The Book of Jonah as Allegory

The Treatment of Women in Deuteronomy: Moral Absolutism and Practicality - Part I

Biblical Historiosophy

Saving the Akedah from the Philosophers

On the Inadequacy of Translation: As Exemplified by a Literary Analysis of Four Translations of Psalm 102 - Part II

Hesed - Mercy or Loyalty?

The Ten and the Torah

Israel's Defining Experience: From Family to Nations

The Fertility of the Early Israelites

Darshanut: Jonah: A Transitional Prophet
THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY
formerly Dor LeDor
AIMS AND SCOPE

The Jewish Bible Quarterly provides timely, authoritative studies on biblical themes. As the only Jewish-sponsored English-language journal devoted exclusively to the Bible, it is an essential source of information for anyone working in Bible studies. The Journal publishes original articles, translations from scholarly Hebrew journals, book reviews, a triennial calendar of Bible reading and correspondence. All viewpoints are considered: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Secular-Humanistic. The Jewish Bible Quarterly can be of value to every teacher and student.

The Jewish Bible Quarterly (ISSN 0792-3910) is published in January, April, July and October by the Jewish Bible Association, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel, a registered nonprofit association (Israeli Registration No. 58-019-398-5). All subscriptions prepaid for complete volume year only. The subscription price for 1999 (volume 27) is $24. Our electronic mail address: info@jewishbible.org. Back issues available on microfiche. FAX: +972-2-6216344 (attn: JBQ)

Founded by Dr. Louis Katzoff, Editor 1972-1987
Published by
The Jewish Bible Association

In cooperation with
THE DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH ZIONIST EDUCATION
The Jewish Agency for Israel

Editor: SHIMON BAKON
Associate Editors: PATRICIA BERLYN, THEODORE STEINBERG, DAN VOGEL
Managing Editor: JOSHUA J. ADLER

JEWSH BIBLE ASSOCIATION
Chairman: ABRAHAM RUDERMAN

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MOSHE ABERBACH
JONATHAN BEN-ARI (KATZOFF)
JACOB CHINITZ
AVIV EKRONI
HARRY FREEDMAN
GILAD GEVARYAHU
DAVID GLATT-GILAD
HAYYIM HALPERN
RICHARD HIRSCH
SHAI KREUTNER

ISSN 0792-3910

Typesetting by <http://www.zionbooks.com> Cover design by Benjie Herskowitz
THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (107) JULY-SEPTEMBER 1999

THE BOOK OF JONAH AS ALLEGORY
Abraham Z. Ephros 141

THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN DEUTERONOMY:
MORAL ABSOLUTISM AND PRACTICALITY: PART I
Jonathan R. Ziskind 152

BIBLICAL HISTORIOSOPHY
Shimon Bakon 159

SAVING THE AKEDAH FROM THE PHILOSOPHERS
Berel Dov Lerner 167

ON THE INADEQUACY OF TRANSLATION
AS EXEMPLIFIED BY A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF
FOUR TRANSLATIONS OF PSALM 102: PART II
Dov Rappel 174

HESED - MERCY OR LOYALTY?
Harold M. Kamsler 183

THE TEN AND THE TORAH
Jacob Chinitz 186

ISRAEL'S DEFINING EXPERIENCE:
FROM FAMILY TO NATIONS
Benjamin Goodnick 192

THE FERTILITY OF THE EARLY ISRAELITES
Jeffrey M. Cohen 195

DARSHANUT: JONAH: A TRANSITIONAL PROPHET
Yossi Feintuch 199

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

36th INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST
FOR YOUTH
Joshua J. Adler 202

ADDRESS
THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

MAIL
POB 29002
Jerusalem, Israel

LOCATION
Kiryat Moriah
East Talpiot, Jerusalem, Israel
Tel:+ 972-2-6216145

ARTICLES IN THE JBQ ARE INDEXED AND ABSTRACTED BY:
Internationale Zeitschriftensuch fuer Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete
Old Testament Abstracts
Religious and Theological Abstracts
Index of Articles on Jewish Studies (Ramb)
JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH

"An extraordinary work."—Chaim Potok

JPS proudly presents the oldest known complete version of the Masoretic Hebrew text of the Holy Scriptures, placed next to JPS's renowned English translation for the first time in one volume. The English text is presented in a dual column format side-by-side with the Hebrew text. Text highlights include both English and Hebrew headers, cantillation and vocalization marks, verse numbers in Hebrew and English, Parasha breaks, and traditional footnotes in Hebrew and scholarly footnotes in the English translation.

