCE OF JOB

At the conclusion of his ordeal, Job addresses God as Y–H–W–H, rather than "Elohim," and confesses, *I knew You before only by hearsay, but now having seen You with my own eyes, I retract all I have said, and in dust and ashes I repent* (Job 42:5–6). Here Job is confessing his former alienation from God while at the same time surrendering to Him. The reward for this return to holiness is God's acceptance of Job in the role for which he was nominated in the first chapter of the Book — as God's *servant* through whom his three gentile friends (all Edomites, descendants of Esau) receive salvation:

> *The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: My anger burns against you and against your two friends... therefore offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you; for to him I will show favor. And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before* (Job 42:8–10).

The conclusion here seems inescapable: the task of Israel, like that of Job, is holiness; her destiny is to redeem the world.

THE EVIDENCE OF ISAIAH

The "suffering servant" passages reinforce this conclusion, (see Encyclopoedia Judaica, vol. 9, p. 65). The *Eved Adonai* and his suffering is a collective metaphor for the community of Israel. On the other hand he is also a portrait of Job — a "parable" according to the Talmud — and that parable identifiable as depicting the rise, fall, redemption and appointment to its destiny of the Knesset Yisrael. I adduce the following comparisons:

The crowds were appalled on seeing him — so disfigured did he look — that he seemed no longer human (Isa. 52:14, 15).	*Looking at him from a distance,* [his friends] *could not recognize him* (Job 2:12).
We thought of him as someone struck by God and brought low (Isa. 53:4).	[The Satan]... *struck Job down* (Job 2:7).
By force and by law he was taken... they gave him a grave with the wicked (Isa. 53:8, 9).	*Yes, God handed me over to the godless, and cast me into the hand of the wicked* (Job 16:11).

Thus, Job's repentance, redemption, and the assignment of his task as *Eved Adonai* are described in "The Song of the Suffering Servant."

> *When the Lord had said all this to Job, he turned to Eliphaz of Teman. I burn with anger against you and your two friends, He said, for not speaking truthfully about Me as* my servant *Job had done. So now find seven bullocks and seven rams and take them back with you, to* my servant *Job and offer a burnt sacrifice for yourselves while Job,* my servant *offers prayers for you. I will listen to him with favour and excuse your folly in not speaking of Me properly as* my servant *Job has done* (Job 42:8).

Several issues are buried in this quotation. To begin with, we see that Job, by his suffering and atonement, is chosen to embody the mission of the Suffering Servant, of whom Isaiah said, *Surrendering himself to death... he was bearing the faults of many and praying all the time for sinners* (Isa. 53:12). Thus Job, because his own suffering was identical with that of the Servant of Isaiah, was elevated to the status of God's Holy Priest by whose prayers and intercession the Gentile and sinner are redeemed. But equally important is the identity of Job's three friends and the reasons they provoke God to exclaim: *I burn with anger against you!* What had they said that God could accuse them of *not speaking truthfully about Me as My servant Job has done?*

First Job's three friends were Edomites from the area of Seir. That is they were Gentiles descended from Esau, the twin brother and arch-enemy of Jacob, from whom Job, the Jew, descended. Second, each of them provoked God's anger with variations of the first speech of Eliphaz who asserted that no innocent man ever perished through affliction and that only the wicked are consumed by God's anger (Job 4:7–9). But the inherent error in their seemingly obvious statements is expressed in Job's contradictory experience – that is that *even the righteous are afflicted and consumed by God's anger when they fail to perform His commandments.* In the words of the Zohar, "Righteousness... is the first opening to enter; through this opening, all other high openings come into view" (Zohar 1:103a-b). Third, Job, the Jew, is elected to pray for his friends, the Gentiles, precisely because he has suffered the consequences of this truth and survived them to make atonement for his past alienation from the Lord.

JOB AND THE REDEMPTIVE DESTINY OF ISRAEL

> *The era of the gentile is over; now the era of the Jew is beginning. God will again favour the Jews.*
>
> *(Hal Lindsay, Christian evangelist)*

In conclusion, the Book of Job, and particularly its final events, are a record of Job's ascent from being a merely righteous man who, like Noah and Daniel, *would not be able to save either son or daughter by his righteousness alone* (Ezek. 14:14) to the condition of an eternal priest, the symbol of Knesset Yisrael, about whom God declares:

> *While Job, My servant, prays for you* [Edomites], *I will listen to him with favor and excuse your folly.*

Why does God elect Job to this lofty status? Because the creature has realized the supremacy of its Creator: man is not God, the servant is not the Master. Through his suffering, Job has come to realize the mercy of God's retribution. The universe is not random, suffering is not coincidental. Submission of our will to God is the ultimate source of power.

