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Illustration of the Book of Ruth, Festival Prayer Book, Germany, c. 1320

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EDITORIAL

It has not been my custom to work on Tisha B'Av, the fast of the ninth of Av which commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples, the downfall of the abortive Bar Kokhba revolt, and several subsequent Jewish national tragedies. But since this editorial piece will deal with Jerusalem, it seems a perfectly appropriate exercise for Tisha B'Av.

My desk faces a window looking out over the Judean desert, the scene of formative events in Israel's biblical history. A more immediate scene is the traditional site of the ancient village of Anatot, birthplace of the prophet Jeremiah. A few minutes walk from here I can view the Old City from a point on Mt. Scopus, and reflect on the beauty of the ancient stones which are imbued with millennia of history.

The sun is beginning to set and is casting a sheen of golden color over the Jerusalem stone. This is precisely the time in the early evening when Jerusalem takes on a special character which has inspired poets from the talmudic period right up to Naomi Shemer of our time to sing about "Jerusalem the Gold." The beauty of the City is breathtaking. The ancient rabbis were ecstatic about Jerusalem and said, "Ten measures of beauty were bestowed upon the world: nine were taken by Jerusalem and one by the rest of the world" (Kid. 49b).

But the importance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people is not related to its beauty but to its religious meaning and to its history. It is noteworthy that Jerusalem, including Zion, is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible nearly 800 times (in the Koran not once; and in the Christian Scriptures 144 times). The prophets saw Jerusalem as the ideal city. So Isaiah calls it "The city of righteousness" (1:26), "The city of holiness" (52:1), "The city of God" (60:14), and Zechariah described it as "The City of Truth" (8:3). Jerusalem thus became the earthly city in which the highest values of Judaism were to be realized in the pursuit of sanctity and social justice. Although the Jewish sages often spoke of "a heavenly Jerusalem" and "an earthly

Jerusalem," the challenge and the religious goal for Jerusalem did not accept the notion of an ideal heavenly Jerusalem as opposed to the real one, but rather the creation of a Jerusalem here on earth where the ideal becomes the real.

From the time of King David, who made Jerusalem his capital city, the Jewish bond with Jerusalem has never once been broken, and wherever he lived the Jew in prayer turned to face the direction of the holy city. No other people, anywhere in the world, at any time in their history, has had such a bond with Jerusalem.

Ever since the eighteenth century the Jews have been the majority of the population, outnumbering the Arabs by as much as two-and-a-half to three times. In the 1948 War of Independence, Jordan captured East Jerusalem and the city was divided in two. Then in 1967 the Israel army regained East Jerusalem, reunited the city and began a massive program of rebuilding with the new University, hospitals, schools, museums, cultural foundations and completely new districts. Today, united Jerusalem is Israel's capital by State law and is the center of Israel's political, religious and cultural life, with freedom of religion and full access to their holy sites accorded to members of other faiths. So the Jew who daily prayed for the peace of Jerusalem has now finally returned to David's historic capital, with a continuing prayer that its future history will match its name, "The City of Peace."

Chaim Pearl

TWO VIEWS OF THE BIBLE

On January 20, 1993, a special symposium took place jointly sponsored by the *Jewish Bible Quarterly* and The Bible Lands Museum, held in the Museum building in Jerusalem. Over 150 people came to hear Dr. Shubert Spero of Bar Ilan University and Dr. Yair Zakovitz of The Hebrew University discuss "Two Views of the Bible: Traditionalist and Secular Humanist."

A TRADITIONALIST VIEW

SHUBERT SPERO

The traditional religious view of the Bible ought to be accorded a certain priority, not merely because it is the older view but because it is the view the Bible claims for itself. The Bible presents itself as the true history of the world, as an account of the origin of the universe and the formation of man, and of the origins and history of the people called Israel. But most important, the Bible purports to contain the word of God addressed to Israel and to all men. I would think, therefore, that any serious approach to the Bible would want to consider it first on its own terms and these are, without a doubt, what we would call religious.

But for a Jew, the issue is not merely a theoretical one of examining a theological claim. The Jew does not just stumble onto this ancient literature. The Bible is handed over to each Jew personally by the previous generation as part of a living tradition. Indeed, the Bible is with us today not because it was found in a cave near the Dead Sea, but because it was carried, over a long and rugged road, for 3500 years by a living people — a people who cherished it, studied it and lived by it. But more important, the people who carried the Bible are, historically, the same people who are described in the Bible — truly the People of the Book.

Thus, a Jew who approaches the Bible today and seriously seeks to unlock its mystery, understand its message, consider its claims, is

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not merely engaging in literary research but is trying to understand his own people, trying to understand what it means to be a Jew, and he is seeking self-understanding. It would seem only fair, therefore, that every Jew be given the opportunity to view his people's literature as it was meant to be read, as the word of God, and thus become acquainted with how the Jewish people saw itself up to the dawn of the modern period.

What is the Jewish religious view of the Bible?

For the purposes of this discussion, I believe it adequate to offer a minimal and functional formulation: The traditional Jewish religious view of the Bible sees the Five Books of Moses (חומש) in their present form as reflecting the will of God for the Jew; which is to say that empirical statements therein are accepted as true and prescriptive statements (מצוות) are accepted as authoritative and binding. Furthermore, this view asserts that the rabbinic legal tradition, the halakhic process in its full historical development, represents the authentic and authoritative interpretation at least of the prescriptive material in the Pentateuch. The remaining books of the Bible, the divisions called Prophets (נביאים) and Writings (כתובים), were written by individuals who were divinely inspired, which means that the historical accounts therein are accepted as true, moral instructions accepted as authoritative and prophecies of the future taken seriously.

Now what are the implications of such a belief for one's approach to the Bible as a whole?

Contrary to a widespread fallacy, holding a religious view does not by itself desensitize one to an appreciation of the Bible as literature, poetry, epic narrative, history or law. On the contrary, if God has seen fit to communicate with man through the medium of words and these words are in the Hebrew language and this language takes the form of literature or poetry, then I must understand Hebrew and its syntax properly and analyze these literary forms thoroughly, in order to arrive at the full meaning of the text. Precisely because of my religious view, with its assumption of multiple layers of meaning, I am motivated and justified to dig

deeply into the biblical material. Witness Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, modern Jews, who both espoused a religious view of the Bible and reached great heights in biblical scholarship. Long before the Modern Age, religious biblical scholars from Saadiah and Menahem ben-Saruk to Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel, not to speak of the talmudic rabbis themselves, wrestled with the text in order intelligently and critically, albeit respectfully, to penetrate the plain meaning (פשט) of the Bible.

For many decades during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several generations of impressionable Jews, who were exposed to modernity, accepted the superficial rationalism of the enlightenment and of the Higher Bible Criticism and not only dismissed out of hand the divine authorship of the Bible but also rejected its value as history. The stories of the Patriarchs were declared to be legends; the stories of Joseph and Moses, fantasy. But those with a religious approach retained their faith in the Bible, certainly as history, right up to our own time, when the archaeologist's spade and the comparative studies of the Egyptologists and the scholars of the rich ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, demonstrated the historical reliability of the biblical account of the Middle Bronze Age conditions as well as of events in the Iron Age.

But of all the implications of the religious view of the Bible, none is so important as the difference it may make as to how one regards biblical values, biblical morality. The entire world has come to admire the beauty of *Love thy neighbor as thyself*, and *Justice, justice shall ye pursue.* Western civilization, influenced by Christianity, has been brought up on the sexual morality of the Bible. Indeed, the basic moral contents of the Ten Commandments were known to the world long before their appearance on the Mosaic Tablets. However, the uniqueness of the Bible lies in its proclamation that the original roots of morality are to be found in the Divine, in the very essence of God, who is Himself just and righteous, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in kindness and truth (צדיק וישר רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב חסד ואמת) — so that the source of morality is not wisdom but prophecy. And while it may be

true that morality is nothing more than conduct befitting the human being as such, yet we need the Bible to tell us what is the nature of man, that the human being deserves moral treatment and is obligated to treat others morally, namely, because he is created in the image of God; and "as He, is merciful and compassionate, so shall you be merciful and compassionate."

Those Jews who believe that the story of Sinai is a fairy tale will ultimately have difficulty regarding the Bible even as a source of morality. For in our cosmopolitan age, why should this literature be favored over the teachings of the Buddha and Confucius? Since, very often, proper moral conduct comes only after a fierce inner struggle, whence is the Jewish secularist to draw his strength and determination or even a justification to engage in a struggle, if ultimately man is the measure of all things, including his morality?

But is there any evidence in the Bible itself, any special features to this literature, that would appear to support the claim that in it reverberates the word of God? In my view, the situation in regard to this question, as in regard to the more fundamental question of the very existence of God, is precisely what it should be: not susceptible to proof either way, for or against. By "proof" I mean a reasoning process that would yield certainty and intellectually compelling assent. But this very lack of proof is how it should be. Because matters of such existential significance as: "Is the universe the creation of a moral God?" and "Does the Bible embody His will?" should be decided by each individual, in a free, personal decision which tests his character, reveals his personality, extends his values, and for which only he himself will carry full responsibility. These momentous questions call upon one's "will to believe," require a "leap of faith" and say, in effect: Impute to the world a moral God and the facts can bear such an interpretation. Impute to the Bible divine inspiration and the facts will not reject it. Here your position is no less rational than that of the secularist who denies divine inspiration! For neither of you has proof positive.

Nevertheless, in its initial stages, this decision procedure is open to rational discussion. One can marshal arguments for and against. Thus, for example, if one encounters self-contradictions in the Bible, then it certainly argues against a single, divinely-inspired author and must be dealt with.

How does a person who is in doubt decide which is the correct view of the Bible, the secular or the religious? As we have indicated, a good part of the judgment involves a rational process: considering various arguments, evidential claims, weighing which theory accounts best for the facts. But ultimately it may involve a religious experience of some sort, an encounter with a spiritual reality, the ability to sense, in some palpable way, the presence of God in the biblical text.

But for this to have a chance of occurring one must heed the advice of Martin Buber paraphrased below.[1]

The man of today can open up to this book and let its rays strike him where they will. He must give himself up to it and absorb its contents with all his strength and wait to see what happens.

