

THE
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THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

AIMS AND SCOPE

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THE RIDDLE OF PSALM 49

DAVID J. ZUCKER

- 1 *For the leader of the Korahites. A psalm.*
- 2 *Hear this, all you peoples;
give ear, all inhabitants, of the world*
- 3 *men of all estates,
rich and poor alike.*
- 4 *My mouth utters wisdom
my speech is full of insight*
- 5 *I will turn my attention to a theme,
set forth my lesson to the music of a lyre.*
- 6 *In time of trouble, why should I fear
the encompassing evil of those who would supplant me –*
- 7 *men who trust in their riches,
who glory in their great wealth?*
- 8 *Ah, it cannot redeem a man,
or pay his ransom to God;*
- 9 *the price of life is too high;
and so one ceases to be, forever.*
- 10 *Shall he live eternally;
and never see the grave?*
11. *For one sees that the wise die,
that the foolish and ignorant both perish,
leaving their wealth to others.*
- 12 *Their grave is their eternal home,
the dwelling-place for all generations
of those once famous on earth.*

David J. Zucker, PhD, is Rabbi/Chaplain at Shalom Park, Aurora, Colorado, a continuum of care/retirement center. He is the author of Israel's Prophets: An Introduction for Christians and Jews (Paulist, 1994), and American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction (Jason Aronson, 1998). His latest book, The Torah: An Introduction for Christians and Jews (Paulist, tentative title) will probably be published in 2006.

- 13 *Man does not abide in honor;
he is like the beasts that perish.*
14. *Such is the fate of those who are self-confident,
the end of those pleased with their own talk. Selah.*
15. *Sheeplike they head for Sheol,
with Death as their shepherd.
The upright shall rule over them at daybreak,
and their form shall waste away in Sheol
till its nobility be gone.*
- 16 *But God will redeem my life from the clutches of Sheol,
for He will take me. Selah.*
- 17 *Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,
when his household goods increase;*
- 18 *for when he dies he can take none of it along;
his goods cannot follow him down.*
- 19 *Though he congratulates himself in his lifetime
- "They must admit that you did well by yourself" -*
- 20 *yet he must join the company of his ancestors,
who will never see daylight again.*
- 21 *Man does not understand honor;
he is like the beasts that perish.¹*

The 21 verses of Psalm 49 are notoriously difficult to translate cogently.¹ Scholars write that it has undergone "serious corruption" in its transmission, and that additions were made to the original text.² One scholar contends that verses from Psalm 49 provide examples of "deliberate ambiguity in the Psalter."³

The psalm deals with one of the riddles of life: Why must people die, the abject poor as well as the powerfully rich? The wish to "cheat" death, or at the very least to take one's possessions to and presumably past the grave, has a long history. Some people believe a sufficiency of material possessions might allow a way to avoid life's inevitable conclusion. Psalm 49 crushes that hope.

A. A. Anderson describes the view of the psalmist:

Death comes to all, and no man can ever redeem his life from the grasp of the underworld, nor can he prolong his years by "paying a ransom to God." It is only God Himself who can redeem the upright

man from Sheol, for the sake of His righteousness. Whether this deliverance implies only a reprieve (that is, an escape from untimely death), or whether it suggests a *lasting* fellowship with God, is difficult to say [italics in original]⁴

Of primary importance in terms of this article is the suggestion that the traditional way of reading this psalm needs reconsideration and restructuring. In the received text, Psalm 49 has several sections. It begins with a superscription (v. 1),⁵ followed by an introduction of four verses, wherein the poet calls for attention from those listening (vv. 2-5). Then comes a set of seven verses (vv. 6-12) followed by a refrain (v. 13) and another set of seven verses (vv. 14-20) followed by a similar refrain (v. 21).⁶

When restructured, the second set of seven verses answers implied questions in the first set.⁷ Alternatively, it is akin to a stair-like form, where a part of a stich is repeated and becomes the starting point for fresh progress. In addition, Briggs suggests that one also finds an "antithetical" (or "introverted") parallelism in the text where death contrasts with life, or life with death.⁸ While neither of Briggs's terms describes Psalm 49 exactly,⁹ the point is that the second set carries home the thought suggested in the earlier set.

The restructured parallelistic configuration looks like this:

1 *For the leader. Of the Korahites. A psalm.*

2 *Hear this, all you peoples;
give ear, all inhabitants, of the world*

4 *My mouth utters wisdom
my speech is full of insight*

3 *men of all estates,
rich and poor alike*

5 *I will turn my attention to a theme,
set forth my lesson to the music of a lyre.*

* * * * *

6 *In time of trouble, why should I fear
the encompassing evil of those who would supplant me?*

14 *Such is the fate of those who are self-confident,
the end of those pleased with their own talk. Selah.*

7 *Men who trust in their riches,
who glory in their great wealth,*

15 *Sheeplike they head for Sheol,
with Death as their shepherd
The upright shall rule over them at daybreak,
and their form shall waste away in Sheol
till its nobility be gone.*

8 *Ah, it cannot redeem a man,
or pay his ransom to God;*

16 *But God will redeem my life from the clutches of Sheol,
for He will take me. Selah.*

9 *The price of life is too high;
and so one ceases to be, forever.*

17 *Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,
when his household goods increase;*

10 *Shall he live eternally
and never see the grave?*

18 *for when he dies he can take none of it along;
his goods cannot follow him down.*

11 *For one sees that the wise die,
that the foolish and ignorant both perish,
leaving their wealth to others.*

19 *Though he congratulates himself in his lifetime
– "They must admit that you did well by yourself!"–*

12 *Their grave is their eternal home,
the dwelling-place for all generations
of those once famous on earth.*

20 *Yet he must join the company of his ancestors,
who will never see daylight again.*

* * * * *

13 *Man does not abide in honor;
he is like the beasts that perish.*

21 *Man does not understand honor;
he is like the beasts that perish.*

VERSES 2-5 - INTRODUCTION

The opening verses (2-5) are classic examples of biblical poetry, the concept of synonymous thought repeated in the second part of the verse, or in the corresponding verse.

This psalm is in the manner of Wisdom literature, the teaching tradition found in the Bible in such works as Proverbs and Job. Other psalms in this Wisdom tradition include Psalms 73¹⁰ and 91. Wisdom psalms often are characterized by expressions and forms where the psalmist speaks of wisdom [*hakhamot*], teaching, understanding [*tevunot*], riddles, or proverbs. As part of his message, the writer warns and teaches, exhorting listeners to paths of virtue, and to trust in God.¹¹ This psalm follows the general pattern of Wisdom literature.¹²

Having secured the attention of the listeners or readers, the psalmist proceeds to deliver the message.

VERSES 6 AND 14 - THEME

6 *why should I fear evil* ~ 14 [death] *is the way of the self-confident*

The psalmist moves from personal, inward, exclusive thoughts and fears of "them" (v. 6) to a wholehearted and wholesale inclusive condemnation of all who offer torment, the "self-confident." This stark, yet natural, contrast of the verse from the first strophe or "set" to its corresponding verse in the second strophe or "set" will be repeated below. At this point, the poet does not spell out the "fate" of the self-confident; that will come a moment later.

VERSES 7 AND 15 - THEME

7 *people who trust in wealth* ~ 15 *death shall be their shepherd*

Verses 7 and 15 both reflect and offer further comment to verses 6 and 14. There also is a phonetic link between 7 and 15, the repetition of the combinations of the phonetic sounds of the letters "shin," "tzadeh," "resh" and "mem" [sh, tz, r, m]. Those who are self-glorifying and appear not to need others will be lost, needing Death as their shepherd as they head for Sheol. In place of relying on their wealth [*ashram*], they will be dependent on the upright [*y'sharim*] to guard them, and further their form [*tziram*] shall waste away.¹³

VERSES 8 AND 16 - THEME

8 *money cannot redeem* ~ 16 *God redeems death*

The psalmist says humans cannot redeem themselves. Rather, it is God's doing. Verses 8 and 16 are linked in several ways.¹⁴ In both verses the same root word for redemption is used [*fadah, yifdeh*], and both address the Deity with the same word [*Elohim*]. The repetition of the key word "yifdeh" [redemption] is another example of stair-like parallelism in biblical poetry. Furthermore, both lines begin with virtual homonyms; "ah" [*alef het*] in verse 8 and "akh" [*alef khaf*] in verse 16.

The message is again similar to verses 7 and 15: Do not expect human abilities to save the day; this is not the way of the world.

Does the restructured reading shed any light on the question of this psalm's alleged hint of the life to come?¹⁵ If in a restructured reading, as suggested here, verse 8 is immediately followed by verse 16, then one might expect some hint of

the afterlife in the earlier verse. This is not evident, though, as noted, there is the repetition of the concept of redemption.

VERSES 9 AND 17 - THEME

9 *the ransom price of a life is too high* ~ 17 *so do not be in awe of wealth*

In contrast to the immediately preceding verses 8 and 16, where the psalmist addresses concerns of the living (paying the ransom to God), verse 9 mentions the cessation of life before it mentions life's activities (v. 17). Here and in verses 10/18 and 11/19, the psalmist will consciously reverse the natural order of the universe in the succeeding verses.

VERSES 10 AND 18 - THEME

10 *Shall one live forever?* ~ 18 *wealth does not go down after us*

The contrasting images of life and death [*y'hi* and *moto*] are powerful reminders that death is our common end. Appropriately, the line on death follows that on life. Then verse 10b (*shall he . . . never see the grave?*) is answered by verse 18; not only shall he see the grave, but despite his hopes he will not take his wealth with him. Verse 18 begins with "ki" as do verses 11 and 19, linking these three verses.

VERSES 11 AND 19 - THEME

11 *everyone dies* ~ 19 *though in life one blessed himself*

The psalmist continues to reverse the natural order of death and life, noting that death comes to all people, (v. 11) the wise, foolish, and ignorant (v. 11), and that includes those who in their life knew blessings and good (v. 19). The "wealth" in verse 11 fits doing "well by yourself" in verse 19.

VERSES 12 AND 20 - THEME

12 *even famous ancestors died* ~ 20 *he will join his ancestors*

Maintaining the image of dealing with death before life, the psalmist opens verse 12 with the word "graves" (or "their graves") as the resting place of the wealthy. It matters not that they hope they will be remembered by leaving wealth to others (v. 11). Despite dynastic dreams, all that the living achieve at death is joining those generations who preceded them. To underscore this point, the

psalmist uses a rhetorical question in v. 10: *Shall he live eternally, and never see the grave?* There is a similar lack of hope in verse 20: *he . . . will never see daylight again.* This is even clearer in the Hebrew: 10 *od lanetzah lo yireh* ~ 20b *ad netzah lo yiruh*

Mark Smith suggested that the language in verse 12 involves an "invocation of deceased ancestors."¹⁶ This idea is strengthened by the direct reference to ancestors in verse 20.

VERSES 13 AND 21 - REFRAIN

13 *Like beasts we perish* ~ 21 *Like beasts we perish*

This reconstructed reading ends on a statement and its echo: Humans neither dwell in honor nor do they really understand it. Like the beasts of the field, death is their common end.¹⁷ Here, each verse begins with nearly the same words, "adam" and "v'adam."

The traditional serial reading of the psalm allows for one of these closing statements about halfway through the piece. The NRSV refers to this verse as a "refrain." This could be justified on grounds of literary foreshadowing, yet placing both statements at the conclusion serves to end the psalm as it began, with parallelism.

A FURTHER COMMENT ON VERSES 2-5

Though these opening verses, read serially, make sense, a strong case can be made that they should be restructured. As in the two strophes or "sets" which follow, there is an implied "Why?" question at the end of verses 2 and 4, which is answered by an implied "Because of" reply in verses 3 and 5.

The opening verses then should be read in this manner: 2 followed by 4, and 3 followed by 5.

2a *Hear this all peoples* 4a *my mouth utters wisdom,*
 2b *give ear . . .* 4b *my speech . . . insight*
 3a *men of all estates* 5a *I will turn to a theme,*
 3b *rich and poor alike* 5b *set forth my lesson*

The second and fourth verses are thematically connected by their reference to both the physical organ concerned (ear/mouth) and the action involved (hear/speak). The tight structure of the poet's lines allows a reversal of the

internal pattern of these organs and actions. The organ (ear/mouth) is mentioned in 2b and 4a respectively, and the action (hear/speak) is found in 2a and 4b.¹⁸

This reversal in the restructured verse (called chiasmic parallelism) will be repeated in verses 10/18 and 11/19 when, as has been shown above, mention of "life" and "death" (v. 10/18) is reversed and mention of "death" precedes mention of "life" (v. 11/19). In verses 3 and 5 the image is somewhat more subdued. In place of the more strident call of verse 2 ("hear this/give ear") there is a more subtle invitation to the people of all estates who in verse 5 are merely invited to take note of the theme and lesson of the psalmist.

CONCLUSION

In this revised reading of the text, the parallelism of the second set of verses alongside the first set drives home the limitations of material possessions. These revisions heightens two points made by M. Dahood about this psalm: Its ironic mode and its conscious controversy: "The poem is marked by a subtle irony throughout, while the language is probably the most dialectal in the Psalter."¹⁹ That some of the "responses" appear as a more "natural fit" than others is because, as noted above, the text has suffered in transmission and therefore is plagued by corruption.