The poem of Job is not, as many would have us think, a testament of existential anguish. It is not a cry of despair, but a shout of conquest. Not, perhaps, the conquest that modern man aspires to, but a conquest nonetheless: Man has conquered God by submitting to Him. The message of Job is a message of liberation: we release ourselves from suffering by accepting the yoke of His Torah. In the final analysis, we are all indeed the authors of our own destinies. In the final act of submission, we become free.

God's covenant with Israel is fulfilled in the elevation of Job: *See, I have made of you a witness to the peoples, a leader and a master of the Gentiles* (Isa. 55:4). God restores Job's fortunes – gives him *double what he had before* – because *he had prayed for his friends* (Job 42:10, 11). That is, Job's life and suffering are "a sign and symbol" of the transformation of the Jewish people from the slaves of Egypt to the redeemers of the world – *Here is My servant*]Israel], *My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have endowed him with My spirit that he may bring true justice to the Gentiles* (Isa. 42:1).

TIKKUN OLAM

The closing passages of Job are a paradigm of the final days, the end of time, and the destiny of Israel as the agent of that apotheosis. Just as Job's three Edomite friends attach themselves to him for their salvation, so God swore to Israel *The foreigner will join* [you] *and attach himself to the House of Jacob* (Isa. 14:1, 2). To this end, God instructs: *You must make yourselves holy* (Lev. 20:7), and says: *I will count you a kingdom of priests, a consecrated nation* (Ex. 19:6).

Job himself declared it, *I am showing you how God's power works* (Job 27:11). For the past two thousand years, however, we have been the victims of a denominational myopia that blinds us to the ancient and eternal truth: Knesset Israel, like Job, is God's "Chosen Priest" – not as those outside of it accuse, by

the fiat of collective chauvinism, but by the authority of a declaration from the holy throne of God:

> *Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine. Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up. Should you walk through fire, you will not be scorched and the flames will not burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior... Do not be afraid, for I am with you* (Isa. 43: 1–5).

It is for this destiny that the House of Israel has been privileged to be inflicted by the Master of the Universe with the sufferings of Job. It is for this holy office that the Jew is forged in the iron furnace of Egypt.

(References on page 82)

THE LIBERATION OF JOB

BY JOSEPH HECKELMAN

The Book of Job has an underlying message which has successfully remained hidden.

It is of that special genre of literature that presents a coherent picture on the surface – and a very different perspective when viewed from beneath the surface. The analogy that most readily comes to mind is that of a body of water. That which one sees on the surface is true, instructive, wonderful. But the view from beneath the surface is quite different – and very much deepens one's perspective and understanding.

In this study, we are not interested in verbal archaeology: we are not concerned with literary strata. It is none of our concern that there may (or may not) have been an original ending with Chapter 28 plus one or two or six additional layers. We shall simply deal with the final canonized text as is. Whether it was polished to its present form by a later editor or by the original author – we are

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dealing with the finished product. It is to this finished vessel, not the explorer's theories or imagination, that we here relate.

The conventional view of the Book of Job is known to us all. It is that the book is a trail-blazer, daring to face a fundamentally upsetting experiential truth: that the expectation (if not the religious promise) of properly metered reward for the good we do, and are, and punishment for the evil we do, and are – is an unrealized expectation. In this story, framed as a fable, we have an altogether good man who is made to suffer appallingly in order to establish whether God or Satan is more correct in their differing understanding of the motivation for human behavior. This work argues that earned reward and punishment – a major premise of conventional religion – can be less of a factor than divine caprice. The playwright poet, Archibald Macleish, states it thus in his Twentieth Century reworking of the story:

> "If God is good He is not God
> If God is God He is not good."

In another context, in another era, the Talmud has an observer of promised reward turned to premature death declare, "There is no judgment and there is no Judge." That is not the final conclusion – but it is very much the immediate reaction.

The ultimate resolution in the Book of Job becomes one of dimension: God's power is so unimaginably greater than that of His tiny, arrogant human creature, that man cannot conceivably comprehend the ways and purposes of God. Man should be good, should assert his integrity, and must accept what is dealt out to him.

While not quarreling with this essentially correct general understanding, it is this writer's contention that careful study of the framework of the book – its first and last chapters – will give us significant overlooked information and a new perspective.