But to this end, he must read the Jewish Bible as though it were something entirely unfamiliar, as though it had never been set before him ready-made at school and after, in the light of "religious" or "scientific" certainties.

He must face the Book with a new attitude, as something new. He must yield himself to it, withhold nothing of his being and let whatever will occur between himself and it. He holds himself open. He does not believe anything *a priori*, or disbelieve anything *a priori*. He reads aloud the words written on the book in front of him, he hears the words he utters and it reaches him. Nothing is prejudged.

If we seize upon it as the expression of a reality which comprises all of life, we really grasp it and it grasps hold of us . . . .

1 Martin Buber, "The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible," in *On the Bible* (N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1968) pp. 4ff.

A SECULAR-HUMANIST VIEW

YAIR ZAKOVITZ

Writing my short essay causes me great discomfort: usually, my verbal and written material revolves around the Tanakh; it stands in the center, and I come only to decipher its codes, to expose its ideas. It is not my own view of the world about which I write and lecture, but about the opinions woven into biblical stories, poetry, laws, wisdom and prophecy. I silence myself before the Bible, I mediate between it and readers who are gaining the ability and the devices for independent reading. True, man — and the biblical researcher in particular — is "nothing but a pattern molded in the landscape of his homeland" as the poet says, and my reading of the Tanakh is influenced by the house of my upbringing, by my talents and limitations and by my own particular interests. Nevertheless, I repeat to myself at every opportunity that I am only a servant of the text, I hope a faithful one, who must not exercise any over-creativity and put his master in the shade.

The above allows me to cry out, "Teachers! Do not stretch your hands out to the Bible, do not exploit the Bible for the education of the next generation!" With this I come out against the conception which won itself a place in the educational system, such as Zvi Adar's idea of a humanistic education based on the Tanakh, which is expressed in his book, *The Educational Values of the Tanakh*:

> the main purpose, ultimately, is educating towards the basic values of mankind as they appear for us in the Bible . . . let us follow in its footsteps and see how we can use it as an encyclopedia for us . . . the Tanakh was and can be also for us an education through literature . . . in the Tanakh we have in our possession the finest educational literature existing.

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Adar's idea of using the Tanakh as an educational tool for our children is, on the surface, extremely logical. It is our Bible, and whether we read from it frequently or not, whether we enjoy it or not, we see in it a kinsman, one of our own, someone or something without which we could not imagine our lives.

Why do we feel this closeness to the Bible? The highlights of our calendar are the appointed times in the Bible; our language is its young daughter, and with the renewal and the refreshment of the biblical tongue we speak the Bible although we are unaware of it. In our associative national vocabulary, an honored place is given to the treasures of the Bible, and it is often that we hear of politicians "clinging to the altars of their servants," of missions "as difficult as the parting of the Red Sea," of our army standing up valiantly against the armies of the Arab nations "like David against Goliath," and so on, by necessity or not by necessity, with reason or without. The Bible is the root of our history, and in the very basis of the common historical memory of our people. (Historical memory and not history. It is irrelevant, for example, whether the Exodus from Egypt is an historical fact or not; it is enough that in our consciousness each generation sees itself as though it had been freed from Egypt, and that the Exodus is laden with ideas and symbols which are dear to the hearts of the entire community.) The Bible is the foundation of all our literature: the Tanakh is the father of חז"ל literature, halakhic and aggadic as one. The ancient poetry of Eretz Yisrael is also based on the Bible and the codes of the holy and secular poetry of the Middle Ages cannot be deciphered without extensive knowledge of the Bible. With every tier added to our literary tower one sees something of the biblical elements — in Agnon, in Moshe Shamir, in Yehuda Amichai and in Amir Gilboa. It may also be pointed out that the Bible is the key to understanding Western culture, literature and art. No one can feel at home in this culture without first acquiring knowledge of Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim.

Although we are close to the Tanakh, it remains a distant relative,

more distant than it is close. Its very proximity is what makes us feel removed from it (a feeling not with us while reading *The Iliad* or *War and Peace*). As an analogy, take a Jew who does not observe the Sabbath, and therefore feels uncomfortable sitting in a synagogue. Visiting a church will not produce a similar emotional effect because churches are alien to our world in any case, and we visit them only as curious tourists or as amateur anthropologists. However visiting a synagogue may annoy us because we feel strange and distant, but at the same time we know that this is not how we ought to feel.

What is the cause of this strangeness and distance? The Tanakh is a religious document and its story is the story of a scalene triangle; of God, the people of Israel and the land of Israel. Many of those who live here, on Israeli soil, make no dwelling-place for God in their hearts, and so His long side of the triangle is meaningless for them. A Jew for whom God does not play a central part, or indeed, any part in his life, a Jew who does not believe, is unaware of an extremely important dimension of religious literature, and the participation in ritual is no part of his experience. Not only is the worship of God strange to him, but the whole relationship between God and man, a central element in the Bible, will never be sufficiently clear to him. Like one who is born blind and does not know what color is, like one who is born deaf and has never heard a melody, the freethinker is prevented from fathoming the depths of the religious experience no matter how sincerely he tries to pursue its roots.

Many of the matters dealt with in the Bible are irrelevant to our lives: the making of sacrifices, kashrut laws, the war against idolatry. Furthermore, there are quite a few matters which might provoke us, such as the assumption that God's rule in our world is a just rule, or the idea of the choosing of Israel. We are naturally unable to reconcile ourselves with the laws of excommunication that appear in the Book of Deuteronomy and their realization in the Book of Joshua.

Also the language of the Bible is not, in fact, our language (in spite of what has been said above). Speakers of modern Hebrew often misunderstand the meaning of biblical words because they are unaware of the changes these words have undergone in the thousands of years and abundant layers of the language's existence. A foreigner, who is unfamiliar with the Hebrew language, will investigate the meaning of each word with the aid of a concordance and a dictionary, while the native speaker will rely upon his ability and the power of his understanding. Such words as אקדח, חשמל, אבוך, ביתן, תותח and מנזר are all biblical, but there is a vast difference between their meaning in biblical language and in our own.

Since the Bible is so distant from us, readers of the Bible who wish to actualize it and to educate by it are selective in accordance with their needs and wishes. Anyone who is brave enough to admit that there is a distance, a dislocation between the Tanakh and our times, may find the path leading to a renewed closeness to it. The reader must not ignore the religious dimension; the Tanakh without God is like the Book of Job without Job, like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. At the same time, the reader must remove the mantle of holiness spread over the Bible, so that he may reach out his hand and touch the human document.

The Bible was written in the language of human beings, by human beings and for human beings, and the reader standing before this creation of man may admire this artistic deed, the unity of a short story, the depth of feeling in a poem from the Song of Songs and the wisdom of the rhetoric in a chapter of Prophets. And indeed, even a prophet who begins with "thus saith the Lord" is formulating the words of the message in his own style. Every prophet is a man, a poet and a talented and skilled orator, and each prophet has his own ideas which he wishes to channel through to his audience or readers. Whomever the fear of God overpowers, whoever does not succeed in reaching out his hand and touching the human creation, will not feel the humor packed within the leaves of the book. The fearful

reader will not see that the incident with Rahab the prostitute (Josh. 2) actually mocks Joshua who sent two *schlemieldik* spies to Jericho. He sought assistance from an intelligence operation although divine salvation had already been promised him (Chapter 1), and he finally learnt from his spies, the lesson which Rahab had placed in their mouths: וכי נפלה אימתכם עלינו וכי נמגו יושבי הארץ מפניכם . . . (2, 15) — a quotation from the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:15-16). What a prostitute from Jericho knew, Joshua should have known — to trust God and to abstain from sending the spies. The story of the beginning of the peoples Moab and Ammon (Gen. 15:40-48) is an Israelite joke about their origin, mocking them as though they came into the world as the result of an incest scandal. The incident with Judah and Tamar (Gen. 48) is a story (whose origin is in the kingdom of Ephraim) about the undignified origins of David from the Tribe of Judah and the House of Peretz, born through incest. More than that, Peretz, by being born, steals his brother's birthright and his privileges, so as to teach us that "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree," and that David is like him in that he steals the throne from the House of Saul. Examples of parody are also not lacking in the Bible: The incident of trapping Saul for the throne (I Sam. 6:20-21) is based on the story of the trapping of a criminal Achan the son of Carmi the son of Zabdi the son of Zerah, of the Tribe of Judah (Josh. 7:14-18), and this is to hint to the reader that Saul may be something of a criminal.

Acknowledging the human dimension will aid the reader in exposing criticism, even if it is hidden, of biblical characters, patriarchs and prophets included. As a result of Abram's descending to Egypt during a famine (Gen. 12:10-20), the enslavement of his seed by Egypt was decreed (so the Ramban interprets). For Elijah's informing on the people of Israel at Horeb (I Kg. 19), at the place where Moses had defended them after their sin with the golden calf (Ex. 42-43), God releases him from his duties because he is no longer worthy of serving as a prophet. The courage to discover the criticism, the hidden controversy with figures, their

deeds and their misdeeds, exposes coded treasures to the reader who removes the veil of holiness which acts as a barrier between himself and the text.

The reader of the human document will notice a lack of unity, a lamination in the stages of the ideas' development and growth. Biblical law, for example, is not made of one layer, that of the law given to Moses on Mount Sinai, but reflects a development and an adaptation to the necessities of reality. The remission of debts (Deut. 15:1-11) is never invoked unless there are difficulties caused by the leaving of fields fallow during the sabbatical year (Ex. 23:10-13); the law forbidding the integration of the Ammonite and the Moabite in the congregation of God (Deut. 23:4) did not stand the test of the reality of intermarriage to foreign women — see the Book of Ruth — and it was finally adapted in the Mishnah to the scroll's viewpoint of that story: "The Ammonite and the Moabite are prohibited and their prohibition is for eternity, but their females are permitted immediately" (Yebamoth 8:3).