In summary, the main point of this psalm is that despite inequity in social standing and financial position, rich and poor alike will die. The grave is our common destiny. This can be deduced from a traditional reading *in seriatim*. However, some of the serious problems raised in the past on lack of a logical thought-sequence in Psalm 49 are resolved by the proposed restructured reading of this text. Restructuring the psalm does not change its essential message. Rather it underscores it more fully: the long-term futility of worldly wealth.

NOTES

1. The translations herein are based on the New Jewish Publication Society (NJPS) version of 1985. The versification follows the Masoretic Text (MT), which differs slightly from Revised Standard Version (RSV); New Revised Standard Version (NRSV); New International Version (NIV); King James Version (KJV); Jerusalem Bible (JB); and New English Bible (NEB). In RSV, NRSV, NIV, KJV, and JB, the superscription and the first verse are considered as one verse. In NJPS they are separate verses 1 and 2. NEB eliminates the superscriptions in its translation.
2. Leo G. Perdue lists a variety of studies in German and English in "The Riddles of Psalm 49," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974) pp. 533-542. In other studies, one can read such comments Vol. 33, No. 3, 2005

as: "a possible translation of MT, but not probable," "awkward . . . unsatisfactory explanations," "no good explanation of it has been given," "difficult reading." C.A. and E.G. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: International Critical Commentary, Clark, 1907) Vol. 1, pp. 407-409. In its present form the "text has undergone some serious corruption . . . the thought sequence is not always logical." W. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (London: SPCK, 1962), p. 264. Cf. F. James, *Thirty Psalmists* (New York: Seabury, 1965) p. 192. Nevertheless, Weiser asserts, "it is still possible to trace in the psalm, the text of which has in places suffered serious corruption, a structure of strophes of some sort." A. Weiser, *The Psalms*, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: Old Testament Library, Westminster, 1962) p. 386.

3. See Paul R. Raabe "Deliberate Ambiguity in the Psalter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110/2 (1991) p. 213 ff., especially pp. 216, 217, 219-220.

4. A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 Vols, New Century Bible, Vol. 1 (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1977) Vol. 1, p. 373.

5. As noted above, in RSV, NRSV, NIV, KJV, JB, NEB, and some other translations, MT's v. 2 is featured as v. 1, and MT's v. 1 is either part of the superscription or not featured at all.

6. The repetition of a refrain appears also in Psalm 80, but there it does not appear after an equal number of verses as it does here in Psalm 49. Briggs 2, pp. 202-203, however, suggests that the refrain should be part of the text in Psalm 80.

7. This is akin to what C. A. and E. G. Briggs term the "Emblematic" form.

8. Briggs 1. pp. xxxiv-xxxvii.

9. See Anderson, Vol. 1, pp. 40-43, for another description of Hebrew poetry.

10. Briggs 1.406, suggests similarities between Psalms 49 and 73.

11. James, p. 188.

12. Cf. Briggs Vol. 1, p. 406.

13. R. Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1973) n. on 49:15 offers as an emendation *v'yitram* for *v'tziram*, which also captures the same idea.

14. Leo G. Perdue in "The Riddles of Psalm 49," p. 541ff., connects vv. 8 and 16 by suggesting that 16 is the answer to the riddle posed in 8.

15. Various scholars have wrestled with the intent of v. 16, "God will redeem my life from the clutches of Sheol, for He will take me." Weiser states, however, "It is a futile effort of expositors . . . to seek to make the question of how the psalmist conceives man's redemption from death the centre of their interest . . . On the basis of the text . . . it is not possible to give a definite answer . . ." (Weiser, p. 390.) That this psalm is not over concerned with the afterlife is clear when it is contrasted with psalms that pay much closer attention to that concept – Psalms 6:5-6, 30:9-10, et al.

16. See Mark S. Smith, "The Invocation of Deceased Ancestors in Psalm 49:12c," *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 112.1 (1993) pp. 105-107.

17. Perdue sees verses 13 and 21 as a riddle and its answer. Perdue, pp. 538 ff.

18. "My speech. [*hagut libbi*]" in NJPS. This phrase is difficult to translate. Cf. "meditation of my heart" (RSV, NRSV); "utterance from my heart" (NIV); "thoughtful heart" (NEB); "my heart whispers" (JB). In any case, the heart's meditation, thought, or whisper needs to be conveyed vocally or visibly if the message is to be understood by others, which is the clear intention of the psalmist.

19. M. Dahood, *The Psalms I* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Bible, Doubleday, 1981) p. 296.

FOUR BIBLICAL OPTIONS OF MORAL CHOICE

JACOB CHINITZ

It is a common assumption that the Bible offers us a choice between good and evil, and that the human will is the agency of such choice. This assumption has to be modified when we examine the texts that deal with this subject. The thesis to be developed here is that the biblical texts offer four options in this area. They are:

1. Man is inherently evil and never really chooses good.
2. Man is inherently good, but tempted to evil by an outside source.
3. Man can choose between good and evil.
4. The soul of Man is not involved in moral choice at all, and it is the body that chooses between good and evil.

'For the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth, and I shall not again smite all life' (Gen. 8:21). The first biblical position on moral choice is that Man cannot choose other than evil, because his natural inclination is to choose evil. God, therefore, resolves that to bring another Flood would be useless and unjust, especially when creatures of other species, who are innocent, are involved in the punishment. This sense of what might be called inherent sinfulness – although that phrase might also indicate sin not as inherent to human nature but as the result of a particular choice which taints human nature – is reinforced by later texts.

Here I was brought forth in sin and my mother conceived me in iniquity (Ps. 51:7). The psalmist attaches inherent sin to himself because of the sinful nature of his conception and birth. Ibn Ezra, writing on Job 5:5, explains this concept further: "Hence the human being is born, and as if he must be born to do but evil, as in the verse: I was brought forth in sin. For the birth of Man impels him to do evil, as in the verse: For the inclination of the heart of Man is evil."

Jacob Chinitz was ordained at Yeshiva University and is a member of The Rabbinical Assembly. He has taught at several colleges, and written over 100 articles for many journals. He has served as rabbi at numerous congregations, and was recently at Congregation Shaare Zedek, Montreal. His book, In My Opinion, a collection of 60 essays previously published in 17 journals, was published in 2000.

However, Genesis also presents an opposite theory: Man is naturally good, but can be tempted to evil by something or someone outside of himself, as Eve said she was tempted by the serpent, and Adam said he was tempted by Eve. After Cain's offering is not looked at with favor, God tells him: *'If you do well, shall it not be lifted up? And if you do not well, sin croucheth at the door. Its desire is for you, but you may rule over it'* (Gen. 4:7). Cain is capable of choosing the good. Sin, as an outside tempter, is waiting to ensnare him, but Cain can overcome temptation.

Farther on in the Bible this force of temptation is personified as Satan. This aspect of sin attacking Man from the outside is clarified in Rashi's commentary on Genesis 4:7: "And his desire is towards you (the desire) of sin, that is the evil inclination, which always desires and yearns to cause you to stumble. And you can rule over him. If you wish you can overpower him." It is not Man who is evil by nature, but the external temptation causes him to choose evil.

The classical concept of Man being a free agent who faces good and evil and determines his own choices, is presented in Deuteronomy 30:

*'See, I have placed before you this day life and good,
and death and evil'* (v. 6).

*'I cause to testify against you this day, heaven and earth,
life and death have I placed before you, blessing and curse.*

Choose life so that you will live, you and your seed' (v. 19).

Here the Torah strips Man of any inherent tendency to good or evil, and considers him a neutral entity with the will power to choose between them. Neither is an irresistible force, and Man has the alternatives between life or death, blessing or curse.

It might be argued that the characterization of "good" as life and blessing, and "evil" as death and curse, is itself a force impelling Man toward one of the two roads open before him. But this is a description of fact from God's point of view, not a force pushing or pulling Man one way or the other.

Talmudic liturgical language introduces a fourth concept in the area of moral choice:

My God, the soul You have placed within me is pure. You created it, You blew it into me. You guard it within me. And You are destined to take it from me, and to return it to me in the future. As long as the

soul is within me, I acknowledge before You, Lord my God and the God of my fathers, Master of all worlds, Lord of all souls: Blessed are You Lord, who returns souls to the dead corpses (TB Berachot 60b).

This language may be poetic hyperbole, but it gives the impression that it is not Man's soul that chooses between good and evil. The soul is pure and remains so, before it is embodied, after it is disembodied, and after it is returned to the body. It resides in and animates the body, and it is only the body that can be impure. The implication is that the behavior of the combined entity of body-soul is determined by the body not the soul. This leads to the question: How can the body choose whether or not to sin? Is it the body that has free will? Or is it the soul that decides how to use the body? We must assume that the soul uses the body, for without it the body is inanimate.

This conundrum is discussed in the Talmud in the following passage:

Antoninus said to Rabbi: Body and Soul may acquit themselves from judgment. How? Body says: Soul sinned, for from the day it left me, I am lying like a dead stone in the grave. Soul says: Body sinned, for from the day I left him, I fly like a bird in the air. He said to him: I will present to you a parable to which this is similar.

A king of flesh and blood had a beautiful garden and in it were pleasant fruits. He appointed two guards: one lame and one blind. Said the lame to the blind: I see pleasant fruit in the garden. Come and ride me on your back and we shall get to eat them. The lame rode on the blind and they got to the fruit and ate them. After days, the master of the garden came and said to them: Where are the pleasant fruits? The lame said: Do I have legs to walk upon? The blind said: Do I have eyes to see? What did he do? He rode the lame upon the blind and judged them together.

So the Holy One blessed be He will bring the Soul and cast it into the Body, and will judge them together. As it is written: (Ps. 50) *He will call the Heavens above and to the Earth below to judgment with Him.* He will call Heaven, that is the Soul, and the Earth, that is the Body (TB Sanhedrin 91a).

This parable implies that the soul, differing with the words of the prayer cited above, may be pure when it enters the body, but then it too can become impure

by sinning together with the body. Punishment then is administered not only to the choosing agent, the soul, but also to the body, for it is part of the joint entity body-soul which acts in this life.

The important conclusion from this examination of our four options of moral choice is that Man does have free will, and is responsible for his moral decisions. That does not mean that the other options of Man's sinful nature, the *yetzer hara* – the constant bodily temptations to make the wrong moral choice – and the real availability of two or more choices can be ignored. They must be considered, but in the spirit of Deuteronomy 30:19: '*... life and death have I placed before you, ... Choose life . . .*' Free will is really free, but God's advice, hope – nay, command – is that we choose life, not death.

עשה תורתך קבע

THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

	2005		
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QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE IN MICAH 6:6-8

RONALD T. HYMAN

One verse in the brief book of the prophet Micah has inspired the world for some 2,700 years. Ancients as well as moderns have found inspiration in Micah 6:8 because many people regard this verse as a high point in religious and moral thought. The ancient rabbis of the Talmud said that this verse, by virtue of its three principles of doing justice, loving mercy,¹ and walking humbly with God, encapsulated the essence of all 613 commandments communicated to Moses.² Two current scholars of the Bible describe Micah 6:8 as "Rightly celebrated as the supreme definition of ethical religion."³

In 1897, Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University, chose the second part of Micah 6:8 to be inscribed above a statue symbolizing religion in the new Library of Congress building. In 1977, Jimmy Carter made it a focal point of his presidential inaugural address.⁴

It is with such high regard and praise for Micah 6:8 in mind that I will first treat the setting for it, then focus on the questions in 6:6-7 that elicit the prophet's unique verse, and finally focus on the verse itself as a response to the questions asked.

THE SETTING FOR MICAH 6:6-8

Hear what the Lord is saying: Come present the case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord – You firm foundations of the earth! For the Lord has a case against His people, He has a suit against Israel (6:1-2).

Micah begins Chapter 6 with a brief generic declaration in Verse 1 that he will now prophesy: *Hear what the Lord is saying*. With this beginning, Micah is different from his contemporary Isaiah, who announces explicitly the form he

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will use for his forthcoming prophecy: *Let me sing for my beloved; a song of my lover about his vineyard* (Isa. 5:1). Micah offers no such clue to his audience on what kind of prophecy to expect, even though he surely has one in mind.⁵ For modern readers accustomed to explicit, advance notice of the setting for a dramatic piece (for example, by a playwright) Micah's beginning for Chapter Six may turn out to be difficult to understand and might well be confusing.

Micah shapes his prophecy as a courtroom Covenant-lawsuit brought by the Lord against His people Israel in order to settle a dispute between them. The Covenant provides that for the People of Israel, as Jeremiah 31:33 puts it, *the Lord will be their God and they will be My people*. The Lord accuses the People of not abiding by the Covenant. The Covenant goes back to ancient times when the Lord says to Abraham: *I will maintain My Covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting Covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and your offspring to come* (Gen. 17:7). Thus, the first eight opening verses of the chapter take the form of an indictment rather than the usual prophetic oration. Complexity and some confusion arise because Micah does not follow the lawsuit analogy to its fullest and does not identify the speakers explicitly while he himself speaks all the roles within the dramatic analogy. The complexity makes it difficult to grasp the flow of the prophecy. Although Micah does not explicitly identify the characters who speak, we can infer the boundaries of the four roles within the analogy. In 6:1-2, a bailiff of the court (or some other assistant) summons the mountains and the hills to hear the suit of the Lord against the People. The mountains and the hills, as ancient foundations of the earth, will serve as witnesses. The issue before the court will be the charge of the Lord, as the plaintiff, that the People of Israel, as the defendants, have breached their Covenant with Him. The bailiff summons everyone to hear the dispute.