The very first sentence of the first chapter tells us directly that the protagonist

1 The term *Elohim* refers to God the (remote) Creator, author of the laws of nature. In some contexts it means "judge," probably originating in the notion of judgment as the natural result of man's activities. The other most widely used term for God, the four letters regularly read *Adonai* and translated "Lord," grammatically and otherwise refers to God as immanent (present) and as Father.

was simple and straight and feared God (the Creator) *and also shunned evil.* It also states that he lived in the unidentified land of Uz. There are titillating hints in his name. First, that there is an enemy, internal or external: Accurate transliteration is not "Job," but "Eyov"; and these four letters, rearranged, spell *Oyev* – enemy.[2] Second, these same letters further rearranged spell *Yevo* – coming, becoming, journeying.

To further frame the setting of this fable, the potent numbers 10 and 3 are introduced. Verse 2 gives our protagonist seven sons and three daughters (10 children); verse 3 adds 7,000 sheep and 3,000 camels (10,000); and 500 each of two other kinds of animals (1,000). Then we have the idealized pattern of continual partying: each of the seven sons hosts a feast on his particular day, with the three sisters always invited (verse 4). How idyllic! Suddenly, verse 5: a verse of hidden explosive power, which the commentators gloss over and take as added proof of Job's piety. But it is not this at all: it exposes a great raw hole in the idyllic fabric of Job's pattern. Job suspects his children of the awful crime of blasphemy: *Perhaps my sons have sinned, and "blessed"* (i.e. blasphemed) *God in their hearts.* Does Job react as a religious man? Does he speak to them? Does he weep for them? Does he agonize in any way for them or to them? Does he pray for them? Does he tear his clothes and mourn for them? No. What does he do? He only undertakes the surface mechanical acts of a smug observer: He sends to sanctify their feasts, and he rises early to offer added sacrifices on behalf of each. This is how Job deals with the ultimate religious crime – the crime for which the Torah decrees execution (Lev. 24:10–16)! And the mechanical formalism continues endlessly: *Thus did Job continually.* That is, it goes on and on, until God decides to take action to shake Job out of his proper, shallow surface routine, by enticing and manipulating Satan. Job is a virtuous man – but the kind of narrow virtuous man who could be called a goody-goody, smug.

2 See Baba Bathra 16a.

3 Later, Job's wife advises him deliberately to commit this sin, so that God will kill him, and he will be released from his painful existence. Rather than retreat from life, his misery prods him to rise to intimate contact with God. This is exactly what God had intended, and is the real reason for Job's suffering. One might note that with some people, suffering is wasted; with Job, it is completely successful. Perhaps there is even a suggestion that suffering is the necessary way to reach the peak. The comfortable cocoon must be broken and it is only via the pit of suffering that one is able to reach the peak of achievement: knowledge of God.

Satan is the prototype adversary, the detractor of man. Satan is a complete Behaviorist. That is, he sees human behavior entirely in terms of response to circumstances. Man, in Satan's eyes, has no transcendent motivation, no independent will: like the lower animals, he is simply an object to be manipulated by reward and punishment. In the event, thus playing on Satan's ego, God uses him to liberate Job painfully from the shackles of his repetitive, virtuous, relatively empty acts. How is this managed?

In verse 8, God (the Father)[1] specifically singles out Job for Satan's attention, praising him in the very words with which the text had described him in verse 1. Satan rises to the bait, declaring that Job fears God (the Creator)[1] because of the material rewards with which he has been blessed. There follows the familiar Behaviorists' challenge, *Take away all his possessions, and see if he does not curse you to your face.* Satan is empowered by God, and destroys Job's property, servants and children. Job mourns and accepts, with his focus entirely upon himself and on God (the Father)[2] of whom he speaks in the third person.

Chapter 1 ends with the words, *Nevertheless Job did not sin, in that he did not ascribe anything unseemly to God.* That is, in terms of the surface view which the text deliberately presents, Job would be considered a sinner only if he faulted God for his troubles.[3] As indicated earlier, from our more direct perspective, Job surely did sin in his formal, remote reaction to his sons' possible blasphemy.

Between this point and the closing chapter, there follow 40 chapters of discussion; some of the discussion is surface, some goes deep. The participants are Job, his three friends, an apparent intruder named Elihu (the letters of whose name are made up of the letters of both names of God which are most widely used in the Bible) and God Himself.