The literature of the Bible grew out of a constant and tense dialogue between different social groups. Many of the Bible's works interpret other, earlier biblical works, in order to equip and adapt them to their times and to their spiritual world. One of the most famous examples is that the Book of Chronicles, which was written in the days of the return to Zion. It goes back and relates the history of the monarchy recorded in the Books of Samuel and Kings in its own way, thus shaping the past in accordance with the conceptions of its present. The Bible is therefore a mirror reflecting an active and dynamic spiritual life, as well as change and development, but always clinging to the core, to what is beyond time and space.

The reader who is unafraid of the unity's collapse, the reader who is capable of handling the variety of opinions and viewpoints, will listen not only to the sound of the central streams of thought in the Bible but also to the murmur of the rivulets which run quietly, to the voice of digressive traditions, such as the one on the basis of which the people of Israel worshiped gods until the land was conquered

before them (Josh. 24:14), or the one which related the giving of the law at Shechem.

Distancing from the Bible, therefore, creates the possibility of drawing near, of examining the mosaic stones which make up the whole picture. Sensitivity to the richness of ideas, to the dialogue and to the struggle, proves how much we are a part of the people of the Bible, how much we think like them, deliberating, clinging to a concept, releasing it and adopting another. We too, as possessors of the Bible, have our collection of beliefs, timeless truths that often clash with the necessities which time perpetuates. Just as the authors of the Bible found various ways of compromising between the ideal and reality, thus we do ourselves.

The discovery of the similarity between our own way of thinking and that of our creative predecessors brings us nearer to the Bible and bridges the deep abyss between it and ourselves. Suddenly, we realize that some of the serious questions we struggle with also disturbed the peace of mind of people of biblical times. Just as we frequently busy ourselves with the question of our right to the land of Israel, so did people of biblical times. The stories of land-buying in Hebron (Gen. 43), in Shechem (Gen. 43:18-20), in Jerusalem (I Kg. 16, 24) were created in order to teach that the land of Israel cannot be considered stolen while under our occupation, that it was not by force that we took it from its rightful owners, as was already pointed out by the authors of the Midrash: ויקן את חלקת השדה וגו' (Gen. 33:19). Rabbi Judan the son of Rabbi Simon said: "This is one of the three places of which the nations of the earth cannot cheat Israel, saying 'it was stolen by you,' and these are: the Cave of Mahpelah, the Temple and Joseph's grave . . ." (Bereshit Rabah 79:7). Also, the story of the covenant of the pieces (Gen. 15) proves the giving of the land into our hands as a result of the sins of its first inhabitants כי לא שלם עון האמרי עד הנה (v. 16), and it is also a strong hint that if they too sin, their fate will be the same as their predecessors (see also Lev. 18:28).

We are likely to identify with some of the values reflected in the Bible, such as the praise of mercy — a matter which the Prophet

Jonah, who believed that "justice must take its course," found difficulty in accepting, or with the idea of ministerial responsibility reflected in the story of Naboth the Jezreelite (I Kg. 21). Although Ahab did nothing to gain Naboth's vineyard, and it was his wife who dropped him the vineyard like a ripe fruit, the prophet blames him: הרצחת וגם ירשת (v. 18). A king may not hide behind his wife's apron; Ahab is the one in authority, and any action done by his authority is his responsibility. The ruler is not master of the law but subject to it, as is emphasised by the law of kings in the Book of Deuteronomy (17:18-20).

The joy in the discovery that some biblical values exist in our own set of values should not turn to grief when faced with the recognition that many biblical beliefs are completely alien to us. Under no circumstances should we occupy ourselves with a midrashic-acrobatic interpretation which overrides the text and gives it meanings which were never intended, all in the name of bringing it closer to us. The act of rape is not only forbidden by law, it is also futile and will never bring the distant close. We must forgo in advance the idea of identification with the Bible and its world. This concession is not, heaven forbid, a forfeiting of the knowledge, the understanding, the appreciation and even the admiration: the admiration of a grand kaleidoscope of the world of thought, and admiration of the artistic tool into which life was breathed. The humble reader, who is prepared to silence his own voice in the face of the many-tongued chorus of the Bible, who is prepared to study what exists in the Bible, and not to force upon it what it does not contain, comes as close to the Bible as we can ever hope.

At the beginning of my essay, I threw education out of the door. At its conclusion, I allow it to return through the window. The teaching of an honest, objective, sensitive and humble reader who hears and listens even to the voices which seem a discord to his ears, is an educational act of the highest order.

(Translated from the Hebrew by Aviva Wolfers.)

GOD AND MAN ON TRIAL

SHIMON BAKON

Dedicated to the memory of my mother, a survivor of Theresienstadt, who suffered greatly, losing too many of her dearest ones, but who never raised a voice of protest against God.

The biblical concept of God as being One and governing the world by justice marked a breakthrough in religious thinking, and created a radical change not only in the thought but also in the lifestyle of peoples. However, this combination of attributes carried the seeds of an almost insoluble problem: How is one to explain the existence of "evil" within the context of monotheism? Within the framework of polytheism there is ample room for evil. In Zoroastrian dualism the two cosmic forces, Ahriman, the principle of darkness, and Ahura-Mazda, that of light, are engaged in an eternal struggle.

Theodicy has made valiant efforts to vindicate God. One philosophical attempt is the argument that since God is the only One who is perfect, His creation, by necessity, is already imperfect. However, Isaiah stated unequivocally, *I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil* (Is. 45:7), and the Book of Job introduced "evil" in the form of Satan.

Possibly an even greater problem is posed by the biblical God of Justice. A corollary of the belief in divine justice is retribution: namely, reward of the righteous and punishment of the wicked. While on a national level this belief may have some validity, when applied to the individual, common experience invalidates it. Already Jeremiah complained bitterly:

Right wouldest Thou be, O Lord, were I to contend with Thee,
Yet will I reason with Thee:
Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? (Jer. 12:1).

Shimon Bakon is the editor of The Jewish Bible Quarterly.

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the problem of theodicy, but Gordis states it correctly: "For the conventional believer, faith in divine retribution is basic to ethical behavior — deny the first and the second will collapse."[1] There is another profound problem implicit in the belief in retribution. If, indeed, well-being is the result of ethical behavior, man's moral integrity can be put into question. If there is a direct relation between deeds and reward, how do we know whether that individual acted from altruistic motives, or was prompted by the judicious promise of reward? The author of Job was quite aware of both problems.

THE TWO TRIALS OF MAN

It is generally assumed that the Prologue to the Book of Job is an old folk tale which the author of Job tailored to serve as a stage for his great poem, in which Job, though righteous, suffers. The Prologue is much more than that. It is an integral part of the entire book. Moreover, the genius of the author allows us insights into fundamental beliefs, which are denied to the *dramatis personae*. One of these beliefs is full divine trust in the integrity of man. Pointing to Job, God teases Satan:

> *Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a whole-hearted and an upright man, one that feareth God, and shunneth evil* (1:8).[2]

Another insight is that Satan, the personification of "evil," who perpetrates mischief and who will be responsible for the undeserved suffering of Job, is conceived entirely within the framework of biblical monotheism and is a legitimate member of the celestial

1 Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965) p. 153.

2 This trust in the exalted status of man is reflected in Psalm 8:6: *Yet Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels, And hast crowned him with glory and honor.*

council. He is no separate cosmic force, such as Ahriman, but performs certain functions within the parameters that God has set for him. He is not Lucifer, a fallen angel, for we see him summoned a second time to the heavenly court; nor is he the Christian devil Mephisto, who vies with the Divine for the possession of souls. But it is he who denigrates man! Arguing that Job's righteousness is due only to all the beneficence God has bestowed on him, Satan receives permission from God to "lay hands" on Job, and a crescendo of suffering is now inflicted on him. In quick succession Job's vast holdings are destroyed by Sabeans, then by fire and by the Chaldeans. His seven sons and three daughters are all killed when a building in which they had been feasting collapses. Yet at this stage Job accepts his suffering without question, uttering his immortal words:

Naked came I out of my mother's womb
And naked shall I return thither;
The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away
Blessed be the name of the Lord (1:21).

When God, at another celestial council proudly indicates to Satan: *he* [Job] *still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou didst move Me against him* (2:3), Satan proposes a more severe test of Job's integrity. He challenges God: *put forth Thy hand now, and touch his bone and flesh, surely he will blaspheme Thee to Thy face* (2:5). Satan is granted reluctant permission, with the proviso that he spare Job's life, and smites him with a repulsive and painful sickness. Job's response to his new suffering is a seven-day silence, which he shares with his three friends who have come to comfort him.

This is the beginning of a new trial awaiting Job, entirely different from that set by Satan, who insinuated that his moral integrity was questionable since it sprang from self-interest. The friends' primary concern is the vindication of divine justice. Eliphaz, the senior of the three, asserts:

Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent?
Where were the upright cut off?

According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity
And sow mischief, reap the same (4:7-8).

Essentially, the friends proclaim, in various forms and nuances, the implicit guilt of Job as the cause of his suffering. Job insists on his innocence, maintaining to the last his moral integrity. In Chapter 31, universally acclaimed as a magnificent summary of the highest ethical concepts, Job presents the lofty ideals by which he had lived and conducted his affairs.

GOD ON TRIAL

There are several instances recorded in the Bible where God is challenged. Abraham accepted unquestioningly the justice of God, but wondered if it was in keeping with His justice to destroy all of Sodom, since there might be a number of righteous people there. What is more, would it not be right to save the city for the sake of a righteous minority? Moses at first did not accept God's mandate to free Israel from Egyptian bondage, since he felt unworthy of this demanding task. Jonah refused God's demands to preach to Nineveh, and Jeremiah contended with the Lord on the crucial issue of justice, not comprehending the apparent perversion of justice when the wicked succeed.

Job goes far beyond any of these biblical giants, for he is personally involved. He suffers greatly and, in the light of the dogma of retribution, cannot see any justification for it. He feels innocent of any wrongdoing (on his part), and undeserving of the penalty inflicted upon him. Of course, he is unaware of what had transpired in the heavenly sphere. One of the answers to his dilemma could have been for him to deny the existence of God altogether; however, such a thought would never have crossed his mind. On the contrary, on occasion, like sparks in the darkness of his despair, an almost childlike trust in the Almighty shines through:

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him (13:15).