VERSES 6:3-5

My people! What wrong have I done you? What hardship have I caused you? Testify against Me.

In fact, I brought you up from the Land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage, And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

My people, Remember what Balak, King of Moab, plotted against you, and how Balaam son of Beor responded to him. From Shittim to Gilgal – and you will recognize the gracious acts of the Lord.'

The term "My People" in verses 6:3 and 6:5 serves to identify the speaker as the Lord and the defendants as the People of Israel, who will have the opportunity to speak next in response to the Lord. In 6:3-5 the Lord speaks and has the opportunity to specify His lawsuit's contention. However, contrary to what is expected from a plaintiff, the Lord does not complain about what the People have done for Him to bring a suit against them. Rather, He breaks the traditional pattern of plaintiffs by asking: *'My People, what wrong have I done to you? . . . Testify against Me.'* The Lord then goes on to point out some of the good things He has done for them, recalling His redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 2-15) and how Balaam refused to curse them (Num. 22:2-24:25). The Lord also refers to His righteous acts in helping the Israelites to conquer the Land of Israel under the leadership of Joshua (Jos. 3:1, 3:14-4:24).

FOCUSING ON THE QUESTIONS IN VERSES 6:6-7

*With what shall I approach the Lord, do homage to God on high?
Shall I approach Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriads of
streams of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the
fruit of my body for my sins?*

It is Man who asks these questions, which by their very nature make two key implicit acknowledgments. First, Man acknowledges that the Lord is right, that the Lord is not at fault in His dispute with Israel. That Man does so is indicated by the fact that he does not contest the Lord's points made in 6:3-5. Man does not testify against the Lord, as He has requested. Neither does Man make any explicit admissions of wrongdoing. Second, Man acknowledges, by virtue of the questions he asks, that now is the time for the People to approach the Lord with some sort of sacrifice to signify that they have erred. In effect, Man says that the People, not the Lord, have broken the Covenant and now it is their obligation to admit it publicly.

Man, speaking in the first person as representative of the People of Israel, asks

four related questions. In the first part of Verse 6, he poses a general query to establish that the offering of sacrifices is his concern when approaching the Lord. Then he asks three specific questions about the type of sacrifice that will be appropriate. It is clear in this context that the words "*with what*" in the first question refer to priestly sacrifices.

Questions 2, 3, and 4 constitute an uninterrupted escalating series concerning the acceptable and appropriate public sign of atonement as homage to the Lord. The escalation begins with the bringing of routine burnt offerings of year-old calves, moves to the bringing of thousands of rams, and then ends with the sacrificing of a firstborn son. The three questions in paraphrase are: Will burnt offerings of year-old calves be acceptable? Will *thousands of rams* that yield *myriads of streams of oil* be acceptable? Will the offering up of my firstborn child, *the fruit of my own body*, be acceptable?

The notable point of these four questions is the focus on *what* to offer the Lord as a sacrifice to show atonement for breaking the Covenant with Him. The substantive component of the questions implies that Man, who is rightly concerned with approaching the Lord as an act of atonement, views atonement at that time as a public act of physically bringing some sort of sacrifice. This view on atonement is questionable. Indeed, the response to these questions in the next verse focuses only on this point.

FOCUSING ON THE RESPONSE IN VERSE 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:6-8 deserves its acclaim as a significant and even unique declaration of religious and moral principles, as demonstrated in the opening section of this article. No one denies the quality of the message: Man should act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with his God. Yet, as a response qua response to the questions asked by Man in the verses preceding it, 6:8 is wanting. That is, the verse does not respond directly and explicitly to the questions that elicited it. The verse is elliptical in that it requires Man, and now the modern reader, to flesh out the full reply in order to understand how it qualifies as a meaningful and acceptable response to the questions about sacrifices that will atone for

breaching the Covenant with the Lord.

The response is silent about sacrifices, even though the questions concern *what* Man should bring with him as a sacrifice as he approaches the Lord. While the questions deal with *what*, the response deals with *how* Man should approach the Lord.

IDENTITY OF RESPONDENT

For our purposes here, it is necessary to deal with the identity of the respondent as a way of understanding the nature of 6:8. Knowledge of the speaker's identity will help us to deal with the apparent conflict between the questions asked in 6:6-7 and the response offered in 6:8. The first step in identifying the respondent involves identifying whom Man was addressing when he asked his four questions. We can do so by examining Man's language and keeping in mind that Micah has fashioned a lawsuit analogy.

First, we note that Man speaks strictly in the third person singular form rather than in second person singular form or in a mixture of second and third person form. In contrast, when Abraham addresses the Lord about the pending destruction of Sodom, he speaks primarily in the second person singular: '*Will You sweep away the righteous with the wicked?*' (Gen.18:23). When Judah addresses the man second to Pharaoh (that is, Joseph) in an attempt to substitute himself for Benjamin, he also speaks in a mix of second and third person form: '*Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant; for you are even as Pharaoh*' (44:18). Departing from the style of Abraham and Judah, Man says: *With what shall I approach the Lord?* Thus, the grammatical form used by Micah offers evidence about the identity of the addressee: Man is not addressing the Lord but, rather, an unnamed judge presiding over the hearing.

It is highly likely that the judge who is addressed is also the respondent speaker in the next verse. However, we must still identify in another way the identity of the respondent, because it is possible that the next speaker in 6:8 is not the judge addressed in the preceding verse. The alternative and confirming way of identifying the respondent is to consider the context of the Covenant lawsuit analogy. Given the dispute between a plaintiff and a defendant, before witnesses and a heretofore unmentioned and non-speaking judge who is

presiding over the case, the choices for the identity of the unnamed speaker are the Lord, the witnesses, and the judge.

First, the Lord does not seem to be the respondent, for the latter speaks in the grammatical third person singular form: *He has told you, O Man*. In the previous verses the Lord speaks in first person form, saying: *'What wrong have I done to you?'* Moreover, it is likely that the Lord would not be speaking at this point in a lawsuit proceeding, because He had already presented His complaint against the People of Israel.

Second, witnesses, who have been summoned in 6:1-2 to "hear" the dispute, do not speak directly to the defendant. It is only the judge who can speak directly to the defendant and chide him for what he said. That the speaker chides Man is implied from the first three words of the response: *He has told* (in Hebrew the single word "*higid*"). These words in the third person form, along with those that follow them, have a tone that suggests the adding of another word — "*already*." That is, the respondent says to Man: *He has already told* . . .

Note that this language refers to the Lord in the same third person singular form that Man himself used to speak about the Lord. Note also that the judge speaks directly to Man, the prior speaker, by saying "*you*" in second person singular form. As the verse continues, the judge again speaks directly to Man, in saying "*requires of you*" and "*with your God*." Only the presiding judge could speak this way to Man after Man's narrow view about atonement.

Micah's analogy presents us with an active, participating judge rather than a passive listener to the disputants' presentations. The judge does not act as one who will only render a final decision on whether the plaintiff or the defendant succeeds. The judge intervenes in the proceeding, pointing out that Man already should know the answers to his questions, because *He has [already] told you, O Man*. This statement by the judge offers no citations of proof or sources where Man has previously been told how to approach his God. The judge simply assumes that Man knows the sources.

The Covenant-lawsuit analogy thus ends because of the inadequacy of Man's presentation. Man has not contested the Lord's case against him and his questions had been answered previously. Thus, there is no need to proceed further; the case is closed. The lawsuit is over, with a favorable decision for the Lord.

If we expand and flesh out the judge's statement within the analogy we can quickly and easily resolve most of the apparent conflict between Man's four questions and the judge's response. We can do so even though the responding judge's statement is elliptical. He says, in an expanded statement:

You, Man, asked "With what shall I approach the Lord?" and then you offered three specific questions about sacrifices. The four "**with-what**" questions are not the appropriate or important ones in this dispute. You have missed the Lord's point entirely regarding your breach of the Covenant. You should be asking, "How shall I approach the Lord?" That is to say, you should be asking, "What kind of person should I be when I approach the Lord?" It is not appropriate or adequate for you to focus on which type of sacrifice to bring before the Lord, because that assumes that the Lord desires sacrifices as signs of atonement. The Lord has already told you that He does not need sacrifices. *If you offer Me burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them* (Amos 5:22).

You simply are asking the wrong questions. You are right in seeking atonement, but wrong in focusing on the bringing of a sacrifice. Bringing a sacrifice is not an essential activity under the Covenant, so do not ask about sacrifices now. Besides, the Lord has already told you, Man, through His prophets, what He requires of you as a member of His Chosen People. He requires three actions on your part: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. If you act in this way, you will demonstrate your atonement. By such actions you will uphold the Covenant. With these three actions you have all the keys to His house. This dispute is hereby resolved in favor of the Lord.

In this expanded sense, verse 6:8 responds directly and profoundly to Man's questions in 6:6-7. It goes beyond the apparent conflict to the very heart of the matter; it states that sacrifices are not essential to the Covenant. Admittedly, the verse does not respond explicitly to Man's general question and to his three specific questions. Rather, it responds to the implicit statement and questions underlying all of Man's speech: I, Israel, admit that I have not kept my part of the Covenant with the Lord. How can I keep my part of the Covenant? What should I do to remain as the Lord's Chosen People? How can I satisfy the Lord?

How can I really atone for my prior wrong behavior? In recognizing the underlying ideas, 6:8 serves as a concise and meaningful response to Man and his need to remain attuned to the Lord.

The essence, beauty, and uniqueness of verse 6:8 is the depth of the response to Man's entreaty about the relationship between the Lord and Israel. It is a compact and profound understanding of what should be the foundation of human behavior.

In addition, it manifests an esthetic sensitivity to the context of the analogy and the Hebrew language. Its conciseness and its emphasis on only three verbs – *doing*, *loving*, and *walking* – connected to three basic moral values – *justice*, *mercy*, and *humility* – make it comprehensible and easy to remember. The three verbs indicate deliberate human actions and are different from verbs that represent involuntary actions such as breathing, crying, and sneezing. The series of three pairs of "a verb tied to a moral value" creates an appealing poetic rhythm. Together, they constitute a series that is a moral guideline for behavior among humans; a goal worth striving for.

While "doing justice" and "loving mercy" recall other verses in the Tanakh (Genesis 18:25; Hosea 6:4,6), *walking humbly with your God* is characteristic only of Micah. Although the terms pride and arrogance, the opposites of humility, appear negatively elsewhere, the positive phrase *walking humbly with your God* is unique to Micah. Indeed, at least since the time of Micah, the concept of religious humility has been integral in Jewish life. In Hebrew, the word for "charity" is derived from the root for "righteousness." Maimonides, 800 years ago, ranked mutual anonymity in the giving of charity to the poor at the highest moral level of giving to those in need, exceeded only by helping the needy to become self-supporting.

We can also see the connection between humility and religious practice in a relatively modern (1900) short story by Isaac Leib Peretz. In the story "If Not Higher," the Rabbi of Nemirov recites his *slichot* [penitential prayers] in preparation for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur while humbly and anonymously aiding a poor and sick Jewish widow. A skeptical Litvak witnesses the rabbi's behavior and is so profoundly impressed that thereafter, when he hears it said that during in preparing for the Holy Days the rabbi ascends to Heaven, he says, "If not higher."

In sum, the wisdom and beauty of Micah 6:8, a verse offered by the prophet as a way to teach his people, deserves all the praise and respect that it has received. It is a response that has guided people for thousands of years because it goes to the heart of moral, religious life. Its compactness, insight, and spirituality were and still are precisely to the point. Micah, speaking as the judge in 6:8, offers a moving response to Man's questions. People were rightly responsive to him in the past and still are.

NOTES

1. The Hebrew word "*hesed*," here translated as "*mercy*," may be translated also as *goodness*, *benevolence*, *compassion*, or *kindness*. For the classic study on the concept of *hesed*, see Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1967).
2. Talmud, *Makkot* 24a.
3. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible – Micah* (New York: Doubleday, 2000) p. 504.
4. "Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter," *Public Papers of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government, 1977) pp. 1-3.
5. Micah, by offering no specific introduction to his forthcoming analogy, is similar to Jotham in Judges 9:7, who introduces his analogy of Choosing the King of the Trees by proclaiming, *Citizens of Shechem, listen to me that God may listen to you*.

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OUR MOTHER RACHEL: *PRIMA INTER PARES*

YOSEF GREEN

Of the four matriarchs, it is Rachel who has inspired the most creative response in art and literature.¹ Without a doubt, she is one of the most beloved figures in Jewish history. Her compelling presence extends beyond the Book of Genesis and appears as well in I Samuel (10:2) and Jeremiah (31:14). Her story is the subject of rich embellishment in the Midrash and mystical literature. Jewish mystics rose up at midnight to recite Tikkun Rachel, in mourning for the exile of the Shekhinah, the Divine presence.²

Rachel was buried just outside of Bethlehem, where it is said she rose up to weep for those led captive to Babylon and to welcome the remnant that later returned. To this day she continues to console a seemingly endless stream of pilgrims who make their way to her grave for prayers, petitions and meditation amidst memories of her tenderness and compassion. For Josephus,³ Sarah stands for wisdom, Rebekah for patience, and Leah for beauty of soul, while Rachel represents sense perception.⁴ Her empathy, sensitivity and tender humanity set her apart.