In terms of our point of view the most significant development in these 40 chapters is Job's demand to experience God's presence, and his being granted that experience. The words that pass between God and Job are not of prime importance; what is, is the contact itself. Having experienced what we call *dvekut*, and others *unio mystica*, chapter 42 can open with Job speaking *to* no longer *about*, God (the Father).

Further (verses 8–10), Job can now pray on behalf of others, and have his prayer accepted. In that Job prayed for his friend, God chooses to restore to Job all that he had lost and more. Thus, God does as He chooses; but man's spiritual acts are not irrelevant. And having experienced God, Job is no longer simply a

smug follower. He becomes an innovator actually, the most serious expander of women's rights in all of the Bible. Everyone recalls the five famous daughters of Zelophehad. Theirs was an unprecedented situation. In a society in which only men were assigned territory and only male children inherited, their father had died in the wilderness and they had no brothers. They put the question to Moses: *Will we be landless, and our father territorially unremembered?* Moses consults God on this new problem, and conveys the answer: (only) where there are no male children, females may inherit. But this landmark Torah legislation pales beside the innovation of Job. Towards the end of the final chapter (verse 14–15), we are told, first, the names of Job's three daughters (the seven sons are not named); then, that they are the most beautiful in all the land; and climactically, that *their father gave them inheritance in the midst of their brothers.*

Job is now truly liberated. Far from being the mechanical, ritually correct follower of the opening chapter, after his direct experience of God he becomes a bold innovator. Against society's universal property discrimination against women he takes direct innovative action establishing a pattern of genuine egalitarianism in matters of finance. Interestingly, he does so not on the basis that women are identical to men, but on the basis that they are different. Their beauty is emphasized just before they are given their inheritances.

The commentators, ancient and modern, quite properly immerse themselves in the central 40 chapters of text. And they conclude that the book's purpose is to affirm that immediate, appropriate reward and punishment are not the way of God's running this world. They tend to see the opening and closing chapters as artificial book-ends, and to pay them small attention.

We have done the reverse, and find that our different perspective has brought us to new observations. These conclusions are that God is very much in control of all of the action. That Job's initial pattern of careful religious ritual is not desirable, and leads to his becoming a sinner when confronted with a serious family religious problem. That God wants Job to become an intimate; and this is the purpose of Job's ordeal: to prod him to demand knowledge of and loving contact with God. That this mystical experience should lead to greater involvement in the world. That women should have inheritance property rights. That where women's rights should be advanced, there should be emphasis on their natural differences from men. That Satan, the real enemy, sees man as totally manipulated by his experiences and is proven wrong.

עשה תורתך קבע

THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

December 1988-January 1989 — טבת תשמ"ט

9	F	Genesis 41-44:17	א	מקץ חנוכה
10	שבת	Haftarah: 1 Kings 7:40-50	ב	הפטרת חנוכה: מלכים א ז', מ"ג
11	S	1 Samuel 6	ג	שמואל א ו'
12	M	1 Samuel 7	ד	שמואל א ז'
13	T	1 Samuel 8	ה	שמואל א ח'
14	W	1 Samuel 9	ו	שמואל א ט'
15	Th	1 Samuel 10	ז	שמואל א י'
16	F	Genesis 44:18-47:27	ח	ויגש
17	שבת	Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:15-28	ט	הפטרה: יחזקאל ל"ז, טרכח
18	S	1 Samuel 11	י	צום י' טבת שמואל א י"א
19	M	1 Samuel 12	יא	שמואל א י"ב
20	T	1 Samuel 13	יב	שמואל א י"ג
21	W	1 Samuel 14	יג	שמואל א י"ד
22	Th	1 Samuel 15	יד	שמואל א ט"ו
23	F	Genesis 47:28-50	טו	ויחי
24	שבת	Haftarah: 1 Kings 2:1-12	טז	הפטרה: מלכים א ב', א'-יב
25	S	1 Samuel 16	יז	שמואל א ט"ז
26	M	1 Samuel 17	יח	שמואל א י"ז
27	T	1 Samuel 18	יט	שמואל א י"ח
28	W	1 Samuel 19	כ	שמואל א י"ט
29	Th	1 Samuel 20	כא	שמואל א כ'
30	F	Exodus 1-6:1	כב	שמות
31	שבת	Haftarah: Isaiah 27:6-28:13	כג	הפטרה: ישעיה כ"ז, ו'-כ"ח, יג
		January		
1	S	1 Samuel 21	כד	שמואל א כ"א
2	M	1 Samuel 22	כה	שמואל א כ"ב
3	T	1 Samuel 23	כו	שמואל א כ"ג
4	W	1 Samuel 24	כז	שמואל א כ"ד
5	Th	1 Samuel 25	כח	שמואל א כ"ה
6	F	Exodus 6:2-9	כט	וארא