As for me, I know that my redeemer liveth (19:25).

On the other hand, he questions the moral order imposed by the Almighty.[3]

If I have sinned, what do I unto Thee? (7:20).

In what has been properly named a "parody" of Psalm 8, Job complains:

What is man, that Thou shouldest magnify him,
And that Thou shouldest set Thy heart upon him? (7:17).

While the Psalmist rhapsodizes about the dual role of man, so small in the sight of God, *yet but little lower than the angels*, Job, emphasizing the insignificance of man, queries why God should mind him altogether.

In Chapter 9 the alienation of Job from God reaches a low when he has the effrontery to charge Him with arbitrariness.

I am innocent . . . . It is all one . . . therefore I say:
He destroyeth the innocent and the wicked (9:21-22).

In an outburst of desperation Job even charges God with outright perversion of justice:

The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covereth the faces of the judges thereof. If it is not He, who then is it? (9:24).

And in Chapter 10 Job charges God with an act of cruelty:

Is it good unto Thee that Thou shouldest oppress.
That Thou shouldest despise the work of Thy hands? (10:3).

What was the purpose of creating man and then to abandon him? Is it merely to perpetrate mockery?

3 This question is later answered by Elihu with the remarkable statement, which does not elicit a response from Job.

If Thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? . . .

Thy wickedness concerneth a man as thou art and thy righteousness a son of man (35:7, 8).

I consider this the first categoric imperative. One acts righteously since it affects a fellow man.

THE VOICE FROM THE WHIRLWIND

Despairing of ever getting a proper hearing from his friends, Job repeatedly had demanded a direct confrontation with God. However, when this finally occurs, the sounds coming forth from the whirlwind do not seem to offer any response to the accusations Job had hurled against God, yet he reaches a peace of mind and feels fully vindicated. How did this come about?

God's two speeches, in which He first describes the miracle of inanimate nature and then the mystery of living creatures, challenge Job as to whether he truly understands any of God's creative powers. These revelations seem irrelevant to the basic issue of retributive justice, but in fact Job is shocked into the realization that man, though perhaps the peak, is not necessarily the center of creation. In the framework of an immense universe and its amazing diversity, the affairs of man shrink into insignificance. What we have here is a radical biblical departure in the perception of the world from anthropocentric to cosmocentric. The Voice proclaims:

Who hath cleft a channel for the waterflood . . .
To cause it to rain on a land where no man is,
On the wilderness wherein there is no man; (38:25-26)

Job gets the message: rain is not for the sole benefit of man. Let us compare Psalm 104, another magnificent ode on God in nature, with Chapters 38-39 of Job. In the Psalm "man" is central and is mentioned five times. Bread and wine are here to rejoice man's heart. In Job, in God's speeches, man is conspicuous by his absence. In a cosmocentric universe, God cannot be judged by man's standard of justice. One of the keys to God's message to Job is when the Voice upbraids him:

Wilt thou even make void My judgment?
Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be justified (40:8)?

With this statement Job is silenced, for with it the circle of two diametrically opposed assumptions is closed, and he is proved to be

wrong. Eliphaz had staunchly maintained that Job's suffering was deserved (4:7-8). Job had countered that he was innocent; ergo, there is no divine justice. Now, in an ironic reminder, God suggests that Job himself had used the same "dogma" in reverse, to impeach the Lord. Job, to justify his innocence, had accused God of injustice. Thus, by a strange paradox, God's vindication is also Job's vindication.

There is also a third element in the Voice which serves as a corrective to Job's fundamental assumptions. In a universe ruled by many forces, there is legitimate room for evil. In the Prologue we met Satan, the personification of evil. In the Voice from the whirlwind, the regrettable but alas necessary existence of evil is confirmed.

> *Wilt thou hunt the prey for a lioness? Or satisfy the appetite*
> *of the young lions . . . ?*
> *Who provideth for the raven his prey,*
> *When his young ones cry unto God?* (38:39-40).

Why are these two creatures of prey singled out, for whom God does provide food? After all, their food consists of other living creatures. What about the vicious, unconquerable, malevolent Leviathan, another residue of evil in the world, perhaps representing the world's unredeemed state of affairs? Whether "evil" is personified by Satan or by Leviathan, or even by the "evil inclination," it is an integral and necessary part of Creation, and so is suffering.

Job now fully understands.

JOB VINDICATED

Like some of the other great narrations in the Bible, the Book of Job unfolds in two orbits, the divine and the human. Actions and events seem to flow from the free will of man, but above them hovers divine Providence. We, the outsiders, are aware that Job is a man of great moral character. Satan questions it, and the friends accuse him in

Kafkaesque fashion, of some unspecified crime. But unlike Kafka's heroes, who never penetrate the castle, Job is fully exonerated in God's words addressed to Eliphaz:

> *My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath* (42:7).

What an astonishing reversal! The friends are rebuked for having attempted all along to maintain the righteousness of God, while Job's harsh words, directed against the divine rule of the world, are praised as being truthful. God's rebuke to Eliphaz and His praise of Job's honesty is one of the high points of the entire book. Fleming James makes an interesting observation: "One of the things that strikes the reader in the dialogue of the Book of Job is the unrestrained freedom with which the hero spoke his mind to God."[4]

However, "freedom" is basic to the biblical view of man, for he is free to choose:

> *I will call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life* (Deut. 30:19).

In a later talmudic elaboration, the providential-deterministic limitation of man is broken precisely in the religious-moral sphere: "All is in the control of heaven, except fear of heaven."[5] In this daring statement man is given the freedom to defy God and His moral demands.

There is always a danger of reading into biblical passages meanings that are not there. However, who can deny that the intellectual giant who authored the Book of Job perceived that integrity — even to the point of speaking one's mind against God — the existence of evil, and man's freedom, are essential ingredients of moral conduct? For in a world suffused only with goodness, without evil and suffering, there is no need for a moral decision.

4 Fleming James, *Personalities of the Old Testament* (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 522.

5 *Talmud Berachot* 33b.

AN UNANSWERED QUESTION

Job comes away from his two trials fully exonerated. Satan's charge that Job-man- [perhaps] Israel, is incapable of acting "autonomously," of transcending the lure of reward and punishment, is nullified by God Himself, who vouches for him. Furthermore, it is confirmed by Job, who counters his wife's demand: *Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Blaspheme God, and die . . . .* with: *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* (2:9-10).

The charge proffered by the friends, that his suffering must be a deserved punishment for some sins committed, is vetoed by the Voice from the whirlwind, expressing anger at Eliphaz and his friends: *ye have not spoken of Me that is right as My servant Job hath* (42:7).

However, the basic question of the "Why" of his suffering remains unanswered. Just as the many mysteries of creation and the universe, it is part of God's inscrutable design, beyond the ken of man's great yet limited intellect. Job is never informed how his suffering came about. God merely indicates that by imputing his "undeserved" calamities to God who conducts His moral world arbitrarily, Job is, in fact as unjustified as his friends who had asserted that his suffering was the direct result of God's displeasure with him.

Job now accepts his fate when he states:

I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear
But now mine eye seeth Thee (42:5).

Its meaning is clear. from his previous understanding, based on the theology of tradition, there was no room for the suffering of the righteous. Now, with his deepened awareness and trust in God, the Omnipotent, he gains new insights and becomes at one with his Creator, his faith unshaken.

It may be of some significance that the tragedy of Job has become the paradigm of the Shoah. Job is made to suffer to disprove Satan

and to prove the great spiritual potential inherent in man. It is of little comfort, but the truth nevertheless, that Jews and Judaism were the implacable enemy of Nazism. Like Job, the Jews lost their people. But like him they survived and recreated a dynamic new life. The human spirit is unconquerable.

THE INCIDENT AT THE LODGING HOUSE

LAWRENCE H. FINK

The Exodus story is marked by a peculiar episode seemingly interwoven into an otherwise seamless narrative relating the beginning of Moses' mission to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt. In Chapter 3, God speaks to Moses at the burning bush to identify Himself and to instruct Moses. Chapter 4 recounts Moses' protestations of his inadequacy to the task, his further instructions and his leavetaking from his father-in-law, Jethro, and his departure from Midian. Chapter 5 concludes in Egypt with Moses and Aaron addressing Pharaoh and Pharaoh's retaliation by imposing additional burdens on the Hebrews.

Within Chapter 4, however, verses 24-26 contain a strange story, the incident at the lodging place and the circumcision of Moses' son. We pick up the narrative at verse 22:

> . . . *'And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh: Thus saith the Lord: Israel is My son, My first-born. And I have said unto thee: Let My son go, that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go. Behold I will slay thy son, thy first-born.' And it came to pass on the way at the lodging place, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said: 'Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me.' So He let him alone. Then she said 'A bridegroom of blood in regard of the circumcision.' And the Lord said to Aaron: 'Go into the wilderness to meet Moses . . . .'*

That this episode is peculiar has long been recognized and is the subject of considerable discussion. The traditional interpretation

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has been that God, having instructed Moses to return to Egypt and warn Pharaoh to release the Israelites or face impending disaster, then, in the person of an angel, confronts Moses along the way and renders him deathly ill, in punishment for his failure to have circumcised his son Eliezer prior to embarking on the journey. Moses, incapacitated by this attack, is then incapable of performing the ritual and Zipporah does so in his stead. She then throws the foreskin at Moses' feet and calls their son "a bridegroom of blood."