Central to her life in the biblical narrative are two themes, succession and love. The former is made manifest through the latter. Jacob first meets Rachel at the well. Scripture describes the meeting as love at first sight. *Jacob loved Rachel . . . and he agreed to work a week of years for Laban's younger daughter because of his love for her.* Nowhere else in the Bible do we find a love story so poignant and rich in pathos.

Judging from Jacob's reaction, their first meeting is emotionally freighted: *Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and broke into tears* (Gen. 29:10-11, 17-18). A midrash says: "From the moment he saw her at the well, his soul was bound to hers."⁵ Another midrash confirms the literal meaning of the text by saying: "It was for her beauty that Jacob embraced her."⁶ A Hassidic text explains that the mention of Rachel's physical charms is meant to draw our attention to the heavenly source of all beauty and that the lovely shepherdess at the well was none other than the Shekhinah, whom Jacob was drawn to embrace when he is

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confronted by the physical Rachel. "Indeed one is permitted to embrace earthly beauty only if it leads to the espousal of supernal beauty."⁷

Apart from the Song of Songs, which is understood as an allegory of love between God and the people of Israel, the only other biblical reference to a man kissing a woman is in Proverbs 7:13, where the woman is a harlot. The rabbis were not altogether comfortable with Jacob's impulsive behavior and explain that "kisses of kinship" were permissible, and Rachel was indeed his kinswoman.⁸ The 16th-century Protestant theologian John Calvin rejects this explanation, since at this point Jacob had not yet introduced himself and so Rachel could not have known of their kinship.⁹

The *Zohar*, the book of Jewish mysticism, discovers in the kiss of Jacob and Rachel the uniting of the sundered spiritual worlds and the apotheosis of the Divine-human encounter. For the mystic, the intimate aspect of that encounter is the goal of all religious striving and the essence of true faith.

When the spirit of love enters the palace of love, the love of the supernal kisses is aroused, concerning which it is written: *and Jacob kissed Rachel.* This arousal brings about kisses of supernal love, which is the beginning of all love attachment and union above. But if kisses are from there, what need have we of Jacob here? Do not the kisses proceed from Him? The matter is thus: *Let Him give me of the kisses of His mouth* [SofS 1:2]. That is Him who is most hidden above. But how since He is most hidden? Through that supernal chariot [*merkavah*] . . . which is Jacob.¹⁰

Rachel, who tended her father Laban's flocks in Haran, became in time the legendary shepherdess and mother of all Israel, rising up from her tomb to console her suffering children. But the central event in the life of Rachel is her extraordinary silence at the time of Leah's substitution for herself in the bridal chamber just when Rachel's dreams of her marriage were to be consummated after seven long years of waiting. This restraint is regarded as one of Rachel's noblest features. Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev writes: "The merit of Rachel's selflessness during the substitution of Leah for herself lest her sister be put to shame, still succors us."¹¹

The Midrash reveals what Scripture conceals; namely, Rachel's inner feelings at the time of the substitution:

"I wrestled nightly with myself over my sister's plight . . . Rightfully, I should have been the bride, and could have been, for had I sent a message to Jacob that he was being deceived, would he not have abandoned her on the spot? But I thought to myself: if I am not worthy to build the world, let it be built by my sister."¹²

In the mystical literature, Rachel represents the visible, the worldly, the tangible called the *alma d'itgalya* [realm of the revealed]. Leah represents the hidden, spiritual, recondite world, called the *alma d'itkasya* [realm of the concealed]. Leah's eyes, though "weak" in natural vision, were thought to have penetrated the mysteries of the hidden world, for she possessed the Holy Spirit, and the Shekhinah did not depart from her tent. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Tikkun Rachel is followed by the recitation of Tikkun Leah.

It is Rachel's Tomb that became, together with the Kotel [Western Wall] and the Cave of Machpela, one of the three holiest sites for pilgrims in the Holy Land. Rachel's compassion, we are told, was such that she "achieved more than any of the patriarchs and matriarchs by stationing herself at the crossroads whenever the world was in need." Jewish mystics thus broadened her intercession in behalf of the Jewish exiles to bringing solace and hope to all the children of men. They even went so far as to give her name to the Shekhinah who accompanied the exiles and shared in their suffering.¹³

The tension between the sisters fades as tradition decrees that even as both Rachel and Leah take their places alongside Sarah and Rebekah as the matriarchs of the Jewish people, the younger emerges as the *prima inter pares* -- first among equals. From Leah were descended the kings and priests, through Judah and Levi. From Rachel came Joseph, who won the birthright. Ephraim became the leader of the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Benjamin settled in the territory whose borders embraced Jerusalem and the Temple (Jud. 1:21), and among his descendants were Joshua, Saul, Esther and Mordecai. And in the final messianic era, the line of Joseph will bring forth the Messiah, Son of Joseph, who will be the predecessor of the Messiah, Son of David.

Of Jacob's 12 sons, it was Rachel's firstborn, Joseph, who captured his heart. Joseph's striking resemblance to his mother was such that whenever Jacob beheld the face of Joseph he was momentarily comforted following Rachel's death.

Although Scripture informs us that Joseph received the birthright because Reuben had sinned with Bilhah (I Chron. 5:1), the *Zohar* argues that the birthright was intended for Joseph from the very outset. In the darkness of the nuptial chamber, unaware that Leah had been substituted for her sister, "Jacob's mind was fixed upon Rachel and it was from that union, with that intention, and with that first drop of semen that Leah conceived and the birthright eventually reverted to Joseph as originally intended."¹⁴

By joining the verse: *This is the history of the family of Jacob*, with the first word of the next verse, *Joseph was feeding the flock* (Gen. 37:2), the Midrash gives us the following reading: "This is the history of the family of Jacob -- Joseph! For Joseph's sake his father travels to Haran and his birth signals the hour of departure. For Joseph's sake the Reed Sea split and the Jordan parted."¹⁵

Twice, Scripture mentions Jacob weeping; once in joy upon meeting Rachel and again in sorrow when he is told that her son is dead. Joseph receives from Jacob the title *nezer ehav* [prince among his brethren] since he was meant to be his father's successor and to transmit the legacy of his forebears intact to future generations. Perhaps the most striking example of his fidelity to the patriarchal covenant was his ability to resist the sexual advances of the wife of Potiphar. "He kept his passion [*kashiut* -- bow] under firm control."¹⁶

Here too, Rachel's presence is in evidence. "It was by virtue of her power of sexual restraint that Rachel merited that her son would be known as 'Joseph the Zaddik', for as the *Zohar* teaches, the title Zaddik is only given to one who has mastered his sexual impulse."¹⁷ Joseph beheld his mother's image, as he was about to submit to temptation. The example of Joseph inspired his brethren in Egypt to emulate his self-discipline, serving as a barrier between the Hebrews and their licentious neighbors until they were redeemed from Egypt.¹⁸ If the tradition that "Israel was redeemed from Egyptian bondage by virtue of the purity of their women" is correct, then Rachel must surely take her place at their head.¹⁹

Jacob's blessing conferred upon Joseph's sons is repeated by Jewish parents to this day on the eve of the Sabbath, when they place their hands on a child's head and say, "God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh." The parallel blessing for a daughter is "God make you as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah," putting Rachel before the older sister Leah.

Rachel's eminence moves beyond her immediate descendants, beyond her time and place. Her prominence as a towering figure in Jewish history and legend is unique. Despite her premature death, she endures as no other woman in Scripture. The *Zohar* informs us that the Shekhinah, God's Presence, never departed from Rachel's tent, since Rachel was one of the names of the Shekhinah, and after her death the Shekhinah moved from her tent to her tomb. There is support for this association in the Midrash, Tana de'bei Eliyahu.²⁰

The Hebrew letters in the name Rachel [*rhil*] are used to form the words "*Ruah El*." Thus saith the Lord: 'A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children . . .' (Jer. 31:15). Read not, 'Rachel, weeping for her children' but *Ruah El* – the spirit of God – weeping for her children."

The Midrash here suggests that Rachel caused the spirit of God to join her in weeping for her children. In order, however, to maintain two separate identities, the mystics posit two Rachels, one human and one Divine. The former rose from her grave to lament the suffering of her children. The latter – *Ruah El* – responds to the tears of her earthy counterpart and joins her in mourning her children's exile.

Rachel's Tomb is located about one mile north of Bethlehem. The verse in Genesis 35:20 reads: *Over her grave Jacob set a pillar; it is the pillar at Rachel's grave to this day.* The Talmud cites this verse as the source for the custom of setting a tombstone at the grave of the departed. The words, "to this day" receives confirmation in that Rachel's Tomb is one of the very few burial sites in Israel whose authenticity remains unchallenged throughout history. Three thousand years ago it appears as a well-known landmark: *And Samuel said to Saul, 'When you leave me today, you will find two men near the Tomb of Rachel in the territory of Benjamin'* (I Sam. 10:2). It is also mentioned in the writings of the Church Fathers and in a Geniza fragment of the 10th century CE. Benjamin of Tudela described it in detail in 1170. In 1841, Moses Montefiore built the stone building over the grave that stands to this day.²¹

There was a steady stream of visitors to the Tomb throughout the year, but the pious would make special visits on the 14th of Heshvan, the day when according to tradition Rachel died, and during the month of Elul in preparation for the High Holy Days. Pictures of Rachel's Tomb are still used to decorate

holy places and holy objects such as Torah mantles, windows and walls of the synagogue, sukkot, charity boxes and memorial lamps. Packets of earth taken from near the grave were distributed to Jewish communities in the Diaspora so they could be placed under the head of the deceased.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah the prophetic portion read in the synagogue is from Jeremiah 31:15, where we read:

Thus said the Lord:

'Hark, a voice is heard in Ramah,

Lamentation and bitter weeping,

Rachel weeping for her children.

She refuses to be comforted for her children,

Because they are gone.'

Rachel's role as a helper in time of trouble extended wherever and whenever there was unrest, injustice or privation. In her mysterious intervention in human affairs as a messenger to the Divine she bears a striking resemblance to the prophet Elijah. In the Bible, their immortal presence extends to Israel's final redemption. Rachel elicits the Divine promise that there is hope in the people's future and that her children '*will return from the land of the enemy*' (Jer. 31:16). Miraculous acts are likewise ascribed to both, which gave rise to a tradition in the Midrash which prompted Elijah to declare "I came from the seed of Rachel."²²

Both men and women visit Rachel's Tomb, but it is particularly popular among women who find there a special feeling of kinship and sisterhood. The preferential treatment accorded women visitors is immediately noticeable. The main entrance to the Tomb leads to the women's section, while the men must enter via a side door. Not only is the women's section larger, it is also furnished with couches and chairs.²³

Rachel's Tomb is a popular place for prayers in general, but it is especially recommended for women who are unable to conceive because Rachel herself was able to overcome her barrenness. A red string that has been wrapped around the Tomb seven times is sometimes used as a talisman for conception, while women who are experiencing a difficulty pregnancy may be given the key to the inner chamber of the Tomb. The key is placed beneath the woman's head to hasten and facilitate the delivery.

Just as Rachel's Tomb has been central throughout the millennial exile of the Jewish people, so too, according to the *Zohar*, will her grave be pivotal at the time of the final redemption when at the End of Days:

Messiah will lift up his eyes and behold the patriarchs visiting the ruins of God's sanctuary. He will see mother Rachel with tears upon her face, refusing to be comforted by the Holy One, blessed be He . . . After thirty days all humankind will witness a blinding light, reaching from heaven to the earth and continuing for seven days, during which the Messiah surrounded by angels shall be crowned on earth.

Where shall this be?

On the way to Ephrat

At the crossroads,

Which is Rachel's grave.

To mother Rachel he will bring glad tidings

And, he will comfort her.

And now she will let herself be comforted.

And she will rise up and kiss him.²⁴

NOTES

1. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol.13, pp. 1486-1491.
2. Otzar Hatefilot
3. Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 1.
4. T.B. Megillah 13b.
5. Midrash Sekhel Tov, Parashat Vayetze.
6. Yalkut Shimoni 2:824.
7. *Or HaEmet* (Zhitomir, Ukraine: 1900) p. 78.
8. Genesis Rabbah 70:12.
9. Calvin, *Opera* 23:400.
10. *Zohar* 146a – 147a.
11. Kedushat Levi 24b.
12. Genesis Rabbah 71:8.
13. *Zohar* 1:118b, 225b, 2:29b.
14. *Zohar* 1: 176b, T.B. B.B. 12b, Tanhuma Vayeshev.
15. Genesis Rabbah 84:5.
16. Midrash Hagadol, ad. loc.
17. A. Enzil, *Korban he-Ani*, 13b.
18. G. Ashkenazi, *Tiferet Ha-Gershuni*, Parashat Vayeshev.