"What a pleasure it is to have the JPS English translation side-by-side with the original Hebrew text...and in a beautiful, elegant presentation."—Hershel Shanks, Editor, Biblical Archaeology Review and Bible Review

This deluxe edition features gilded edges, gold ribbon, leatherette case, and sewn binding.

2,000 pages, ISBN 0-8276-0656-7, $69.95

Jonah

The first in a series of commentaries on the Five Megillot and Jonah, this volume includes a critical commentary of the biblical text, which is presented in its original Hebrew. Also included are a thorough introduction and extensive bibliographic and critical notes.

104 pages, ISBN 0-8276-0672-9, $34.95

The Jewish Publication Society
1930 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103
Tel: 215-564-5925, Fax: 215-564-6640
email: jewishbook@aol.com
www.jewishpub.org
THE BOOK OF JONAH AS ALLEGORY

ABRAHAM Z. EFROS

The Book of Jonah, which is read during Yom Kippur services, transmits a sublime universalist message. God is the Master of the universe and of history. He is a forgiving God, whose mercy is granted to all who are sincerely repentant, Jew and non-Jew alike.

However, some aspects of the text make one wonder why a prophet would attempt to distance himself from God, rather than obey His command. Moreover, Jonah's attitudes and behavior compare unfavorably to those of the pagan sailors and the people of Nineveh. So much so, that an allegorical interpretation of this prophetic book seems to be in order.

So great a literary work as the Book of Jonah must have more than one layer of meaning and is, perforce, open to various interpretations. I hope that the proposed allegorical exegesis of the book is a valid one, and provides a satisfactory answer to the questions posed above.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

God commands the prophet Jonah to 'Arise, go [ית repairing] to Nineveh,' there to proclaim judgment on it for its wickedness. Without uttering a word, Jonah arose [סייר], not to do God's bidding but rather to flee [לocide] to distant Tarshish. So Jonah went down [מר〕] to Jaffa and went down [ל〕 into a ship bound for that destination. In attempting to evade a mission that could lead to the possible repentance by and consequent forgiveness of the people of Nineveh, he disobeys a direct command of God.

The repeated use of the verb go down (Jon. 1:3,5) for actions of the prophet, in contrast to the verb arise used by God (1:2) emphasizes Jonah's rebellious obstinacy and symbolizes his descent into the abyss of moral irresponsibility.

Abraham Z. Ephros, a retired civil engineer, specialized in the structural design of dams, hydro-electric projects and other water-resource related construction. He served as design engineer for the Haifa wharf extension and the Tel-Aviv water supply system (1949-1952). More recently, he was chairman of the board of Beit Knesset Moreshet Yisrael in Jerusalem, and is chairman of its ritual committee.
The Almighty brings on a mighty storm that threatens to capsize the boat. The pagan sailors pray, each to his own god, and jettison the cargo in a frantic effort to save the ship and all on board. Does Jonah now break his silence and pray to his God? Not at all! Ever so silently, he again went down, this time into the hold of the vessel. Stilling his conscience, he falls asleep, perhaps in anticipation of a sure but relatively easy death. There is no indication of recognition on his part that he is about to cause the imminent and agonizing death of fellow human beings by their consignment to a watery grave. Ethically, the prophet is at a nadir, just as physically he has placed himself as far as possible from the sight of heaven, the _eyes of God_ (2:5).