The narrative is thus read (with pronouns identified in brackets):

> *And thou* [Moses] *shalt say unto Pharaoh: 'Thus saith the Lord: Israel is My son, My first-born. And I* [God] *have said unto thee* [Pharaoh]: *Let My son go, that he* [the children of Israel] *may serve me; and thou* [Pharaoh] *hast refused to let him* [the children of Israel] *go. Behold I* [God] *will slay thy* [Pharaoh's] *son, thy* [Pharaoh's] *first-born. And it came to pass on the way, at the lodging place, that the Lord met him* [Moses], *and sought to kill him* [Moses]. *Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son* [Eliezer] *and cast it at his* [Moses'] *feet; and she said: 'Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou* [Eliezer] *to me.' So He* [God] *let him* [Moses] *alone. Then she* [Zipporah] *said* [to her son]: *'A bridegroom of blood in regard of the circumcision.' And the Lord said to Aaron . . . .*

Not surprisingly, this story has been the subject of considerable midrashic and talmudic exposition, with some convoluted explanations being put forth to account for the several events. The consensus view is in accord with Rashi's interpretation[1] that Moses faced the divine punishment of death because he failed to circumcise his son Eliezer. According to the Midrash, Moses was faced with a dilemma. If he circumcised his son Eliezer, either his journey would be delayed for at least three days (in contravention of God's instructions) or his son's health would be put at risk. Rashi, quoting

1 Rashi on Exodus 4:24.

the Talmud[2] suggests, alternatively, that Moses was accountable not because of his failure to circumcise his son before setting off on his journey, but because, upon arrival at the lodging place, he concerned himself with the lodging place (i.e., his comfort) first. Only Simeon ben Gamliel expressed a contrary view, that Satan sought to slay not Moses, but "the child."[3]

Accordingly, at the lodging place, God (or an angel, or an angel appearing as a serpent, depending upon different legends) attacked Moses and, by the method of attack, makes it clear to Zipporah that the circumcision should have been performed.[4] Zipporah acts promptly, in the face of Moses' incapacity, and throws the foreskin at the feet of her husband, pronouncing their son "a bridegroom of blood." Onkelos holds the blood to be that of the circumcision, while Rashi considers it that of her husband, because her bridegroom [Moses] would have been slain because of his failure to perform the circumcision.

Even with the accepted resolutions of the problems posed by the lack of clear identification of the persons represented by the several pronouns, the story still does not hang together. Significant questions remain which, if anything, detract from an understanding of the lesson(s) to be learned from the Torah, rather than elucidate it. These questions include:

(1) If Eliezer is the subject of the circumcision story, why does no one hold Moses accountable for his apparent, and fundamentally more significant, failure to trust in God? By performing the act of circumcision and setting off on the journey without delay Moses would clearly demonstrate his absolute faith. Why is it postulated that Moses faced a dilemma? Why does Moses have to choose, in what can only be described as a lose-lose situation? Does he, in fact, make such a choice?

2 Nedarim 31b-32a.
3 *Ibid.*
4 See Rashi *ad. loc.* and Nedarim 32a.

(2) Why did God "change His mind" and seek to kill Moses after having just sent him on the mission to confront Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt? Would God actually change His mind? And if Moses makes a choice to carry out God's wishes without delay, rather than circumcise Eliezer and then tarry for the sake of his baby's health, would that merit the death penalty? If God is engaged in a detailed and prolonged conversation with Moses, demonstrating signs and wonders, could He not have also instructed Moses to circumcise his son at some defined point, because it would be unseemly not to do so and then appear before the children of Israel as their leader?

(3) Why did Zipporah perform the circumcision and whom did she then address as "a bridegroom of blood"?

(4) Finally, the most critical question of all: Who was the object of God's warning "Behold, I will slay thy son, thy first-born"?

There seems to be universal agreement that the answer to Question 4 is that God instructed Moses to tell Pharaoh that his own son would eventually die, and that this (tenth) plague was singled out for mention in advance because it was the most severe. There is reason to believe, however, that this basic interpretation may be flawed and that correction of this error leads, inevitably, to quite a different interpretation of the subsequent pronouns and, therefore, of the entire story and its lesson.

The first question to resolve is: Does Moses, in fact, tell Pharaoh that his (Pharaoh's) son will die? Interestingly, the answer to this question brings us to another odd interpretation in a later passage. Chapter 10 ends with Pharaoh dismissing Moses after the ninth plague and threatening him with death should he dare return. Moses responds *Thou hast spoken well: I will see thy face again no more* (v. 29). The obvious conclusion is that Moses does not, in fact, announce to Pharaoh the tenth plague and its implications. Chapter 11 continues the temporal sequence with God telling Moses about the tenth plague and the coming redemption from bondage, instructing him to *Speak now in the ears of the people*. But then there is a peculiar

interposition, beginning with a second sentence in verse 3: *Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt . . . .* The chapter then recapitulates a detailed description of the impending death of all the first-born of Egypt, concluding at the end of verse 8, *And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.* If temporal sequencing cannot be literally deduced from the Torah, there is at least a question raised by the phraseology as to whether, in fact, Moses does address Pharaoh regarding the impending death of his first-born.

In response to the questions raised above, Question 2 should be answered first. Simply put, except for an appeal for divine mercy (cf. Moses' intercessions on behalf of Israel) there is no instance in the Torah where God announces His determination to do something and then changes His mind. Therefore, we should reject the simplistic interpretation, however layered by commentary over the ages, that God sent Moses on the mission to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and then disabled him for failing to circumcise his son.

Similarly, with respect to Question 1, it is inconsistent with our view of Moses to believe that he would find himself in a dilemma over the circumcision of his son and thus incur the extreme wrath of the Almighty. The Torah records only one instance of Moses' "disobedience" to God's instructions, the striking of the rock. For that he is punished by being forbidden to lead the children of Israel over the Jordan and into Canaan. Both the incident and the punishment are clearly detailed in the Torah, with a clear linkage of cause and effect, and an equally clear moral message. The lodging-house incident, however, appears to come without warning and, seemingly, without provocation.

Without warning, that is, only if the traditional view is held. If, however, we read the episode as beginning not with verse 24 (*And it came to pass . . .*), but with the prior verse, an alternative scenario becomes apparent. Inserting appropriate pronouns, the relevant verses read:

> *Behold I* [God] *will slay thy* [Moses'] *son, thy first-born* [Gershom]. *And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that the Lord met him* [Gershom], *and sought to kill him* [Gershom]. *Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son* [Gershom], *and cast it at his* [Moses'] *feet; and she said: 'Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou* [Moses] *to me.' So He* [God] *let him* [Gershom] *alone. Then she said* [to Moses]: *'A bridegroom of blood in regard of the circumcision.'*

What about Moses' first-born son, born in Midian years earlier? There is good reason to believe that he remained uncircumcised, in accordance with local Midianite custom, and remained so at the time of Moses' departure for Egypt.[5] Accordingly, having warned Moses, *Behold I will slay thy son . . .*, God then "delivers" on his promise at the lodging place. This scenario also explains why Zipporah was the one who performed the rite of circumcision. Realizing that she, because of her Midianite custom, had delayed the circumcision of her son Gershom she was personally accountable for the near-death of her son.

Finally, in despair, she accuses Moses of being a "bridegroom of blood in regard of the circumcision." By no stretch of the imagination is one really able to consider it appropriate for Zipporah (or any woman, for that matter) to refer to her *son* (either the younger Eliezer or the older Gershom) as a "bridegroom." The only rational explanation is that, forced to accede to, indeed to perform, the act of circumcision which she had so long delayed, Zipporah, her son's blood on her hands and a mother's fear for the safety of her son in her heart, cries out in anguish to Moses, her bridegroom and husband, that he is responsible for this act and its potential consequences.

5 There is indeed a tradition that before Jethro gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses as a wife an agreement was forced on Moses that one son would be brought up in the Midianite tradition.

SENSE AND INCENSE

SCHNEIR LEVIN

Now Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his fire pan, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered before the Lord alien fire, which he had not enjoined upon them. And fire came forth from the Lord and consumed them; thus they died . . . (Lev. 10:1, 2).
But Nadab and Abihu died . . . when they offered alien fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai (Num. 3:4, 26:61).

What happened? What is this all about? Why did Nadab and Abihu die? Their father Aaron's stunned reaction was predictable: He was "silent" (New International Version), "dumbfounded" (NEB; a fine alliteration with the Hebrew *vayidom* of Lev. 10:3), "pierced with anguish" (Septuagint). Their mother's reaction is not recorded. Moses attempted an explanation. For all the obscurity of verse 3, the intention, it seems, is to couple the two sons with the notion of holiness. God takes to Him those whom He especially values. To this day we refer to slain adults and children as *kedoshim utehorim*, (holy and pure). That is one explanation for their deaths, and a most reasonable and sympathetic explanation it is, especially on the spot, at the time of their deaths, with their stricken father Aaron silently crying "Why, why, why?"

Their evaluation as righteous young men must have persisted for centuries if we can judge by their reappearance, in those very names, or close to them (Nadab and Abijah), among the sons of jeroboam, the first king of Israel after the division with Judah. It was predicted that the offspring of Jeroboam would be burned (I Kg.

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14:10), but it is expressly stated of Abijah, who became ill (v. 1) and died (v. 17) was a good person (v. 13) and all Israel mourned him (v. 18).

In his commentary, Rashi briefly notes a source (Sifre) classifying the sons as righteous. They are called *bahurim yafim* (fine youths) in Shmot Rabbah 24:11 and *chavivim . . . hamakom* (beloved of God) in Bamidbar Rabbah 2:23.

And yet, in terms of theodicy, it is morally unsatisfying, if not repellant, to explain that God kills because the victims are especially righteous. The generation of Noah and that of Sodom were killed because they were wicked; that satisfies the demands of theodicy, God's justice. There are numerous prophetic warnings and explanations for the impending doom to be visited on Israel and later on Judah because of their wickedness. God cannot be defined as wicked or capricious, so His people must perforce wear this label: *Ah, sinful nation, a people tainted with iniquity* (Isa. 1:4) as an explanation for defeat, destruction and exile.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that with the passage of time we encounter a reversal of the early evaluation of Nadab and Abihu as righteous innocents; no, they were wicked, they were up to all kinds of illicit activities and deserved death. Leviticus 10:9 warns against drinking alcohol before holy service in the tabernacle, lest death ensue. Accordingly, the couple must have been drunkards (Lev. Rab. 20:9; also Rashi). Moreover, they used unauthorized priestly ways — it says so in the text: *esh zara* — alien flame (Lev. 10:1). One cam hardly avoid the mind's flight to *avoda zara* — pagan religious practice. So that is what they were up to! They were haughty (Lev. Rab. 20:10), and aimed to oust their father and uncle and replace them: "When will these two oldsters die, and I and you will lead this generation?" (Sanhedrin 52a). God thereupon sent two streams, then four streams of fire which consumed their lives without signs of external injury (Ibid. 52a).