שבט תשמ"ט — January-February 1989

7	שבת	Haftarah: Isaiah 66	א הפטרה: ישעיה ס"ו
8	S	I Samuel 26	ב שמואל א כ"ו
9	M	I Samuel 27	ג שמואל א כ"ז
10	T	I Samuel 28	ד שמואל א כ"ח
11	W	I Samuel 29	ה שמואל א ב"ט
12	Th	I Samuel 30	ו שמואל א ל'
13	F	Exodus 10-13:16	ז בא
14	שבת	Haftarah: Jeremiah 46:13-28	ח הפטרה: ירמיה מ"ו, יג-כח
15	S	I Samuel 31	ט שמואל א ל"א
16	M	II Samuel 1	י שמואל ב א'
17	T	II Samuel 2	יא שמואל ב ב'
18	W	II Samuel 3	יב שמואל ב ג'
19	Th	II Samuel 4	יג שמואל ב ד'
20	F	Exodus 13:17-17	יד בשלח
21	שבת	Haftarah: Judges 4:4-5:31	טו הפטרה: שופטים ד', ד-ה', לא
22	S	II Samuel 5	טז שמואל ב ה'
23	M	II Samuel 6	יז שמואל ב ו'
24	T	II Samuel 7	יח שמואל ב ז
25	W	II Samuel 8	יט שמואל ב ח'
26	Th	II Samuel 9	כ שמואל ב ט'
27	F	Exodus 18-20	כא יתרו
28	שבת	Haftarah: Isaiah 6-7:10	כב הפטרה: ישעיה ו'-ז', י
29	S	II Samuel 10	כג שמואל ב י'
30	M	II Samuel 11	כד שמואל ב י"א
31	T	II Samuel 12	כה שמואל ב י"ב
		February	
1	W	II Samuel 13	כו שמואל ב י"ג
2	Th	II Samuel 14	כז שמואל ב י"ד
3	F	Exodus 21-24	כח משפטים
4	שבת	Haftarah: I Samuel 20:18-42	כט הפטרה: שמואל א כ', יח-מב
5	S	II Samuel 15	ל שמואל ב ט"ו

אדר א' תשמ"ט — February-March 1989

6	M	II Samuel 16	א שמואל ב ט"ז
7	T	II Samuel 17	ב שמואל ב י"ז
8	W	II Samuel 18	ג שמואל ב י"ח
	Th	II Samuel 19	ד שמואל ב י"ט
	F	Exodus 25-27:19	ה תרומה
	שבת	Haftarah: I Kings 5:26-6:13	ו הפטרה: מלכים א ה', כו-ו', יג
12	S	II Samuel 20	ז שמואל ב כ'
13	M	II Samuel 21	ח שמואל ב כ"א
14	T	II Samuel 22	ט שמואל ב כ"ב
15	W	II Samuel 23	י שמואל ב כ"ג
16	Th	II Samuel 24	יא שמואל ב כ"ד
17	F	Exodus 27:20-30:10	יב תצוה
18	שבת	Haftarah: Ezekiel 43:10-27	יג הפטרה: יחזקאל מ"ג, י-כז
19	S	I Kings 1	יד מלכים א א'
20	M	I Kings 2	טו מלכים א ב'
21	T	I Kings 3	טז מלכים א ג'
22	W	I Kings 4-5	יז מלכים א ד'-ה'
23	Th	I Kings 6	יח מלכים א ו'
24	F	Exodus 30:11-34	יט כי תשא
25	שבת	Haftarah: 1 Kings 18:1-39	כ הפטרה: מלכים א י"ח, א-לט
26	S	I Kings 7	כא מלכים א ז'
27	M	I Kings 8	כב מלכים א ח'
28	T	I Kings 9	כג מלכים א ט'
		March	
1	W	I Kings 10	כד מלכים א י'
2	Th	I Kings 11	כה מלכים א י"א
3	F	Exodus 35-38:20	כו ויקהל פ' שקלים
4	שבת	Haftarah: II Kings 11:17-12:17	כז הפטרה: מלכים ב י"א, יז-י"ב, יז
5	S	I Kings 12	כח מלכים א י"ב
6	M	I Kings 13	כט מלכים א י"ג
7	T	I Kings 14	ל מלכים א י"ד

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