19. Leviticus Rabbah 32:5; Numbers Rabbah 3:6.
20. Broude edition (Philadelphia: 1981) p. 366.
21. Zev Vilnai, *Encyclopedia Ariel* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1979) vol. 8, pp. 6449-6462 [Hebrew]; Shraga Weiss, *Atarim K'doshim b'Eretz Yisrael* (Reuben Mass: 1987) pp. 1-18; S. H. Dresner, *Rachel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994) pp. 175-205.
22. Genesis Rabbah 71:9.
23. S. Sered, "Rachel's Tomb," *Journal of Feminine Studies*, Fall 1986, p. 714.
24. *Zohar* 2: 7a-9a.

QUESTIONS from Rabbi Hayyim Halpern's book TORAH DIALOGUES

1. Why, of all matters and incidents in the wilderness, does Moses begin Deuteronomy with his appointment of judges and the delegation of authority (1:15ff) ?
2. Where else in the Torah are there instructions to judges? (Hint: look in *Mishpatim* and *Kedoshim*.)
3. Compare and contrast the blessing of Adam (Genesis 1:28) with that of Noah (Chapter 9).

ANSWERS ON PAGE 195

ACCENTUATION:
A TOOL FOR INTERPRETING
THE TEXT OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

LEONORA SAMUEL

The Hebrew Bible, as it was passed down from scribe to scribe, is a text which lacks vowels and punctuation. Around the eighth century of the Common Era, notations were developed to record the traditional way of reading, or chanting, the text. The extra notation consists of the pointing. That is:

1. the notation that records the vowels and the *dagesh* that hardens, or notionally "doubles," a letter;
2. the cantillation-marks, or accentuation, indicating the notes used for chanting the text;
3. notes in the margins, in some copies of the *masora*, giving detailed information about elements of the text.

This work was done by the masoretic scholars, who were then based in Tiberias in the Holy Land.

The accentuation marks, or accents, serve three purposes:

1. they are a guide to the melody given to the chanting of the text in public readings;
2. they often indicate which syllable of a word takes the stress (which can have grammatical implications);
3. they provide information on how the text is divided into verses and into phrases.

In this article, I intend to comment briefly on how the accentuation informs the phrasing and on the attitudes regarding this as expressed or implied by biblical commentaries.

Studying the accentuation, in parallel with biblical commentary, has relevance for two reasons. On the first level, it gives tools for analyzing the biblical text

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and gaining insight into its meaning. On the second level, it gives insight into the attitudes of different scholars toward the interpretation of the biblical text in a way that can be described as "scientific."

Scholars vary in their readiness to use the accentuation to re-interpret the text. In his introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch, Samuel David Luzzatto (Shadal – a 19th-century Italian Jewish leader, teacher and scholar) discusses the attitudes of a range of medieval commentators toward biblical accentuation. He writes that many commentators used the accentuation to interpret the text, and that – nevertheless – virtually all of them disagreed at times with the interpretation given by the accents.

In this article, I am only considering the so-called 21 books, the books of the Bible minus Psalms, Proverbs and Job, which have their own accents following different rules. A study of the system of cantillation used in Psalms, Proverbs and Job is likely to bring to light matters of great interest, because those books contain a lot of poetry and language which is both complex and difficult to fathom. However, such study is beyond the scope of this work.

DETERMINING PHRASING USING THE ACCENTUATION

In the Hebrew Bible, in most current printed editions, we see extra marks, besides the vowel signs, above and below the letters. These marks are called *'amim* [טענות]. These are the marks that are referred to in English as "accents."

A QUICK GUIDE TO THE ACCENTS

מְנַח | מְנַח | מְנַח סְגוּל מְנַח | מְנַח
רְבִיעִי מְהַפֵּךְ פְּשֻטָּא זְקֵנֵי-רִמָּן זְקֵנֵי
גְדוּל מְרַבָּא טְפֵחָא מְנַח אֲתַנְחַתָּא
פֶּזֶר תְּלִישָׁא-קַטְנָה תְּלִישָׁא-גְדוּלָה
קֶדְמָא וְאוּלָּא אוּלָּא-גְרֵשׁ גְרֵשִׁים
דְרָגָא תְּבִיר יְתִיב פְּסִיק | סוּף-פְּסִיק;
שְׁלֵשַׁת קַרְנֵי-פְּנֵיהַּ מְרַבָּא-קַפּוּלָה
יְרַחֲבֵי-יָמוֹ.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACCENTUATION

The most obvious significance of the accentuation is that it instructs the reader as to the tune with which he is to chant a biblical passage. The tunes themselves vary according to the tradition followed by individual Jewish communities. Details of the tunes can be found in many academic and popular works. We will not discuss them except to say that, in a traditional Jewish public reading of a biblical passage, the reader is trained to follow the accentuation with exactitude. The less obvious messages given by the cantillation marks are, as mentioned above, the placing of the stress in a word and the separation of the text into verses and into phrases. The exactitude mentioned above means that, in a public reading from the Bible, the reader is not permitted to deviate from the phrasing implied by the accentuation. Here, we are limiting our discussion to the way the accents illuminate the structures within a biblical verse or between two verses.

The accents fall into two basic groups: conjunctive and disjunctive. A conjunctive mark on a word joins it to the next word, to form a single phrase. Disjunctive marks indicate a pause on a word, of greater or lesser significance. Most modern academics agree that there are four levels of pause indicated by different marks. To use the accentuation in our analysis, we need to understand how each accent determines pause and thus indicates phrasing. Also, we would benefit from understanding the rules of how the accents are placed in relation to one another, because this information helps us to spot exceptional configurations which might be relevant in interpreting the text.

CONJUNCTIVE ACCENTS

- munach*
- mahpach*
- telisha ketana*
- kadma*
- mercha*
- darga*
- mercha ch'fula* (rare)
- m'ayla* (rare)
- yareach ben-yomo* (rare)

Sometimes the conjunctive accents are called "servants" and the disjunctives "kings" [*melachim*]. This can be confusing because, in the eyes of modern analysts such as Breuer and Kogut, the disjunctives are deemed to denote four different levels of pause, one of which is referred to as *melech* or king.

The presence of a conjunctive accent on a word indicates that the word thus marked is joined syntactically to the following word. The "servants" of a given disjunctive accent are the conjunctive accents that tend to mark the words preceding the word marked by that particular disjunctive accent. For example, consider the final word of a verse. It is accented with the *sof pasuk* to indicate that it is the last word of the verse. If it is preceded by a word that is closely linked syntactically, to form a phrase, then the preceding word will probably be accented with a *mercha*, because the *mercha* is the "servant" of the *sof pasuk*. But if we have a word accented with an *etnachta*, which shows that this word marks the primary dichotomy of a verse, then a closely-linked word, directly preceding, would be accented with a *munach*, because the *munach* is the "servant" of the *etnachta*. The *mercha* is not found directly preceding the *etnachta*, because it is not the "servant" of the *etnachta*.

DISJUNCTIVE ACCENTS

Emperors <i>Kaysarim</i>	Level 1 (most significant)	
	<i>siluk (sof pasuk)</i>	X
	<i>etnachta</i>	X
Kings <i>Melachim</i>	Level 2	
	<i>segol</i>	X
	<i>zakef gadol</i>	X
	<i>zakef katan</i>	X
	<i>tipcha</i>	X
	<i>shalsholet</i> (rare)	X

The disjunctive accents work to divide and subdivide the verses, to form groups of words (phrases) and to form groups of phrases. In places where the verses are longer, the process of division and subdivision is more complex; sometimes the way a verse is divided and subdivided makes a critical difference to how it should be interpreted.

As Mordechai Breuer explains,³ a disjunctive accent functions not only to separate two parts of a verse or verse segment but also to unify the phrases within each part. At the start, we thus have *In the beginning, God created* and the next part is *the heavens, and the earth*. The phrase "the heavens and the earth" is marked out by the *etnachta*, with its significant disjunctive function, in the word preceding it. This emphasises the status of "the heavens and the earth" as the direct object clause referred to by the verb "created."

We can carry on with this procedure to the third order, fourth and so on, dividing up any segment of a verse, until we find no more words marked with disjunctive accents. For example, Exodus 24:5 (discussed below, next section) divides as far as the third order, and the third-order divisions have less significance than the higher-order ones.

WAYS IN WHICH PHRASING SEEMS TO HAVE ACTED AS COMMENTARY

In commentaries on the biblical text, one can find places where different interpretations of the text seem to have been handed down as parallel traditions but the accentuation we have today supports one reading. Medieval commentaries on these verses, such as Rashi and Ibn Ezra, and of the Aramaic Targumim will confirm this observation. Manuscript evidence and that of exegesis suggest that at certain locations (Gen. 1:11; Isa. 1:9) the correct accentuation was in doubt and that there were parallel traditions.

I wish to focus only on one example of a location where the accentuation sheds light on the interpretation of the text.

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-נְעָרָיו בְּגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲלוּ עִלָּיתָּ
וַיִּזְבְּחוּ וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה פְּקֻדִים

Tractate Hagiga 6b of the Babylonian Talmud, records the following colloquy (translation based on the Soncino Talmud).⁴

R. Hisda asked: How is this verse to be understood?

*And he sent the young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt-offerings (meaning, lambs) and sacrificed sacrifices, peace-offerings to the Lord, oxen? Or perhaps both were oxen? [literally, "these and these were oxen?"] What is the difference between them? Mar Zutra said: The phrasing [*l'pisuk t'amim* the division given by the accents)]. Rav Aha, son of Rava, said: To the one who says: "Behold! I undertake to offer a burnt-offering like the burnt-offering that Israel offered in the wilderness." What [do we say he should offer]? Were they oxen or lambs? - It remains undecided.*

The talmudic sages are pointing out that the verse can mean two different things, depending on how it is phrased or punctuated. Either the final word of the verse "oxen" refers only to the peace-offerings, or it also refers to the burnt-offerings. By inserting the word "lambs" the redactors of the Talmud -- or Rav Hisda, to whom the words are attributed -- are declaring their preference for the interpretation which tells us that the word "oxen" only applies to the peace-offerings.

The verse attracts not only talmudic commentary but also the super-commentary of Rashi. Here is the comment of Rashi on the talmudic phrase *l'pisuk t'amim* in that passage.

If you will say "two different species" you need to accent (literally, "separate") the phrase *vaya'alu 'olot* (they offered burnt offerings) with an *etnachta* -- as we read it -- or with a *zakef katon*, an accent that divides the saying from what comes after it. And if there were only one species then you'd need to read it with one of the other accents which does not separate, such as a *pashta* or a *revia*.

Now, this comment does not make sense at first sight based upon traditional interpretation of the accents, because the two accents that Rashi suggests "do not separate"; the *pashta* and the *revia*, are both disjunctive accents and not conjunctive ones which connect words to create a phrase. It appears that Rashi calculated that reducing the level of pause on *vaya'alu 'olot* would transform the phrasing of the verse. If you replace the *etnachta* with a *revia* you in fact have to amend other accents in order to keep the phrase *vaya'alu 'olot* together, as Rashi

clearly intends. Having done that you find that, as Rashi suggests, the phrasing gives the alternative interpretation to the one that "our" accentuation implies.⁵ This is because after the pause on *olot* is reduced, the *tipcha* on *parim* [oxen] serves to unite all the preceding words following *bnei Yisrael* as explained in the previous section. So *olot* and *zevachim* are now part of the same phrase.

The significance of Rashi's comment is that he did not want to be seen as an innovator in his commentary but as a transmitter of what he had learnt from his teachers. Rashi's comment on the role of the accentuation would not have come "out of the blue" but would have reflected an older tradition.

CONCLUSION

The accentuation of the biblical text is not just a decorative guide to melody. It gives a valuable insight into interpretation of biblical passages, and in particular it sheds light on the views held by the masoretic scholars who recorded the tradition that has been passed down to us. Where there are several possible ways to interpret a text, and where Targumim and commentators themselves do not agree, the accentuation can provide an extra perspective. This perspective is occasionally cited by medieval and modern biblical exegetes. The accentuation tells us about the phrasing of a biblical verse according to a set of complex rules which also, with few exceptions, govern which accent can be used where.

In orthodox Jewish tradition, in public readings from the Torah and other biblical texts, the reader is required to adhere to the traditional accentuation. Despite the restriction imposed upon public readings, medieval and modern Jewish interpretations of the text do not always follow those suggested by the accentuation. The role of the accentuation, like that of the Aramaic Targumim, seems to be similar to that of any respected commentary. It is often taken into account, but on occasion traditional accentuation and phraseology may be ignored or overruled and a conflicting interpretation may be suggested. We see that the orthodox Jewish process of textual interpretation invites a multi-faceted approach which can be different from conventional intonation.

NOTES

1. Simcha Kogut, *Correlations between Biblical Accentuation and Traditional Jewish Exegesis: Linguistic and Contextual Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994) Section 0.2, pp. 13-14.
2. English translations of the four types of disjunctives are taken from Julian Gilbey's presentation on the subject at the Limmud conference, December 1998.