In time the commentaries compounded their wickedness as a necessary argument in the cause of divine justice. God, just and

merciful, could not be guilty, His moral motives could not be questioned, so that further sins had to be imputed to Nadab and Abihu. In this context, and highly relevant, is a remarkable passage found in some prayer-books near the end of the Sabbath morning service. It is a paragraph from Mishna Keritot 6a and deals with Temple incense. Some sixteen constituents of incense are listed, plus another from a Rabbi Nathan, c. 200 C.E. These constituents far exceed those listed in Exodus 30:34ff. These numerous materials could not have been available in the barren Sinai and derive from the period when the Temple ritual flourished; they are a listing from earlier documents and records the ingredients used at one time or another in the Temple. If all of these are not used precisely as described, says Rabbi Nathan, then the officiant is deserving of death. What? Is he serious? The apothecary compounding these items makes an error of mixing and must die? It seems that this opinion can only make sense if seen as an oblique allusion to Aaron's sons. It is hardly possible to consider incense without reference to Nadab and Abihu. The use of alien or illicit mixtures deserves death and hence explains, if not excuses, the horror of the death sentence visited on Aaron's sons.

In his Pentateuch commentary, Hertz accuses them of intoxication, unholy ambition, arbitrary tampering with the service and introducing strange fire into the sanctuary. "It is probable that the fire [which killed them] took the form of a lightning flash, killing them without destroying their garments."[1] (It says in the text that they were buried with their tunics on [Lev. 10:5]). S. R. Hirsch, in his Pentateuchal commentary[2] really lays it on thick. In two full pages, he waxes indignant at their depravity: "conceited vanity . . . self-importance . . . [with offerings] illegal and sinful."[3] The Levitical text gives no indication of such extravagant exegesis. The sons of Eli were wicked and it is so stated (I Sam. 8:1-5), but not the

1 2nd ed., 1964, p. 480.
2 P. 445.
3 2nd ed., 1962.

sons of Aaron. Putting aside all interpretations of early righteousness and later wickedness, what can we actually learn or infer from the incident?

All we are told about Nadab and Abihu is that they were childless (Num. 3:4, 1 Chr. 24:2). If so, they were probably in their late teens or early twenties when they approached their soon-to-prove-fatal priestly function. They were young, they were inexperienced, perhaps even irresponsible and reckless. Very likely they did not know much about varieties of incense and their incendiary properties (both English words derived from the same Latin root). Unauthorized (Lev. 10:1) incense, (*ketoret zara*), of which two handfuls of fragrant powder (Lev. 16:12) were placed in a fire-pan, was forbidden (Ex. 30:9). There must already have been earlier unhappy experiences with the use of novel ingredients. Experiments with new and untried varieties of incense by the young, without adequate supervision, could be hazardous, in which case culpability would rest with the elders, with Aaron and Moses. Nadab and Abihu were inexperienced, if not irresponsible, and he who plays with fire can expect to get burned.

The text writes of an alien fire, the consequence, of course, of an alien incense (Ex. 30:9). An "Act of God" ensued and, unless one means God, the intention is anything but a divinely directed act; quite the reverse. An accident is implied. If one maintains that *lifne Hashem* (Lev. 10:2) means "from God" rather than "in the presence of God," then one can postulate that God sent a lightning bolt to kill them, without harming their bodies or clothing (Sanhedrin 52a). Josephus (*Antiquities* III: 8:7) writes of a "sudden fire" like a "flash of lightning." F. Rosner, the only recent medical man I can find, writes that their deaths were likely due to ". . . electrocution, a phenomenon related to sunstroke" but could also have been caused by suffocation [from fumes?][4]

4 *Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud* (N.Y.: Ktav Publishing House, Yeshiva Univ. Press, 1977) p. 69.

Did they spontaneously ignite? At rare intervals there are reports in the lay press on death due to spontaneous combustion. For no obvious reason, a person is suddenly engulfed in conflagration, a weird, mysterious death, from causes unknown. A recent study[5] published in Buffalo, New York, went into great detail during investigations of several such instances and in every case without exception, the victim was either in alcaholic stupor or was senile and did not register that anything was burning or (as with a lighted cigarette) likely to ignite something nearby.

But then Aaron's sons were not aged, nor in alcoholic stupor and we can dismiss the possibility of electrocution or spontaneous combustion.

There is surely no mystery. It is here suggested that they tried a new ("alien," "illicit") mixture of flammable incense in their fire-pans. The unexpected flash fire engulfed them in flames, burned their clothing and they dies of shock from massive third degree burns. Their burial in their tunics (Lev. 10:5) is no accidental mention; the charred clothing could not be peeled off their burned skin.

And so, what does the text say? Exactly what we should expect: it was an accident, a tragic accident.

A similar situation features in the death of Uzza (II Sam. 6:7; 1 Chr. 13:9, 10) who saved the holy ark from falling off a cart after the oxen pulling it stumbled. Uzza died, but since in such a situation it was held that God must have been directly implicated, Uzza is accused of a criminally negligent act. What happened was quite otherwise. The heavy ark fell on Uzza and fatally injured him (smashed skull? broken neck?). It was an accident, and King David was very upset about it (II Sam. 6:8, 1 Chr. 13:11). Neither in the case of Uzza, nor of Nadab and Abihu, was a sacerdotal taboo involved, but an accident, due to an unforeseen hazard, such as

5 J. Nickell and J. F. Fischer, "Incredible Cremations: Investigating Spontaneous Combustion deaths," *The Skeptical Inquirer*, 1987, 11: 352-357.

happens daily, and results in sudden death. In both accidents we have a lesson in preventive care. Their supposed moral blemishes, the blackening of their reputations, is no more than an exercise in theodicy, an excuse for God's seeming injustice, and can be set aside as unjustified; their moral and religious rehabilitation is long overdue, and they deserve a better obituary.

UNDERSTANDING REDEMPTION THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF THE FAMILY:
A PROPHETIC VISION

DIANE COHEN

It is probably fair to say that the prophetic vision of messianic times that most people carry with them comes from Isaiah: *The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox* (65:25). However, a different thread, not of peace as the absence of aggression but of peace as reflected in the home, may also be found running through the books of the prophets. This thread defines the salvation of Israel by the metaphor of family, both the positive relationship between parent and child, and the vision of redemption as return to the celebrations of marriage and childbirth. Not only will nation no longer lift up sword against nation, young people will fall in love, marry, and bring children into the world, a world where these children will be safe in the streets and loved in their homes.

In order for the blessings of the messianic visions to be fully appreciated, we need to contrast them with the curses found in other prophetic passages. These curses, and their counterpart blessings, fall into two categories: (1) The curse of the absence of future generations versus the promise of lineal survival with the establishment of new households; and (2) the curse of animosity between the generations versus the hope of a rapprochement, the disappearance of the generation gap and the opening of the arms of understanding by both parent and child for one another.

Diane Cohen is entering her senior year in the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. She holds a B.A. in English from the University of California at Los Angeles and an M.A. in Education from the University of Judaism.

THE HOPE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Two of the three prophetic passages to be cited in this section fall into the "curse" category and the theme of loss of future generations.

According to Jeremiah and Hosea, the future will be lost in two ways. First, young people will cease to marry. Jeremiah mentions this in several places:

> *Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; for the land shall be desolate* (7:34).
>
> *Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place, before your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride* (16:9).
>
> *. . . I will cause to cease from among them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp* (25:10).

The picture he paints is a bleak one: there will be no celebrations, no rejoicing of the community at the creation of yet another family in Israel. The *Metzudat David* commentary explains this state of affairs to be the result of the desolation of the land, when "there will remain no man." In a sense, the young girls of Judah will be widows before they can become brides. Later, of course, Jeremiah turns the image around.

Hosea's warning is an even grimmer one. While Jeremiah's Jerusalem will be bereft of joy because of the absence of young men, Hosea's vision is harsher and bloodier: *they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up* (14:1). Thus, existing children (born and unborn) are destroyed, and there is no hope that other children will be born to take their place.

Contrasted to these curses are the blessings of Jeremiah and Isaiah, blessings that neatly parallel the curses.

After describing a world in which young girls will no longer be able to find husbands, a world empty of the sounds of rejoicing, toward the end of his book Jeremiah reverses his gloomy curse and assures us that God's anger will abate, Jerusalem will be restored, and the desolate towns of Judah will once again ring with the sounds of rejoicing, of those giving thanks to God and those celebrating the marriages of a younger generation: *The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride . . .* (33:11).

More poignant is the vision of Isaiah. In contrast to the destruction of future generations at the hands of conquering armies, Isaiah's vision is one of comfort, of the birth of a new generation. More than that, *They shall not bear children for terror* [or *in vain*], *but they shall be a people blessed by the Lord, and their offspring shall remain with them* (65:23). This vision foresees the safety of children, and their health and longevity. As *Metzudat David* explains, children will not die in childhood, or even in the lifetime of their parents, but will grow old and stay with their parents.

FAMILY HARMONY

The theme of estrangement between parent and child is significant in the prophets. The vision of the destruction of Jerusalem in Lamentations: *The hands of women full of compassion have sodden their own children; they were their food in the destruction of the daughter of my people* (4:10) is echoed in Jeremiah: *And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and straitness wherewith their enemies and they that seek their life, shall straighten them* (19:9). Most significant is Ezekiel's description of the worst days of the siege of Jerusalem:

Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers . . . (5:10). S. L. Gordon does not see this merely as a result of terrible famine: "This terrible famine will turn people to beasts, for all feelings of love and compassion will be foreign to them."[1] Not only will there be some sense of justification for cannibalism, there will no longer be any remorse, any regret, any mercy for the victims.

A similar absence of appropriate feelings for parents is found in Micah where the result is not physical aggression but emotional estrangement.

For the son dishonoreth the father,
The daughter riseth up against her mother,
The daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
A man's enemies are the men of his own house (7:6).