Only after being exhorted by the ship's captain to _arise_ and call upon his God, and only after being incriminated by the casting of lots, does the prophet acknowledge that he is fleeing from his Master, _the Lord, the God of heaven... who hath made the sea and the dry land_ (1:9); a Lord so mighty that His will cannot be countermanded by any or all of the gods of the sailors. The already terrified sailors now realize how desperate their situation is, and ask Jonah what they must do in order to calm the storm. Jonah instructs them to cast him into the sea. Their terror notwithstanding, they respond by rowing hard back toward shore in a desperate but unsuccessful bid to save themselves and the ship without having to drown the passenger. Admittedly, a prime motivation for the sailors' concern for Jonah is fear of a storm so severe that it threatens to sink their ship. Fear, however, is not the only motivation for the exceedingly humane treatment they accord Jonah at great risk to their own lives. They appear to have great concern for human life per se, a concern not shared or reciprocated by Jonah. When they pray to Jonah's God for absolution for the spilling of _innocent blood_ (1:14), a deed apparently imposed on them by this same God, they demonstrate their recognition of the Noachide prohibition of murder. Finally, realizing that they must bow to the will of this most mighty God, the sailors throw Jonah into the raging waters and the storm abates. Their relief at being saved transforms their terror into awe; reverence for God accompanied by intimations of belief in Him (1:16). The grateful sailors sacrifice to God and make vows. This chapter concludes with Jonah in a sorely lacking moral state, both as a prophet in relation to God and as a human being in relation to his fellowmen. In fact, he appears ethically inferior to the pagan sailors.
Chapter 2 relates that God does not fulfill Jonah's original death wish but rather appoints a "great fish" to swallow him up and keep him alive. The prophet is spared so that he may benefit from God's compassion and mercy. Perhaps he might then be more inclined to be the instrument for affording the people of Nineveh the chance to be saved. However, the prophet must not escape punishment, one that is calculated to teach him a lesson. The classic retribution of measure-for-measure is applied. He who has attempted to flee as far as possible from God's presence by descending into the bottom of a vessel sailing to a remote corner of the world, is to be sent to the very bottom of the world itself (2:7). Similarly, the prophet whose cold-hearted behavior has threatened the innocents on the ship with drowning in the sea, is to be consigned to that same dark and turbulent environment.

Jonah, who has twice resigned himself to dying (Ch. 1), realizes that he is now much worse off. Condemned to a seemingly permanent solitary confinement in the belly of the nether world (2:3), his anguish and despair impulse him to break his silence and address God in a prayer (2:3-8), describing his suffering and asking for deliverance. Among his other tribulations, the prophet bemoans his banishment from God's presence ("eyes"), conveniently forgetting that it was he who banished God's presence from his heart and mind. Not once does Jonah express remorse or promise to carry out God's original command. Apparently, the author of the book couched these verses in the past tense to indicate Jonah's belief that by virtue of his special prophetic relationship to God, prayer alone was sufficient to make forgiveness and remission of punishment a foregone conclusion. Finally, in the penultimate verse of this chapter (v. 10) the author turns to the future tense, with Jonah promising to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and to honor vows of an unspecified nature.

In comparing these sacrifices and vows with those of the sailors (1:16), one notes a degree of vagueness in both cases, but the similarity ends there. The sacrifice of the sailors expresses thanksgiving for having been saved. That of Jonah is promised in advance on the assumption that, by virtue of the prophet's special relationship to God, his prayer has already guaranteed him forgiveness.

Points of contrast between the vows made by the sailors and those Jonah promised to fulfill are also present. By making vows immediately after offering
sacrifices of thanksgiving to the Lord, the sailors seem to indicate their abandonment of paganism in favor of allegiance to the God of Israel. Jonah seems to be attempting to appease God in anticipation of continued disobedience to Him.

At God's command, the "big fish" discharges Jonah onto dry land. The prophet is again told by God, 'Arise go unto Nineveh . . .' (3:1,2). Since he has not proceeded to do so of his own volition, it is obvious that he has not yet absorbed God's intended lesson. Like the pagan prophet Balaam, Jonah must now, in spite of himself, obey the Divine will.

As he enters the city, he makes the only direct prophetic statement of the book. It is as laconic and matter-of-fact as can be, consisting of a phrase that is but five words in the Hebrew text: 'Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown' (3:4). Jonah makes no mention of the possibility of deliverance through repentance, even though he is convinced of its effectiveness (4:2). Nevertheless, the response of the people of Nineveh is immediate and positive, indicating a full understanding of the implications of this enigmatic prophecy. Not waiting for instructions from their king, they proceed to proclaim a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them (3:5). When news of this prophecy reaches the king and the leaders, an edict is issued confirming the actions of the people and even including cattle in the fast. The most important step to true repentance is specified: [to] turn everyone from his evil way (3:8). Nineveh's contrition, translated into corrective action (3:10), contrasts strikingly with Jonah's words-only response to his punishment and with his continuing recalcitrant attitude. The chapter ends with the Lord's own "repentance" from the "evil" decree pronounced on Nineveh.