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3. Mordechai Breuer, *Pisuk t'amim sheba-mikra: Torat dikduk ha-t'amim* (Jerusalem: Hahistadrut ha-Tzionit, 1958); introduction, p. 1 and chapter 1, p. 1
4. *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Hagiga*, translated into English with notes by I. Abrahams (London: The Soncino Press, 1984).
5. Kogut, *Correlations*, pp. 196-97

RECOMMENDED READING

- Mordechai Breuer, *Pisuk t'amim sheba-mikra: Torat dikduk ha-t'amim* (Jerusalem: Hahistadrut ha-Tzionit, 1958)
- Mordechai Breuer, *Ta'amei ha-Mikra* (Jerusalem: Michlala, 1982)
- I. Epstein, ed., *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud* (London: The Soncino Press, 1984)
- David B Freeman and Miles B Cohen, 'The Masoretes as Exegetes: Selected Examples' in *1972 and 1973 Proceedings IOMS, Masoretic Studies 1*, (Missoula, MT: Ktav Publishing House 1974); pp. 35-46
- Maurice Gellis and Dennis Gribetz, *The Glory of Torah Reading* (Monsey, NY: MP Press, Inc., 1983)
- Simcha Kogut, *Correlations between Biblical Accentuation and Traditional Jewish Exegesis: Linguistic and Contextual Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994)
- Rabbi Matis Weinberg, *Frameworks: Genesis*. (Boston: Foundation for Jewish Publications, 1999) preface
- Shmuel Yehuda Weinfeld, *Ta'amei ha-Mikra* (Jerusalem: Eshkol Press, 1972)
- William Wickes, 'A treatise on the accentuation of the twenty-one so-called prose books of the Old Testament' in *Two treatises on the accentuation of the Old Testament*, 1887: republished with a preface by Aron Dotan (New York: Ktav, 1970)

GOD'S VOICE: FROM CREATION TO THE SANCTUARY

JEFFREY M. COHEN

God's Voice is manifest in four developing stages. In the first stage, a transcendent God brings the world into being by His creative word: *And God said* . . . With the creation of man, there is a gradual transformation of His Voice in three more stages, until in the context of the sanctuary His presence can be intimately perceived by Israel.

God appears at the beginning of the Torah as the transcendent Creator; the unseen, unreachable, indefinable, totally awesome Creative force whose every utterance is not just a word but a sound charged with creativity: *And God said, 'Let there be . . .,'* or as the Psalmist expressed it: *By the word of the Lord where the heavens brought into being* (Ps. 33:6).

The man He created could not possibly have had a relationship with such an awesome Being. Therefore, God moderates His Voice, so that it can be a medium of communication with humans. But it is still overwhelming in its novelty and intensity. The traumatic impact of the very first audible communication of God to Man is chronicled in the flight of Adam and Eve from the sounds which heralded God's presence in the Garden of Eden, when He addresses them: *'Where are you?' And they heard the voice of the Lord God reverberating in the garden, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden* (Gen. 3:8). Adam's answer to God's question *'Where are you?'* is *'Your voice I heard in the garden,'* (3:10) which invokes existential terror in Adam and Eve. This is Stage One, the heaven-based Voice. God's pristinely creative Voice seeking out the terrified fugitive Adam is the turning point in God's relationship with Man.

In Stage Two, God changes His Voice to one that can be comfortably received by Man. This is the Voice heard by the Patriarchs. But it is still a remote Voice,

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merely the echo of a transcendent God. On occasion, it is heard in a vision, as in the episode of the Covenant Between the Pieces, introduced by the verse: *After these things the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision, saying . . .* (15:1), or when God communicates with Jacob while he sleeps (28:12). At other times, the Voice of God is mediated through angels, as when the three angels appear to Abraham, and, later, when the angel stops him, in mid-act, from slaying his son at the Akedah.

The third stage in the development of God's communication and relationship with Man was the experience at Sinai. There, God's Presence moves from a remote position in heaven and is suspended just above the mountain: *And God descended upon Mount Sinai* (Ex. 19:20). There was heard the original creative Voice that God once again employed, the Voice that had brought the world into being and now composes and transmits the Torah, the creative word of God. The thunder and lightning and the great shofar grow stronger and stronger, causing great fear that so engulfs the people that after the Second Commandment they beg Moses to stand between them and God's Voice.

The fourth stage of God's communication with Man is bringing it into the very closest proximity to Israel, in the sanctuary [*mishkan*] in the midst of the camp. Exodus 25:26 details God's command that Moses construct this portable sanctuary wherein God's presence could be experienced by all Israel, to inspire them and to give them an added sense of His proximity and protection. The paramount importance of this concentration of God's presence within the camp is the reason why the entire five concluding chapters of Exodus are devoted to its construction.

The sanctuary can be viewed as the climactic stage of a progressively clearer and closer revelation of God's presence to Israel. Here, the distance between God and Man is bridged. The fear of His Voice is now gradually replaced with a thirst for His word; and creativity is now vested in Israel. As recipients of the Torah, the Israelites have reached a stage of spiritual maturity and purity that makes them capable of creating a sanctuary to house God, *that I may dwell among them* (25:8).

King David acknowledges the Voice of God from Creation to sanctuary, and portrays it graphically and majestically in Psalm 29:

The voice of the Lord is powerful
The voice of the Lord is majestic
The voice of the Lord splits the cedars
The voice of the Lord cleaves flames of fire
The voice of the Lord makes the wilderness quake
The voice of the Lord makes the hinds go into labor
The voice of the Lord strips the forests bare.

He concludes reassuringly with just four words in the original Hebrew, that convey the contrasting tranquillity that pervades the sanctuary, where God has become familiar to His people, beloved of them and praised by them: *uv'heikhalo kullo omer kavod* (But in His sanctuary, everything exudes Glory).

The relationship with man begins with God aloof in His heavenly court, and remote from the lower spheres. The stages of growth in the love relationship of God and Israel is seen by some as expressed metaphorically in The Song of Songs, that reads like a passionate love poem of a shepherd and shepherdess and the obstacles placed in their way by King Solomon, who wanted the beautiful shepherdess for his own harem.

Developing a relationship with God, to learn to have faith in Him, to trust Him, and to wait patiently for Him, one needs to study and fathom His word, so that it is no longer incomprehensible and unfamiliar, but rather inspirational, warming and character-forming.

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RASHI'S VIEW OF GENESIS

JOEL LITKE

In the opening words of his commentary to Genesis, Rashi writes:

Rabbi Yitzchak said, (God) need not have begun the Torah but from *This month shall be for you* (Ex. 12:2), because it is the first commandment which Israel was commanded. What is the reason that it began with the Book of Genesis? Because (it wishes to convey the message of the verse), *The power of His acts He told to His people in order to give them the estate of nations* (Ps. 111:6). So that if the nations of the world will say to Israel, "You are bandits", for you conquered the lands of the seven nations, they, Israel will say to them, "The whole earth belongs to the Holy One, Blessed be He. He created it and gave it to the one who is proper in His eyes. By His wish He gave it to them, and by His wish He took it from them and gave it to us."

The above introductory comment to the Torah offers a striking and illuminating perspective on the very meaning and aim of Genesis. In Rashi's view, the Torah's intention was not to reveal to mankind the secrets of Creation, that is, to outline the manner and order in which God called the world into being for its own sake, but rather to proclaim that He as Lord and Master of the earth is the advocate and champion of Israel's right to the Land of Canaan. The Creation account is to serve as the source and base for Israel's legal and moral title to the Land, which they acquired directly from the Ultimate Owner Himself.

It would be tempting to dismiss Rashi's brief as a mere self-serving, biased and arbitrary expression of partiality, were it not for the fact that we are dealing with the foremost student of the Bible, one finely attuned to the sense and nuances of scriptural text and themes. And, indeed, a proper analysis of Genesis will reveal that one of its chief designs is to justify Israel's entitlement to the

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land, and at the same time to demonstrate the unfitness and disqualification of the occupier of the moment.

For the Torah, such justification of Israel's selection was very important, for God is just and "He does not deal despotically with His creatures." But for the fact that Canaanites were deserving of expulsion and the Hebrews meriting His favor, God would not have decreed such drastic upheaval of national fates. To God, such intervention in the destiny of nations is necessary, and to explain the deserved consequences of the ideals and deeds of the respective peoples, the Torah traces the origins and developments of the histories of the Canaanites and Hebrews in Genesis.

As narrated in Genesis, almost every encounter with the Canaanites deals with their immoral conduct, which evoked God's displeasure. Surprisingly, it is not their idol worship or superstition that is censured or deplored, for these are hardly mentioned. It is their sexual indulgences on which the text concentrates. The very first reference to the Canaanites is in connection with an indecent act, when Canaan, their ancestor, is associated with his father Ham's leering at the nakedness of Noah (Gen. 9:22-25). This reveals a characteristic vulgarity, that infected his descendants and became their distinctive national trait.

The men of Sodom, who were inhabitants of Canaan, were also depraved. They openly and unabashedly demanded the surrender of the two visitors whom Lot had invited into his home: *'Deliver them to us so that we may know them [intimately]'* (19:5). This shameless public outburst precipitated their destruction. Any other corrupt norms and practices are not mentioned in the Torah, that suggests idolatry is considered less destructive of organized social life than immoral vices that are inevitably harmful to the fabric of communal order and detrimental to family bonds.

To emphasize further the immoral character of the Canaanite people, the Torah reports three episodes of a king abducting a beautiful matriarch for his harem; once by a pharaoh of Egypt, and twice by Abimelech of Gerar, who is called a Philistine but whose city was in Canaan. Of the Egyptians, the prophet Ezekiel remarks, *Their issue is the issue of horses* (Ezek. 23:30) and their polytheistic pantheon was a confusion of human and animal gods. According to biblical genealogy, Caphtor (Crete) is a descendant of Mizraim (Egypt) (Gen. 10:13-14), and when the Philistines resided in Canaan they assimilated the

mores of the native population. Also, Egypt exercised great sway over the culture of the area, and its decadence was powerfully alluring and widespread.

This focusing on the seizing of the women can only mean that the Torah wishes to highlight a conspicuous and unconstrained habit of acting in any manner they saw fit toward women. It is especially persuasive that in relation to the Canaanites, it is the only event that recurs in Genesis. To this series of abductions must be added the rape of Dinah, daughter of Jacob, by Shechem, son of a Hivite king in Canaan (34:6).

The point of all this is obviously not to boast of the desirability and attractiveness of the Hebrew women, but to illustrate in the clearest form the low standard of culture and morals of the leaders of the peoples of Canaan, who were the representatives and models for those over whom they ruled.

A people worthy to live in such a land cannot be like the Canaanites, steeped in immorality and depravity. In the Holy Land a people must live and strive for holiness, which in biblical terms also means restraint in sexual matters. The Canaanites did not live up to such standards, and inevitably the land would spit them out.

The recorded biographies of the Patriarchs who lived in excess of hundred years are sparse, and yet deal disproportionately with the sexual encounters of their women with the native heads of the land. Its significance can only be that the Torah was interested in proving the true nature and sensual practices of the inhabitants, and of these the glaring characteristic was their sexual laxity. To the Torah this was abhorrent, and the cause of the inhabitants' forfeiture of the land.

In contrast to the immodest behavior of the Canaanites, the Hebrews in Genesis are portrayed as people who live by norms that are decent and virtuous. The Patriarchs are represented as being faithful and dutiful to their wives. Of Abraham, it is stated that he will charge his descendants to do justice and righteousness: *That he may command his children . . . that they may keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice* (18:19). He is of such supreme ethical refinement that he argues with God Himself: *'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?'* (18:25). The sons of Jacob detested acts of immorality so much that they felt compelled to take revenge on Shechem who had dishonored their sister Dinah, vindicating themselves by exclaiming, *Should our sister be*

dealt with like a harlot?' (34:31). Joseph resisted the repeated blandishments of the wife of Potiphar.

The whole drama of Abraham and his descendants could take place only in Canaan, for the simple reason that the land is precious in the eyes of God. Because of its preciousness, God called Abraham from his birthplace to move and settle there, as it is the select place on earth. There, God vouchsafed His special Providence to become manifest and bestow its prosperity as it is written: . . . *a land which the Lord your God cares for, where the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it* (Deut. 11:12). It is the place for which God's commandments are designed, and of which the Sabbatical law declares: *the land shall rest a Shabbat unto the Lord* (Lev. 25:2). No other place on earth is so designated and so distinguished.

The theme of the Book of Genesis may be termed a Divine selection and rejection in process. As the careers of the Canaanites and Hebrews proceed, it became manifest who earned approbation and who met with disgrace. There was nothing prejudicial or racial in Abraham's selection. What is remarkable is that not all members of his family were fit to be entrusted to be bearers of Abraham's message. Those who imitated Canaanite mores and practices were disqualified. Only the branch of Isaac and Jacob became the official and legitimate "seed" of Abraham that was included in the covenant and the promise to inherit the Land of Canaan and become a source of blessing for all nations.

In Rashi's understanding of the text of the Book of Genesis then, whatever else it may mean and teach, and this is much of course, the main thrust of its chronicle and narrative is to prepare the legal and moral grounds for Israel's claim to the Land of Canaan.