As David Kimhe explains, "normal" familial relationships should be characterized by children exalting and honoring their parents. In Micah's prophecy, however, children demean their parents. One might observe, in anticipation of Rashi's comment on the prophecy of Malachi, *And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction* (3:24) that both generations lose: the parents lose their children's love and respect, and the children lose their parents' perspective on the past and the future.

In glowing contrast to the visions of horror painted by Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah, Malachi tells us exactly what to expect in the end of days. It is important to note that at the end of the Book of Malachi, the prophet does not say that the redemption will necessarily be characterized by a return of parents and children to one another. Rather, Elijah will come before the day of the Lord, to bring parent and child back together. Malachi sees this reunion as necessary in order that redemption come. Rashi comments on this verse that *v'heshiv lev avot al banim* really means that the hearts of the

1 S. L. Gordon, *Nevi'im Aharonim, Yehez'kel*, vol. 4, p. 50.

parents will return to God through the words of their children, and conversely, that the love of parents will turn the heads of their children to God.

It would thus appear that in order for redemption to occur, the estrangement between parents and children must end. Each generation must understand the value of the other, and the heart of each be open to the other. Malachi's vision of the end of days, an appropriate conclusion to the books of the prophets, is one in which family strife becomes a thing of the past and each generation cares for the other.

The unifying image from these prophetic selections is that of a natural order, of children growing up in homes where they are loved, then marrying amid a celebrating community and raising a new generation to follow them. The curses described by the prophets disrupt this natural order, so that children are brutalized, mothers are rendered incapable of bearing more children, and hatred and bitterness destroy the family. National redemption, as part of the messianic era, will be signalled by the re-establishment of unity and happiness in the family circle which will then spell out the hope for a glorious future.

We congratulate our Assistant Editor, Dr. David Wolfers, on being invited to address the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense (Belgium). The subject of his lecture is "Job 26 — An Orphan Chapter."

ISRAEL MUSEUM EXHIBIT

P. J. BERLYN

In May 1993, The Israel Museum in Jerusalem launched a special exhibit with the appealing title, "Painting The Bible in Rembrandt's Holland." It comprised fifty paintings and some crafted objects that were indeed created in Holland around the mid-seventeenth century, most of them depicting characters and stories from the Hebrew Scriptures. But only five of the pictures are by Rembrandt, and only two of those are biblical — one being his "Moses With The Tablets of The Law," displayed as the centerpiece of the show. The rest of the works range from competent on downward. They are of less interest as art *per se* than as illustration of how the Dutch in that age viewed the Bible, the Jews and themselves.

They were Protestant and literate, a combination that often stimulated an intense involvement with "The Old Testament." For an extra measure of intimacy, they conjoined their attachment to Scripture with their own recent historic experience: two generations of rebellion and hard struggle to win back the independence that had been lost when a tangle of royal intermarriage brought them under the domain of the despotic and fanatically Catholic kings of Spain.

In this struggle, they cast themselves as the Children of Israel. William of Orange, steadfast leader up the rocky road to freedom, was their Moses. Because his son Frederick Henry of Orange won victories over the Spanish he was painted as David in an allegorical concoction of Jacob Gerritsz Cuyp; a middle-aged David and altogether a Hollander except for a kilt in place of breeches, posed with a gruesome head of Goliath, encircled by admirers including

P. J. Berlyn, formerly of New York, NY and Princeton, NJ, is now a resident of Jerusalem. She is a graduate of Barnard College, Columbia University, and has been on the staff of The Commission on Jewish Education and The Council on Foreign Relations.

The Seven United Provinces of The Netherlands personified as seven women playing musical instruments — though not timbrels.

In contrast to many Bible-loving Protestants, the citizens of the new Dutch Republic, the bulk of them adherents of the stern Dutch Reform Church, had an innovative attitude toward the Jews of their own day. For the first time in a Christian country, Jews were accepted into the host society, could practice their religion openly and at the same time take their part in the intellectual, scholarly, professional and communal life of the state. As soon as the Republic was proclaimed, Jews were drawn to it, first of all from Spain and Portugal, where for a century they had been Crypto-Jews, preserving their Judaism in secret under the shadow of the Inquisition and the pall of the stake.

The Dutch artists knew them, mingled with them, and portrayed them not in the conventional Christian mode as loathsome caricatures, but as fellow citizens who were not even exotic. Thus, an interior view of the Amsterdam Synagogue does not present the dwelling place of Satan but a realistic rendering of the building and its congregation. Similarly, "Circumcision in a Sephardic Home" is a normal genre group portrait of a family assembled to celebrate a *brit mila*. And the Jewish Dr. Ephraim Bueno, as portrayed by Rembrandt, can well pass for a countryman of his neighbor in the next frame, a Dutch Protestant clergyman clasping his beloved Hebrew Bible.

In freedom and prosperity the arts flourished. Painters set to work not on vast adornments for cathedrals and palaces, for which there was no call, but on easel paintings for the homes of the affluent bourgeoisie. For those patrons, subjects from the Bible they knew so well combined art with edification. They might even be the models, as when a married couple commissioned not merely a pair of portraits but some conjugal scene in which they appeared together in the guise of Isaac and Rebecca or Ruth and Boaz.

People and settings are often so contemporary that the biblical connection is not readily apparent. Such is Rembrandt's interior

with a woman and two men, identified only by the title as Potiphar's wife with Joseph and Potiphar. Hendrick ter Brugghen placed a simple Dutch family of father and mother, two sons and the dog at supper in a kitchen and called it "Jacob Buys The First-Born Right."

However, artists might also use their subject of long ago and far away to indulge their fancy in touches not generally suitable to the Dutch milieu. Meinheer and his Vrouw did not keep camels in Amsterdam, but transpose them to Hebron or Bethlehem and these novel beasts could be added to the composition. A sumptuous gown and jewels were not ostentation if worn by Queen Esther. Eve had the entrée where Venus could not tread. Some artists did try to make their figures look "biblical," but little was then known of the ancient Near East, and so they are presented either as Antique, in Roman tunics and crested helmets, or as Eastern, in voluminous pasha's robes and turbans.

Tales of the patriarchs were particularly favored, perhaps because of their domesticity, with emphasis on personal and family relationships. There is strong human emotion, for instance, in a canvas of Jan Victors setting a distressed Abraham between a young, sorrowful Hagar and an aged, implacable Sarah.

Biblical decor was also found on everyday objects about the house, sometimes neatly à propos: Joseph on a silver goblet, the Lot family on a salt-cellar.

In sum, this collection shows not only how Rembrandt and a number of his colleagues drew inspiration from the Bible, but also how a society intertwined the Bible into its own life.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS — 40 YEARS LATER

ABRAHAM RUDERMAN

For the first time in forty years, scholars have complete access to the Dead Sea Scrolls. This has been made possible by the administrative changes initiated by the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The Scrolls were discovered in the Qumran area between 1947 and 1956, and can be divided into four categories.[1]

1. Biblical: Of 150 thus far found, only the scroll of Isaiah is a complete text. Fragments of all the other books except Esther and Nehemiah have been found. Some of these fragments have been dated as early as 300 B.C.E. Until their discovery the oldest known Bible manuscripts went back no further than the Middle Ages.

2. Sectarian: These were written by the Essenes who dwelt at Qumran, and have been published.

3. Apocryphal: These are compositions not included in the Hebrew Masoretic text, but known from the Greek Septuagint version of the Bible. Some works called Pseudoepigrapha — such as the Book of Enoch — not included in the Septuagint, also came to light.

4. Non-Liturgical: Secular documents, such as contracts and lists have also been discovered, some of them from Wadi ed-Daliyah north of Jericho. Writings in Hebrew and Aramaic include a letter addressed to Bar Kokhba, the leader of the revolt against Rome, 132-135 C.E.

Most of the Qumran texts are written in Hebrew, the second largest group in Aramaic, while a few are in Greek and some Nabatean

1 Emanuel Tov, *Biblical Archeology Review*, July-Aug 1992.

Abraham Ruderman was ordained at the Jewish Institute for Religion. He served as a chaplain during W.W. II and was spiritual leader of congregations in Poughkeepsie, Elmont, Hazelton and South Africa. He came on aliyah in 1976, and at present is the editor of the weekly bulletin of the Jerusalem Rotary.

documents have been found. The texts are in two forms of Hebrew script — the early paleo-Hebraic and the later Assyrian script which the Jews brought back from the Babylonian Exile.

At first, the work of sorting, deciphering and translating was entrusted to a team of scholars which was too small for the task, causing delay in publication. Eight volumes of *The Discoveries in the Judean Desert* have been published, and twenty more are scheduled to appear in the near future. The editor-in-chief, Prof. Emanuel Tov, has enlarged his editorial team to fifty-three, drawn from Jewish, Protestant and Catholic scholars from eight countries.

Among the texts not yet published is a letter to the leader of the Qumran community describing in detail the differences in legal views between the sect and outsiders. The views of the Qumran sect appear so close to those of the Saducees that it is believed to be an offshoot of that sect. Another text awaiting publication is the pseudoepigraphic Book of Jubilees, hitherto known only from Latin and Ethiopic translations from a no longer extant Greek translation of a Semitic text. Fragments of this Semitic text have been found in both Hebrew and Aramaic versions. The Book of Jubilees is a story of the Book of Genesis with the years subdivided into groups of fifty, each with a Jubilee year. One document contains an apocryphal psalm together with a prayer for the well-being of King Jonathan — a reference to Alexander Janneus, king of Judea from 103 to 76 B.C.E. Some priestly calendrical documents, soon to be published, mention priestly families which are to serve on certain days in the Temple. These provide evidence of the sect's calendar, which differed from that in general use at the time.

The Apocryphal Book of Tobit, hitherto known only in Greek translation, has been found at Qumran in several Aramaic manuscripts. One cave yielded fragments of at least eight copies of the Damascus Covenant, describing the history and laws of the Qumran community. One copy was previously known from the Cairo Geniza.