In Chapter 1 Jonah remains completely silent (in relation to God) while acting against His will. Chapter 2 finds him in such dire straits that he speaks to God in prayer. Chapter 3 presents an almost wordless prophet who utters merely five words in the hope of fulfilling the letter, if not the spirit, of God's command. Finally, he enters into a full-fledged dialogue with God, remonstrating with Him (as perhaps he should have at the beginning of Chapter 1), for apparently sparing Nineveh from destruction (Ch. 4). He justifies his attempted flight to Tarshish by citing God's known attributes of compassion, mercy and remission of punishment (4:2). In Chapter 2, prayer alone seems to the prophet to be an a priori guarantee of forgiveness. But Chapter 4 indicates that complete forgive-
ness for the people of Nineveh is unacceptable to Jonah, even though they have prayed, fasted and, most important of all, have turned from their evil way (3:10). In a fit of anger, he asks God to "take" his life.

The Almighty now attempts to enlighten Jonah through another lesson. The prophet waits outside the city, hoping that God might destroy it after all. The Lord God provides a shade-giving plant to shield Jonah from the merciless rays of the sun. Jonah rejoices greatly, since the plant is much more effective than the flimsy booth he has erected. Yet he says not a word of thanks to God. At dawn, the Lord causes a worm to destroy the plant and a sultry east wind to blow. The rays of the rising sun beat directly upon Jonah. In physical agony and probably emotionally distraught (sensing that in all likelihood Nineveh would be saved) he again wishes to die (4:8). He is angry even unto death about the plant (4:9).

God now hammers His point home. The prophet has "pity" on a single evanescent plant (an order of life even lower than the cattle of Nineveh) over which he has not even labored. Should not the Creator, then, "have pity" on the multitude of Nineveh's inhabitants (including their cattle) who may have sinned only through childlike innocence (4:11)?

Does Jonah finally understand? The book ends without clarifying this.

PROPHETIC MESSAGES

As with all great literature, the Book of Jonah can be understood on more than one level. Suggested herein are two possible messages of this prophetic book. The first, so explicit that it needs no expounding, is nevertheless presented here in the interest of a fuller picture and as an introduction to the postulation of another, less obvious message.

The only direct prophetic statement in the book (3:4) does not of itself constitute a significant message. Only in conjunction with the other sections of the book, comprising narration, prayer and dialogue with God, does a clear and meaningful prophetic teaching emerge.

The God of Israel is the Lord and Master of nature. It is He who raises and abates storms, appoints big fish to perform supernatural acts, and causes plants to spring up overnight and then to be eaten up by worms. Clearly, it is futile to
attempt to flee from Him. He is also the Master of history, controlling the destinies of mankind; thus there is no escape from His commands. The classic biblical and post-biblical doctrine of the causality of evil-doing and punishment, as well as that of sincere repentance and forgiveness, is clearly articulated through the medium of this prophetic writing. The Lord's attributes of compassion and mercy are available to all the sincerely repentant. Even the inhabitants of a pagan city as wicked as Nineveh can qualify for total waiver of punishment.

If the above were the totality of the message of the book, some puzzling questions would arise relating to the negative behavior of the prophet toward both God and his fellowman. Why, for example, is Jonah portrayed as one who would rather attempt to flee from God than do His bidding? Why is he so insensitive to the plight of the innocent sailors? This is exceedingly strange behavior for a prophet.

Because there is no clue in the text to Jonah's motivation, various speculations in justification of his actions may be entertained. Midrash Yonah, for example, hypothesizes that because of the Lord's infinite capacity for mercy (4:2), Jonah fears that a repentant Nineveh would be spared destruction and that he would then be branded a false prophet. This explanation does not provide a satisfactory excuse for his flagrant disobedience of God's command. On the contrary, it only serves to emphasize his presumptuousness.

Another possibility hinted at in this Midrash is Jonah's unwillingness to be responsible for the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel at the hands of the Assyrian empire, the capital of which was Nineveh. This may have some historic basis. "Jonah son of Amittai" is mentioned in II Kings 14:25 as being a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II, King of Israel circa 789-748 BCE. Some scholars place the writing of the book as early as the eighth century BCE, possibly within Jonah's lifetime. In that period Assyria, despite some temporary revolts within its empire, was a world power on the rise. It can be assumed, then, that Jonah perceived Assyria to be an imminent threat to the existence of the Northern Kingdom. Thus, he may have preferred to risk God's anger and a sentence of death rather than be an instrument for saving that empire's capital city.