ELIASAPH BEN-DEUEL/REUEL: A RABBINIC INTERPRETATION

ZVI RON

The Torah reports that the leader of the tribe of Gad in the second year after the Exodus from Egypt was named Eliasaph ben-Deuel. This name is recorded in the list of tribal leaders in Numbers 1:14, and again in Numbers 7:42 and 7:47 when the Torah records the offerings of each tribal leader at the dedication of the Tabernacle. Eliasaph ben-Deuel is again mentioned in Numbers 10:20, when the marching order of the Israelites is reported. A problem arises when we read the order of encampment of the Israelites in Numbers 2:14 and we find that the leader of the tribe of Gad is called Eliasaph ben-Reuel.¹

It is obvious that the Torah refers to the same individual, Eliasaph, the leader of the tribe of Gad, yet there seem to be two different versions of his father's name. In this article we will explore three different approaches that the medieval rabbis [*Rishonim*] developed to explain this inconsistency.

THE APPROACH OF RAMBAN

The best-known rabbinic approach is that of Ramban (1194-1270), who explains that "it is customary in the sacred language to change names of the same meaning." Ramban gives the example of the name of one of the sons of Simeon. In Genesis 46:10, he is named Zohar, and in I Chronicles 4:24 he is called Zerah, both names meaning "brightness." In the case of the father of Eliasaph, he was called Deuel based on the root "*dei'ah*" meaning "knowledge," because he "knew" God. The name Reuel is based on the root "*ra'ayon*" meaning "thought," because "he set all the thoughts of his heart on God." According to Ramban, "since people used to call that person by two names, therefore the Torah mentioned both of them."² Rabbeinu Bachya (1263-1345) similarly explains, "He is named sometimes with a *dalet* and sometimes with a *resh*, and it all has the same idea, that he wanted to know (his thoughts were directed to God) God."³

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Thus, the father of Eliasaph was referred to sometimes as Deuel and sometimes as Reuel. No explanation is given as to why it is specifically in Numbers 2:14 that the Torah calls him Reuel, and in all other places Deuel.

This explanation became very popular, and was quoted by many other commentators, including the Baal haTurim on the Torah, Samson Raphael Hirsch, in *Da'at Mikra*, and in the Artscroll Stone Chumash. In all of these commentaries it is presented as the only explanation for the name change.

THE APPROACH OF ELAZAR OF WORMS

A different way of approaching this problem is to understand that the name of the father of Eliasaph was not both Deuel and Reuel, and that the Torah calls him by both names as a hint to some special teaching. Elazar of Worms, known as the Rokeach (1160-1238), explains that since Gad was the firstborn of Zilpah, the leader of the tribe could have complained that their tribe was not made the leader of an encampment. The tribe of Reuben, firstborn of Leah, led the South encampment. Ephraim, son of Joseph, firstborn of Rachel, led the West encampment. The tribe of Dan, firstborn of Bilhah, led the North encampment. Thus, the only firstborn tribe not to be a camp leader was Gad, that was included in the South under the leadership of Reuben, while Judah was made the leader of the East encampment.

Elazar of Worms explains that this is hinted at by calling the father of Eliasaph both Reuel and Deuel. The first letters of these two names spell out the Hebrew word "*reid*," meaning "go down," suggesting that the leader of the tribe of Gad was lowered from a position of greatness. Since Eliasaph accepted this without complaint, his tribe merited that Moses [*reah El* – the friend of God] be buried in their portion east of the Jordan River. This implies that the name Reuel, meaning "friend of God," is a hint to a special connection between the tribe of Gad and Moses. Elazar of Worms notes further that the name Gad is composed of the two letters "*gimmel*" that has the numerical value "three" and "*dalet*," that has the numerical value "four." Together, they have the value "seven" which is the date in Adar when, according to the Talmud Kiddushin 38a, Moses was born and died.⁴ This method of interpretation, based on the manipulation of letters and gematria, is fairly typical of the commentary of Elazar of Worms.

This explanation is cited by Chaim David Azulai (1724-1806), in his book *Chomat Anach*.⁵ Azulai adds that the father of Eliasaph is called Reuel specifically in Numbers 2:14, when the order of the encampment is given and the tribe of Gad was not placed in a leadership position. At precisely that point, when it was revealed that Gad would not lead an encampment, no complaints were made about the lowering of the status of the tribe of Gad.

According to this explanation, the name of the father of Eliasaph was Deuel, but he is called Reuel in Numbers 2:14 because at that time the tribe of Gad was "brought down" from a leadership position in the order of the encampments.

THE APPROACH OF RADAK

Radak (1160-1235), relates to this issue in a very different way. In his commentary to I Chronicles 1:7, he writes that there are many interpretations of changing letters in the names of people and places in different parts of the Tanakh, but the real explanation is:

Since the *dalet* and *resh* are similar in appearance, and among the readers of the genealogies which were written in ancient times, some read a *dalet* and some read a *resh*, some names were preserved for posterity in two forms with either a *dalet* or a *resh*.

Radak explains that Scripture preserved both traditions by recording these names one way in certain locations and the other way in others, offering Deuel/Reuel as an example. Other examples include the Dodanim of the line of Javan (Gen. 10:4) called Rodanim in I Chronicles 1:7,⁶ and the city of Rivlah, mentioned many times in II Kings and Jeremiah,⁷ called Divlah in Ezekiel 6:14. Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) also presents Deuel/Reuel and Dodanim/Rodanim as examples of words with interchanged letters due to the similarity in appearance of the letters "*dalet*" and "*resh*."⁸

The idea that the letters "*dalet*" and "*resh*" may be interchanged by mistake is not a radical one. Elazar of Worms explains that the word "*acher*" in Exodus 34:14 (*For you shall not prostrate yourself to an alien god . . .*) is written in the Torah scroll with a large letter "*resh*" and the word "*echad*" in Deuteronomy 6:4 (*Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One*) is written with a large "*dalet*" to make certain that these letters are not interchanged by mistake.⁹ Switching the "*resh*" to a "*dalet*" in the word "*acher*" (Ex. 34:14) would turn it

into "*echad*" meaning "one" and would leave us with the theologically problematic verse "For you shall not prostrate yourself to the one God . . ." Similarly, substituting "*resh*" for "*dalet*" in the word "*echad*" (Deut. 6:4) would corrupt the verse to read "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is **Another**." Radak and Ibn Ezra take this idea a step further by suggesting that there are places in Scripture where these letters were in fact interchanged.

Baruch HaLevi Epstein (1860-1941), in his book *Tosefet Bracha* gives a long list of places in Scripture where he feels the letters "*dalet*" and "*resh*" have been interchanged. He includes in this list Deuel/Reuel, Dodanim/Rodanim, and Divlah/Rivlah which were cited by Radak, as well as a few more of his own, such as the son of Gomer, who is called Rifat in Genesis 10:3 and Difat in I Chronicles 1:6. Epstein explains that "there is no tragedy in these switches" since they are just names of people and places, and whether they are written with a "*dalet*" or a "*resh*" is not significant. The fact that the father of Eliasaph is sometimes called Deuel and sometimes Reuel is theologically irrelevant.¹⁰

According to this approach, the name of the father of Eliasaph was originally either Deuel or Reuel, but the spelling was sometimes inadvertently switched since the "*dalet*" and "*resh*" look so similar. The Torah preserves examples of both the "*dalet*" and the "*resh*" versions of this name. This approach is basically the approach of modern Bible scholars who see this as an example of an "interchange of similar letters due to graphic similarity."¹¹

We have seen that commentators approached the problem of the two versions of Eliasaph's father's name from different perspectives. Ramban explains that he had a dual name even during his lifetime. Elazar of Worms offers a homiletic interpretation, and Radak a graphological explanation. Taken together, we see a wide spectrum of approaches, all grounded firmly in rabbinic tradition.

NOTES

1. This Reuel has no connection to the Reuel mentioned in Exodus 2:18 as the father of Zipporah, or Reuel the son of Esau (Gen. 36:4) or Reuel from the tribe of Benjamin (I Chronicles 9:8).
2. Ramban, Numbers 2:4. English translations are from the Charles Chavel edition, (New York: Shilo Publishing House, Inc., 1975).
3. Rabbeinu Bachya, Numbers 2:14.
4. Commentary of Elazar of Worms, Numbers 2:10. See also the commentary of Rabbeinu Yoel in his *Sefer HaRemazim*, Numbers, 2:14, where he identifies Deuel himself as the *reah El*, the friend of God.

5. Chaim David Azulai, *Chomat Anach*, Numbers 3. He writes that he saw this explanation in the book *Imrei Noam* on the portion VaYetzei in Genesis.
6. See Rashi on I Chronicles 1:7 for a midrashic explanation for Dodanim/Rodanim.
7. See for example II Kings 25:6 and 20 and Jeremiah 39:5 and 52:9 and 26.
8. Ibn Ezra, Ecclesiastes 5:1.
9. Commentary of Elazar of Worms, Exodus 34:14. See also the commentary of Rabbeinu Yoel in his *Sefer HaRemazim*, Exodus 34:14 where he gives a long list of words where one has to be careful not to interchange the letters "*dalet*" and "*resh*."
10. Baruch HaLevi Epstein, *Tosefet Bracha*, Exodus 34:14.
11. See Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Second Revised Edition, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001) pp. 12, 13, 243, 244.

RESPONSES from Rabbi Hayyim Halpern's book TORAH DIALOGUES

1. Moses' first oration prepares the people for entry into Canaan (1:6-8). Judges would be needed for an orderly transition (cf. Ramban on 1:9).
2. Much of *Parashat Mishpatim* (Exodus 21-23) especially Exodus 23:1-3, 6-9, parts of *Kedoshim* (Leviticus 19:15, 33-37) and *Shoftim* (Deuteronomy 16:18-20, 17:2-12) deal with judicial rules and attitudes.
3. The outstanding difference in the two very similar blessings is the instruction regarding other creatures. Adam is to share vegetation with the beasts and fowl. Noah is told of antipathy between humans and other creatures. Permission to use animals for food is granted to Noah (9:3).

A COMMENT ON *YOU SHALL NOT BOIL A KID IN ITS MOTHER'S MILK*

JOEL T. KLEIN

If an inquiry into the origin of a custom or ritual produces two or more possible explanations that may be taken to mean that the research did not go far enough to determine the true origin and reason. This seems to be the case on determining the origin of the rule *You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk* (Ex. 23:19, 34:25; Deut. 14:21).

John Spencer in his *De Legibus Hebraeorum* explores many theories on the purpose of this rule and finds most cogent those that define it as a normative inversion of some idolatrous ritual and a prohibition against fertility magic. He cites Isaac Abravanel's commentary on Exodus which describes a Spanish feast called *mesta*, celebrated twice a year by shepherds, that involved the boiling of kids in milk. If the biblical prohibition were only against eating that meat, that is a ban on mixing meat and milk, it would have said "You shall not eat " rather than the broader *You shall not boil*, suggesting a reference not to diet alone but to ritual.

In his search for the source and origin of the rule, Spencer also cites an ancient Karaite authority who wrote about a custom of ancient gentiles. They first harvested all the fruit from the trees. Then they cooked a kid in the mother's milk, and sprinkled the milk over the trees, fields, gardens, and orchards as a magical way to assure they would produce a good harvest in the following year.

Whether the references in other sources are real or the formations of imagination, they cannot be firmly established. But Spencer cites the custom from a rather apocryphal source by the name of Rabbi Menachem, who wrote that he had heard of a gentile custom of boiling meat with milk, especially of goat or lamb. When they planted trees they fumigated those trees with their seeds and

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poured that milk unto them in order to ensure that the trees had more and faster-maturing fruits.

These may not be taken as valid sources, since Spencer might have used the principle of normative inversion; that is, if there was a law forbidding the boiling of a kid in its mother's milk, there must have been a pagan ritual which followed precisely that procedure. In that context, Archer mentions Ugaritic texts that describe a pagan celebration that included cooking kids in milk.¹

These data do indicate how taking one more step to investigate more ancient sources than can be found in medieval codices can help to clarify both the ordinance and its purpose of separating Israel from the paganism which surrounded them.

NOTES

1. Gleason Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament: Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1974) p. 179.

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A GOD WHO CARES

THEODORE STEINBERG

Exodus 32 is about the worship of the Golden Calf, Israel's great sin. It may seem to be a straightforward story, but it is not. There are differences of opinion on just how the people erred, and what made God so angry. The figure of the calf was itself an idol, and idolatry was strictly forbidden. But the calf was not meant to be an image of some pagan deity. The text seems to say that the calf was meant to represent the invisible God Almighty who led Israel out of Egypt. It is not surprising that after centuries of exposure to a pagan, idol-ridden culture the Israelites felt the need of a material image of God.

With the delay of the return of Moses from Mount Sinai, some of them feared the worst; that he was not coming back. They were shaken, nervous, and surrendered to baser impulses. Rabbi Akiba suggested that when Moses did not return on the expected date, the frightened people began to argue:

"Does God really care about us [*Yvechi imanu haya asuk*]? No! For [God] was only concerned with Himself [*im atzmo haya asuk*]. He re-deemed Himself, but not us." (S.R. 42:3)

This kind of faithlessness was the sin. It points to a classical question. "Does God bother with human beings?" According to Rabbi Akiba, the answer of Israel at Sinai was No!