From eleven caves at Qumran, fragments of more than 190

biblical scrolls have come to light. These include 34 from the Book of Psalms, 27 from Deuteronomy, about 22 from Isaiah, 20 from Genesis and 14 from Exodus. The biblical texts fall into four categories:

1. Proto-Masoretic texts constitute about 60 percent of the Qumran finds and are characterised by their agreement with the medieval Masoretic text. [The Masoretic text was standardized in about the 10th century with an apparatus of vocalization, accentuation and comments.]

2. Pre-Samaritan texts, close to the Samaritan Pentateuch. These, along with texts close to the Hebrew source of the Septuagint, constitute about five percent of the collection.

3. Texts written in the "Qumran Practice," an unique system of spelling, linguistics and scribal practice. This style is used for about 20 percent of the text, including the Isaiah scroll.

4. Some "non-aligned" texts contain readings not known in other versions.

Since they were removed from the dark and dry places where they rested for 2000 years, the scrolls have been deteriorating, and improper treatment has exacerbated the problem. The best techniques of preservation are maintained at the Shrine of the Book in the Israel Museum, which holds the most complete and beautiful of the Qumran scrolls. There, display cases are virtually oxygen-free and temperature and humidity are carefully regulated. At the Rockefeller Museum, fragments are glued to a sheet of rice-paper with a glue made from the dust of deteriorated scrolls. Among other methods of halting deterioration, fragments may be placed between two pieces of glass. The most recent method utilizes computer imaging systems that convert photographs into electronic images that can be stored in a computer and displayed on a screen. One day it will be possible to view all the Dead Sea Scrolls from one compact disk.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Immediately before the article "Who is the Villain" by Ronald T. Hyman, Vol. XX, No. 3, Spring 1992, you stated as a preface that: "Dr. Russel K. Edwards responded insisting that the real villain of the Book of Esther was Mordecai." I did not make such a statement. I described Mordecai's behavior as one of monumental stupidity and political madness. And so it was. He was a colossal unseeing, uncaring egotist. By his aggressive and foolish behavior, he nearly brought down upon his brother Jews a disaster which could only be compared to the Shoah in its ferocity and intensity.

Mordecai had many failings. But villainy was not one of them. That trait of character rightfully belongs to Haman and the King. Nowhere did I suggest otherwise.

In reply to Hyman: (i) He complains that "Edwards uses only negative language when describing Mordecai's actions and attributes." But he fails to make comment on the very forceful language in which I describe Esther's heroism, self-sacrifice and courage. The whole of my final paragraph is a most powerful accolade in tribute to this wonderful Jewish girl. That escapes Hyman's attention. It also defeats the comment of Benjamin Goodnick (Jan. 1993) as to my antisemitic traits and strong tendencies to identify with those in power.

(ii) Hyman comments on what he states is my failure to understand how to write and structure a convincing argument against Mordecai, "the man who derails Haman's plan in the end." On what basis does Hyman so describe Mordecai? Apart from his public outburst and reporting his plot to assassinate the King, as well as his high moral instruction to Esther, what action did Mordecai take to avert the forthcoming disaster?

There is no record of any such attempt by Mordecai. He said nothing, he did nothing and he attempted nothing.

In sharp contrast, Esther showed fire, initiative, zeal, outstanding courage, and a superlative acute political insight and psychological understanding of the monarch. It is therefore absolutely clear that it was Esther who destroyed Haman and not as Hyman postulates.

Hyman quotes me "But it is not the case as a consequence of all this" Haman sought to destroy all the Jews. I draw his attention to verse 3:5: "and Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not down, nor prostrated himself before him." The failure to bow down is very clearly followed by and linked to the filling of Haman with wrath.

No one knows for certain why Mordecai behaved the way he did. His action can only be the subject of conjecture. But this does not permit or excuse a slavish, blind adulation of him. The conduct and failure of Haman's derailer to act at the right time certainly do not justify placing Mordecai on that elevated high pedestal of virtue and all-embracing wisdom which is the traditional view concerning Mordecai, and which Hyman so blindly, enthusiastically and so mistakenly has swallowed.

Dr. Russel K. Edwards
Jerusalem

Sir,

My article "The Large Numbers in the Bible" which was published in Vol. XXI, No. 2 of *The Jewish Bible Quarterly*, was taken from a full article which originally appeared in the "Tyndale Bulletin" 18 (1967) pp. 19-53.

Rev. John Wenham

Sir,

The Jewish Bible Quarterly is an invaluable asset to the English-speaking Jewish community and to others who wish to deepen their knowledge of the Tanach. The *Quarterly* provides a

forum where serious Bible students can share their ideas and reflections. While most of the contributors are not professional scholars, the scope of their perceptions and depth of insights lead to a greater appreciation of the inexhaustible riches of the Tanach. Thus, the work of the *Quarterly* must continue.

Ashley S. Rose
Lombard, Ill.

Sir,

Rabbi Derby's assumption that the tablets were basalt may be wrong. The Sinai is mostly red granite, with some sandstone to the west. I have been told there are some basalt dikes, but have not myself noticed any. As for the other side of the graben forming the Gulf of Aquaba, i.e. Moab, I understand it too is red granite.

To assume that, because the Moabite stele is basalt (lots of which is found to the north of Moab), therefore, Moab is full of basalt, is like assuming that, because an inscription in Manhattan is cut on Indiana limestone, New York is full of limestone. It isn't.

I enjoyed Rabbi Derby's most interesting article, and being jolted by him back into fond memories of hiking in the Sinai desert — a granite desert.

David Mack
New York, N.Y.

עשה תורתך קבע

THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

November 1993

NOV		
1	M	Proverbs 5
2	T	Proverbs 6
3	W	Proverbs 7
4	Th	Proverbs 8
5	F	Numbers 14:11-14:45
7	S	Proverbs 9
8	M	Proverbs 10
9	T	Proverbs 11
10	W	Proverbs 12
11	Th	Proverbs 13
12	F	Numbers 15:1-15:45
14	S	Proverbs 14
15	M	Proverbs 15
16	T	Proverbs 16
17	W	Proverbs 17
18	Th	Proverbs 18
19	F	Numbers 16:1-17:15
21	S	Proverbs 19
22	M	Proverbs 20
23	T	Proverbs 21
24	W	Proverbs 22
25	Th	Proverbs 23
26	F	Numbers 17:16-18:24
28	S	Proverbs 24
29	M	Proverbs 25
30	T	Proverbs 26

December 1993

DEC		
1	W	Proverbs 27
2	Th	Proverbs 28
3	F	Numbers 18:25-20:13
5	S	Proverbs 29
6	M	Proverbs 30
7	T	Proverbs 31
8	W	Job 1
9	Th	Job 2
10	F	Numbers 20:14-22:1
12	S	Job 3
13	M	Job 4
14	T	Job 5
15	W	Job 6
16	Th	Job 7
17	F	Numbers 22:2-23:9
19	S	Job 8
20	M	Job 9
21	T	Job 10
22	W	Job 11
23	Th	Job 12
24	F	Numbers 23:10-24:25
26	S	Job 13
27	M	Job 14
28	T	Job 15
29	W	Job 16
30	Th	Job 17
31	F	Numbers 25:1-25:9

January 1994

JAN

2	S	Job 18
3	M	Job 19
4	T	Job 20
5	W	Job 21
6	Th	Job 22
7	F	Numbers 25:10-26:51
9	S	Job 23
10	M	Job 24
11	T	Job 25
12	W	Job 26
13	Th	Job 27
14	F	Numbers 26:52-27:14
16	S	Job 28
17	M	Job 29
18	T	Job 30
19	W	Job 31
20	Th	Job 32
21	F	Numbers 27:15-28:25
23	S	Job 33
24	M	Job 34
25	T	Job 35
26	W	Job 36
27	Th	Job 37
28	F	Numbers 28:26-30:1
30	S	Job 38
31	M	Job 39

February 1994

FEB

1	T	Job 40
2	W	Job 41
3	Th	Job 42
4	F	Numbers 30:2-30:17
6	S	Song of Songs 1
7	M	Song of Songs 2
8	T	Song of Songs 3
9	W	Song of Songs 4
10	Th	Song of Songs 5
11	F	Numbers 31:1-31:24
13	S	Song of Songs 6
14	M	Song of Songs 7
15	T	Song of Songs 8
16	W	Ruth 1
17	Th	Ruth 2
18	F	Numbers 31:25-31:54
20	S	Ruth 3
21	M	Ruth 4
22	T	Lamentations 1
23	W	Lamentations 2
24	Th	Lamentations 3
25	F	Numbers 32:1-33:42
27	S	Lamentations 4
28	M	Lamentations 5

SEVENTH TRIENNIAL INDEX

1990-1993

This triennial index lists the articles published in *The Jewish Bible Quarterly* in Volumes XIX-1 — XXI-4.

CONTENTS

PART I

Index by Authors

PART II

Books of the Bible

PART III

General Index

MISCELLANEOUS

WE ENCOURAGE OUR READERS TO SUBMIT ARTICLES ON BIBLICAL THEMES

MANUSCRIPTS should be submitted to the Editor, the J.B.Q., P.O.B. 29002, Jerusalem, Israel. The manuscript should be typed on one side of the page only, double-spaced, with at least a one-inch margin all around, and be no longer than 12 pages. **Authors are also requested to submit a computer diskette** (IBM or Macintosh).

SPELLING: To standardize spelling, the American usage will be employed.

QUOTATIONS from the Bible should follow one of the Jewish Publication Society's translations, unless a special point is being made by the author for the purpose of his article. Biblical quotations should be checked by the author for accuracy.

TRANSLITERATIONS: The following transliteration guide-lines, though non-academic, are simple and the most widely accepted:

ע and א	assumes the sound of its accompanying vowel = e.g., Amen, Alenu, Olam, Eretz.
ח	= H e.g., Hodesh.
כ and ק	= K e.g., Ketuvim, Kadosh.
כ	= Kh e.g., Melekh.
צ	= Tz e.g., Tzaddik.
ֶ	= E e.g., Ben.

Standard transliteration of biblical names remains unchanged.

FOOTNOTES:

For a book: Author's name, *Title of Book*, (place, date of publication), p.

For an article: Author's name, "Title of Article," *Title of Book* or *Periodical*, vol. (date), p.

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