This hypothesis on Jonah's motivation certainly puts the prophet in a better light. He is shown to be an ardent patriot impelled by love of his people. Consequent...
quently, the stance he adopts toward Nineveh (Assyria) is similar to that of the prophet Nahum, who roundly condemns that evil empire and predicts its destruction. But there is a major difference between these two. Nahum speaks in the name of God, while Jonah acts against His will. Furthermore, the moral corruption and idol worship that were rife during the reign of Jeroboam II led prophets like Amos and Hosea, approximate contemporaries of Jonah, to denounced the people of the Northern Kingdom and warn them of severe punishment. Had Jonah been a more typical prophet, would he not have recognized the justice of God’s implicit decree to punish the people of Israel through the instrument of the Assyrian empire? Yes, he might then have beseeched God to have mercy on the admittedly sinful people and embarked on the required mission with an aching heart, but he would not have tried to evade it.

Besides the above-quoted midrashim, there are numerous modern interpretations of this book. One postulates that the Book of Jonah focuses on the philosophic question of whether strict justice requires retribution for evil-doing without recourse to mercy (Jonah’s view), or whether true repentance can merit compassion even to the elimination of penalty (God’s view).

This modern interpretation maintains that Jonah’s sense of justice was violated by the Divine decision to spare a city as wicked as Nineveh. However, it is clear from the text that Jonah, the allegorical protagonist, does not reveal a highly developed sense of justice. If the primary focus of this book is indeed justice versus mercy, then it is illogical to choose such an individual as Jonah to represent strict justice. How can one who expects a good measure of God’s compassion for himself, unwarranted in this case, have the moral right to ask for an uncompromising application of His attribute of justice [יִתֵּן נְאֻם] to other, deserving, human beings?

In summary, the first midrash does not adequately justify Jonah’s original disobedience of God’s command and his continued negative attitude as he reluctantly carried out the task imposed on him. The second midrash and the modern interpretation, even if accepted, do not answer satisfactorily another puzzling question arising from the text of the book: Why is there such a sharp contrast between the book’s description of Jonah as morally delinquent, presumptuous, and stubborn and the miraculously immediate and complete reformation of
Nineveh, especially in view of the known Assyrian reputation for violence and cruelty? In Chapter 4, the Lord makes a seemingly strange and unbelievable statement in justification of His most lenient attitude towards the people of Nineveh. He implies that they sinned merely for lack of understanding; that is, they could not discern between their right hand and their left hand (4:11).

The terribly flawed behavior of Jonah as opposed to the seemingly naive idealization of the people of Nineveh leads one to believe that there is an allegorical level of meaning in the book, conveying an implicit message. In an allegorical interpretation of this prophetic book, Jonah ben-Amittai represents the people of Israel, while Assyria (through its capital city Nineveh) and the sailors on the ship symbolize the pagan world. The real prophet, then, is not Jonah, but the author of the book who rails against his people for their wrongdoing. Just as Jonah disobeys the Almighty and attempts to flee from Him, so does Israel rebel against and forsake Him (compare שָׁבַע and שָׁבַע, Isa. 1:2,4).12

Both Jonah and the people of Israel hold unique titles which point to a special relationship with God. Jonah is described as God's "servant" (II Kings 14:25) and Israel, by virtue of its covenantal status, is known as a "treasured people" (נְדֵנָה נְדֵנָה -- Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6,14:2,26:18; Ps. 135:4).13,14 The Covenant, of course, mandates special responsibilities, and failure to carry them out may lead to dire consequences (Deut. 28:15-69). Both Jonah and Israel appear to presume on their link with the Almighty. Both seem to assume that mere ritual gestures such as prayer, sacrifice and fasting, in and of themselves, qualify them for a full measure of the Lord's mercy, in spite of their ethical shortcomings.

Israel's failings are mentioned time and again in prophetic exhortations which call for a return to God and a turning away from evildoing, very often understood as moral failure. Thus, Isaiah 58:2-7 is devoted to the proposition that protestations of righteousness and fastings without a radical change of behavior are insufficient to merit the Lord's grace.15 Amos goes even further, declaring that precisely because of its special status, His people must receive a full measure of punishment for its iniquities (3:1,2). Both Jonah and his people are indeed punished.