Harold Kushner raised this question in his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*: Is what the Sages called "individual providence [*hashgacha pratit*]" real? Does God really – as the saying goes – care about every fallen sparrow? Does He care about human beings and all their woes and troubles? Kushner's answer was that He does not. Essentially, God leaves us alone. He allows us freedom. He gives us intelligence, and at least the potential power and wisdom to cope with our problems. Thus, essentially we are on our own. God does not interfere with the laws of the universe in order to do this or that for individuals. In fact, God Himself lets Himself be bound by those laws. And that

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is why bad things can happen to good people. Kushner wrote that he came to this conclusion, in part, out of his own bitter experience with the death of his young child.

Hence the eternal question: Does God care about human beings? Some theologians thinkers have spoken of an "otiose deity," an idle god. He created the world, nature and human beings and then left them on their own. In the ancient world, this was the concept of atheism. The question was not whether God exists, but whether He is concerned about humans.

According to Rabbi Akiba, the great sin of the worshippers of the Golden Calf was that they believed God exists but does not care about them. It follows that Man can do as he pleases, including dancing around a Golden Calf.

No one can prove that God cares about people. Neither can one prove that He does not. It is an issue faith, a personal decision, to believe: God cares about me, and what I do with my life. Therefore I opt to live in a certain way. His way. God cares for us as Jewish people. He has a special interest in us and how we conduct our lives. He made us His partners in *tikkun olam*, keeping the world in decent repair. Perhaps that is the manner of God's involvement in humanity, through what we humans do in His name. God's involvement in our lives may be through an awareness of guilt when we do wrong. It is God who gives us this sense of morality.

Our mysterious God *hizuk v'meretz* [strength and courage]. He wants us on His side. He needs us to proclaim His teaching and help with His work in the world.

Adolph Hitler called the Ten Commandments a Jewish trick to enslave the world and corrupt the noble instincts of peoples like the Aryan Germans. Such noble instincts lead Man to murder, steal, lie, and cheat. That our Ten Commandments are the opposite of such instincts is one of our great achievements in history.

REVIEW OF: SIMI PETERS, *LEARNING TO READ MIDRASH*. JERUSALEM, NEW YORK: URIM PUBLICATIONS, 2004. 310 PP., INCLUDING HEBREW TEXTS OF MIDRASHIM ANALYZED. NO INDEX, NO BIBLIOGRAPHY, \$26.95. REVIEWED BY DAN VOGEL

Midrash, 1,500 years ago, was an oral discourse for farmers, artisans, stall-keepers, that was invariably inspired by a problem a rabbi perceived in a biblical text. Getting the audience to understand the text was one goal; greater closeness to God was concomitant. Since then, great things have happened in the world. First of all, the invention of printing pulled Midrash out of its oral confinement (with a few manuscripts floating around) into a widespread genre of Judaica. Secondly, readers in their homes of exile have become more educated and sophisticated. For some years now, Midrash has even become fashionable; authoritative literary scholars like to label any modern poem or fiction a Midrash if it alludes to a biblical text, directly or obliquely. Clearly, both the Bible and Midrash, are alive and well.

Simi Peters has all the requirements to author a book like *Learning to Read Midrash* – glorious, fascinating old-time Midrash, that is. She has been a teacher of Bible and Midrash for many years, fully conversant with the vast literature on these subjects as well as general literature. She is both scholar and pedagogue, and wants to provide the as-yet-uninitiated reader with the tools to penetrate the form and intention of Midrash as it was. Her Introduction describes how a rabbi elucidated a biblical passage by other biblical texts, parables, explanations, "narrative expansions," all formulated as what she calls "the map" of a midrash; that is, the conventional outline of its parts.

Peters gives examples of the genre with very close reading of 15 or more midrashim, ranging from the easy "*mashal* [parable]" to difficult and obscure types wherein one rabbi alone might offer several prooftexts and another rabbi offer an interpretation diametrically opposed. The rabbis' prooftexts and stories would on the surface always be far, far from the plain meaning of the biblical text under scrutiny, and the audience sat in expectant wonderment about how the rabbi was going to connect them! But connect them he did in the end, to the delight, satisfaction, and ultimate spiritual betterment of his listeners back then and readers today.

Although Peters recognizes the relationship between "interpretation and homiletics . . . as opposite poles in a continuum" (Introduction), this polar defi-

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nition betrays her into what I think is the major weakness of the book. Now that printed editions of series of midrashim are easily at hand, Peters approaches Midrash as a literary genre, with rules and techniques of explication of a midrash itself (not only the biblical fragment) as if it were similar to a poem by e.e. cummings, or to *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot (who had to write his own footnotes!). She offers detailed explanations of every point, replete with citations of sources of which no beginning reader of Midrash is aware.

She formulates questions on the text that might never have occurred to our ancestors listening in a *beit midrash* on a Shabbat afternoon, nor to a modern reader curled up with an anthology of midrashim. Of course, one may argue that the miracle of printed texts invites this kind of analysis, but one wonders whether such detailed explication for a neophyte modern reader is necessary. Some of it might have been reserved for an anthological sequel to this ostensibly introductory book.

Engulfed in her interesting, even fascinating, explications, Peters sometimes ignores the homiletical purpose of classic Midrash alongside its exegetical intention. On the other hand, she has a great chapter on the personality of King David, a powerful, mission-driven, passionate, self-judging, spiritual figure – maker of wars and psalms, who sinned with Bathsheba and knew it. He did not need Nathan the Prophet to scold him. A subsection of Peters's chapter is entitled "David and *Teshuva*." Thus Peters combines interpretation of the midrashim on David's sin and homiletics that can be derived from them. Here her explication falls back into the sanctified, honorable midrashic convention. The reader is almost forced to apply a *kal v'homer* of personal betterment: "If King David, this magnificent symbol of the Jewish nation, ancient and eternal, bent himself to do *teshuva*, so can I and ought to."

Modern poems called "midrashim" are in the main self-cathartic ruminations that purify the poet of his emotions. However, readers of this book will be immersed in amazement at the ingenuity, virtuosity, and dedication of ancient rabbis who had no time for self-catharsis, but only for their listeners' understanding of Scripture and the spiritual catharsis of their charges in the audience. In addition, teachers of Judaic subjects will find in Simi Peters's book materials to be adapted to every level of class and pupil. (An index would have helped them.) *Learning to Read Midrash* will be for every reader an adventure of challenge, wonderment, and satisfaction.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Aron Pinker in his Letter to the Editor (XXXII:4, October 2004, p. 270) says in paragraph 2: "The words *vaychal elokim bayom hashvyi* seemed to imply that God did some work on the Seventh day." Surely He did. The text tells us that *He ended His work and blessed the Seventh Day and sanctified it* (Gen. 1:3). In line therewith, the Decalogue enjoins us to sanctify the Seventh Day and not to do any work. Sanctifying that day is part of our service that we are told to do (Deut. 6:13). We do so being created in the image of God Who ended His work on the Seventh Day and sanctified it. Sanctifying is an activity: the children of Israel make the Sabbath and give it a special atmosphere of holiness. The making of the Shabbat is not mere non-doing of material things. When seen from that viewpoint, there is no difficulty regarding Genesis 2:2.

Asher Eder
Jerusalem

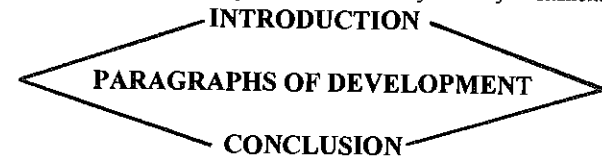
Sir,

The article by Shubert Spero (XXXII:4, October 2004, pp. 245-250) about the relationship between Jacob and Esau is quite wonderful. The change in Esau from hatred of his brother Jacob to brotherly love is a remarkable change. We are not told what happened to Esau during the 20 years the brothers were separated. Rabbi Shimon bar Gamliel said that no one ever honored his father as did Esau (Midrash Rabba, Deuteronomy 1:15). It would appear that Jacob lived with their mother while the outdoorsman Esau took care of his handicapped father. This suggests a sensitivity in Esau not usually noted by the commentators.

Moshe Reiss
Beit Shemesh

SUGGESTIONS TO AUTHORS FROM THE EDITORS

Face it: The article you write is intended to convince your reader that your ideas are valid. Here is a simple but effective macro-outline of doing so. It is based on the principle that organization is not only an instrument of clarity, but also of persuasion. Think of your essay as diamond-shaped:



INTRODUCTION: Whatever else you may include as background or attention-catching, the Introduction *must* present your *thesis* (*the over-arching idea of your essay*) and *indications of how you will proceed*. E.g.: "Commentators have often insisted that most miracles in the Tanakh did not violate natural order. However, what they have not emphasized is the involvement of *Timing* of the manifestation of natural order [*the thesis*]. Three "miracles" in diverse sections of the Bible – Torah, a book of history, and a prophetic book – that exemplify this element are the splitting of the Red Sea, the destruction of Sennacherib's army in II Kings 19, and the storm in the Book of Jonah."

PARAGRAPHS OF DEVELOPMENT: These ¶s will develop the indications, that is, the sub-ideas, mentioned in the Introduction, in one or more paragraphs for each. *Every developmental ¶ in its own right, is argumentative in the sense that it should contain somewhere in it a sentence or clause whose idea is "to be proved."* E.g.: "Storms at sea are frequent and sometimes violent, but Jonah intuited why the storm came at precisely this juncture in time." The "to be proved" statement will control your choice of quotation or paraphrase of biblical text or of other source and your own commentary in the rest of the paragraph. *All must pertain clearly to the idea of the argumentative statement.*

TRANSITIONS: insert links between ¶s and sets of ¶s (those ¶s that develop one sub-idea). Transitions are myriad: *and, but, however, nevertheless, etc.; first, second, third, next, last, etc.*; repetition of a word or *brief* phrase, etc. Be conscious of the need for transitions and they will come naturally, either conventional ones or ones you create also.

CONCLUSION: A simple summary will do; an admission that further study is necessary or a homiletic insight into the material presented – each and more are acceptable conclusions to your effort to convince your reader that what you are saying is interesting, valid, and worthy.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Only original papers written in English will be considered. Manuscripts must be word-processed on a computer using one of the following formats only: WORD6, WORD7, or RICH TEXT FORMAT (.rtf). Do **NOT** use the ENDNOTES feature of WORD. The entire ms. must be in plain text with no special formatting. Do **NOT** include tables or graphics. Ms. must be double-spaced. Authors are requested to email an attached file to: info@jewishbible.org and to include author's full name, postal mailing address and phone number. For those without email: the manuscript must be submitted in triplicate along with a diskette in one of the above formats and sent to: Dr. Shimon Bakon, Editor, JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel. A printed page in the JBQ is approximately 34 lines long, with approximately 80 characters to a line. Thus, the submitted ms. should be no longer than 12 pages. There are no page charges.

REFERENCES should be cited consecutively in the text as superscript numerals and listed on the last page in numerical order. Each reference should contain, in order, the following: **JOURNAL ARTICLE:** Author (initial of first name, last name), "Title of article" (in quotation marks, lower case), Title of Periodical in italics, vol. # (year of publication) inclusive page numbers. **Example:** S. Bakon, "Biblical Monotheism: Some of its Implications" *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 19 (1990) pp. 83-91. **BOOK:** Author (initial of first name, last name), Title of Book in italics, (place of publication: Publisher, year of publication) p. #. **Example:** N. Sama, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) p. 330.

QUOTATIONS from the Bible should follow one of the Jewish Publication Society 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. Biblical quotations should be in italics. No quotation marks are used except for dialogue, which takes single quotation marks [']. Quotations from the Septuagint or other versions are not in italics. In general, quotations from any source other than the Bible are not in italics or underlined. When a book of the Bible is mentioned in the text, the name of the book is written in full, followed by chapter and verse. In a direct quotation, the citation is in parentheses at the end of the quoted text, using the short forms below -- e.g., (Gen. 12:1-3). Place period after numbers or reference. **EXAMPLE:** Ex. 6:1-9; 6:30; 7:3. - *and this too will be given you* (Gen. 29:27). **HEBREW WORDS** transliterated into English should be in italics, except those in very common use, such as Tanakh and Midrash. Where a Hebrew word is used followed by an English translation, or vice versa, the translation is in brackets. The following are Hebrew transliterations: *Amen, alenu, olam, eretz, hodesh, Ketuvim, kadosh, tzaddik, ben*. Hebrew should be used sparingly and only if absolutely vital to the article.

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

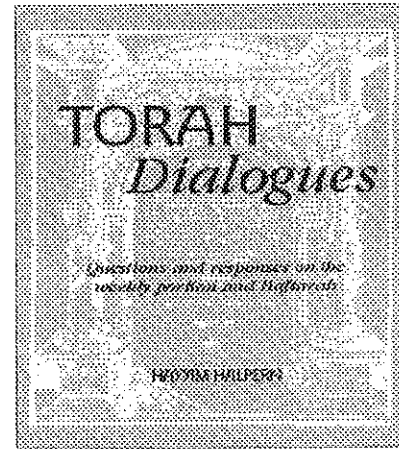
- א and א assume the sound of the accompanying vowel - e.g. Amen, Alenu, Olam, Eretz.
ה = H (e.g. Hodesh)
כ and כ = K (e.g. Ketuvim, Kadosh)
ח = Kh (e.g. Melekh)
צ = Tz (e.g. Tzaddik)
ב = E (e.g. Ben)

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