Yet another parallel between Jonah and the people of Israel is their rebellious obstinacy. That of the prophet is fully documented in the text of the book. As for Israel, time and again throughout the entire Bible it is chided for its stub-
bornness. In Exodus 32:9, for example, it is called a stiff-necked people [נֵפֶך]. Both Jeremiah (7:26) and Nehemiah (9:16,17) accuse the people of Israel of stiffening their necks [נֵפֶךְ נַפְשׁוֹ] in defiance of God's commands.

In contrast with the negative aspects of Israel's (Jonah's) behavior, the pagan world is shown to be capable and ready to acknowledge the Lord, believe in Him, and act in accordance with His demands. Since God's concern is not limited to the people of Israel (Jonah) but embraces all humanity and also the animal kingdom (4:11), this book transmits a promise of Divine mercy to all the truly penitent of the world. In this respect, the author's ideas are in the spirit of the end-of-days prophecies found in Isaiah 2:1-4, and almost identically in Micah 4:1-5, prophecies encompassing all mankind and of sublimely universal implications.

AFTERWORD

While this allegoric reading of the biblical text makes an almost explicit promise of forgiveness to those of the entire pagan world who would sincerely repent and turn everyone from his evil way (3:6-8), it does not speak openly of the fate of the exceedingly sinful people of Israel. This mirrors the ambiguity as to whether Jonah has indeed absorbed the lesson God has tried to teach him at the end of Chapter 4. Is Israel, then, to be left with no words of solace, no hope for a better future? Amongst the numerous verses of consolation and promises of deliverance in the prophetic writings, the following excerpts from Isaiah 58 (Haftarah for Yom Kippur morning) are of surpassing eloquence:

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning,
And thy healing shall spring forth speedily . . .
... Then shalt thou call and the Lord will answer;
Thou shalt cry and He will say: 'Here I am' . . . .
... And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry
And satisfy the afflicted soul;
Then shall thy light rise in darkness,
And thy gloom shall be as the noon day . . . (vv. 8-10).

In cognizance of the author's implicit approach, it can readily be deduced from the allegory that if the surrounding pagan world can earn Divine forgive-
ness and full remission of punishment, then so much more so is the door open to God's treasured people, if only they would take to heart the teachings of the Divine Teacher of all humanity.

NOTES

The ideas presented in the section Textual Analysis and Interpretation, with the exception of one note, are based on the biblical text sans recourse to homiletic devices or Midrash. In the section Prophetic Messages, excerpts from Midrash Yonah and other sources do appear. All biblical quotations are from the NJPS translation, or from the J.H. Hertz edition of the Huma
dash and Haftarot.

1. The symbolic use of the verb "go down" [תָּהֹרַה] was expounded by Esther Tishbi, a well-known Israeli educator, in a lecture on the Book of Jonah at the Center for Conservative Judaism in Jerusalem.

2. The assumption of the ethical sensitivity of these pagans is supported by Midrash Yonah. In the view of the sages, the sailors express their doubts as to Jonah's guilt in an entreaty to the Lord, saying that the only evidence available to them to warrant a death sentence for Jonah is his self-incrimination (not permitted by Halakhah). The sailors then proceed to test these doubts by immersing the prophet only partially into the waters, at first only up to his knees and then up to his neck. In both cases the storm begins to abate when Jonah is in the water but is immediately restored to full intensity when Jonah is drawn out of the sea. It is only when all doubt has been dispelled about Jonah's culpability that they relegate him to his fate.

3. The same pattern is followed in the reaction of the people of Israel as they witness the Egyptian army drowning in the Sea of Reeds (Ex. 14:31). The word "feared" [הָרָמָה] here can be properly understood as "revere." There are many examples of this usage in the Bible.

4. Some scholars believe that Chapter 2 is a later addition to the original text. In any case, the text of this chapter is in consonance with the thrust of the other three chapters as interpreted herein.

5. The sailors earlier in the narrative come to fear (revere) the Lord (1:16); the people of Nineveh believe Him (3:5) and act accordingly by engaging in sincere repentance. Thus these pagan inhabitants of the dry land join their seagoing counterparts in acknowledging the supremacy of Jonah's universal God.

6. Moses (Ex. 3:11, 4:10) and Jeremiah (1:4-7), when reluctant to carry out missions ordered by God, first remonstrate with Him but finally proceed to obey His will. Jonah does neither until subject to the severe punishment decreed by God. Even when he finally obeys, he does so halfheartedly and angrily.

7. This idea of Assyria being God's instrument for the punishment of the people of Israel is pro
pounded by Isaiah (10:5,6) perhaps a younger contemporary of Jonah.


10. Jewish sages realized that if this Jonahite view were to be maintained under all circumstances, humanity could not survive. Even in the Torah itself there is a realization that the attainment of
justice may require, in some cases, a seemingly overly generous application of mercy. In Genesis 18:25,26, Abraham confronts God with the rhetorical question 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?' God tacitly agrees that justice is better served in this instance by the exemption from punishment of a big majority of sinners in the city of Sodom, rather than by the undeserved sentence of death on even a handful of its righteous inhabitants.

11. If the date of the book, as some scholars believe, is much later than the eighth century BCE, and if in fact it was written after the fall of the Assyrian empire, then as an allegorical tale the choice of Nineveh is especially apt. At that point in time it could have been viewed as a legendary paradigm of evil and brutality [ת"ע] (3:8). The use of Jonah, an obscure, little-known prophet of the earlier period, to symbolize Israel would be similarly fitting. Was he not an advisor and confidant of Jeroboam II, the ruler of a corrupt people?

12. Other references to this behavior are found in Jeremiah 5:23,17:13 and Ezekiel 24:3.

13. The term "covenant" [ת"ע] is used in the same verse as "treasured people" (Ex. 19:5).

14. These prooftexts, with the exception of that taken from the Psalms, are in the context of honoring covenant obligations for righteous behavior.

15. The choice of Isaiah 58 for part of the Yom Kippur morning Haftarah, as a companion to the Book of Jonah on Yom Kippur afternoon, can be seen as very appropriate.
THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN DEUTERONOMY:
MORAL ABSOLUTISM AND PRACTICALITY - PART I

JONATHAN R. ZISKIND

From a 20th-century perspective, the laws of Deuteronomy have a strong moralistic tone not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, as shown in a number of different ways. There are stern motive clauses on the consequences of sinful conduct when a law is violated. On the other hand, there is humaneness toward the poor and the disadvantaged and kindness to animals, that goes beyond simple charity and mere avoidance of cruelty. This contrast, according to Weinfeld, is especially manifested in a humane concern for women. However, this applies only to women considered virtuous, with strong measures to protect their reputation. Women whose behavior was the contrary were dealt with forcefully -- nay, brutally. The methodology adopted to make this point was to construct legal cases that exemplified summa iustitia, summa iniuria, or to conjure up situations that either made no sense or were highly unlikely to occur in reality.

The law on the slandered bride in Deuteronomy 22:13-22 combines impossibility of implementation with unreasonably extreme justice accorded to the bride. If a bridegroom, after the prima nox, alleged that his bride was not a virgin, and the charge proved to be false, he was fined 100 shekels, double the usual bride price, paid to the girl's father who bore the responsibility for her conduct and whose integrity and honor were impugned. The bridegroom was also flogged, and forced to remain married to her with the right to divorce her forever forfeited. This action was taken by the elders of the town acting as a court, because he has slandered a young woman in Israel (v. 19).

If the charges were proved true, the bride was brought to the entrance of her parents' home where she was stoned to death by her fellow townspeople, because she brought disgrace upon Israel by being a harlot while in her father's house, and so you shall remove evil from your midst (vv. 20-21). Making her

Jonathan R. Ziskind has a B.A. in classical languages and history from Ohio State University and a Ph.D. in ancient history from Columbia University. He is Associate Professor of Ancient History at the University of Louisville, specializing in the Ancient Near East.

JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY
parents' house the site of the execution served to underscore the shame and
disgrace her conduct brought upon her family.

This law, as described, poses serious problems. First, it ignored the rule that
no one should be put to death without the testimony of at least two witnesses
(19:15). In fact, there were no witnesses at all. Considering the nature of the
accusation, there could not be any. The second problem is the nature and quality
of the evidence presented on the bride's behalf. Her parents responded to the
charge by exhibiting the bloodstained bedcloth, and this was apparently
sufficient to convince the court that the charges were false. The penalties were
then imposed upon the husband, including forced permanent marriage. The
difficulty here is that the evidence used to prove virginity was in the custody of
the parents until it was brought before the court. It could easily have been faked
by smearing some blood from a pricked finger onto the cloth. Even if no fraud
was perpetrated, the blood could have been menstrual rather than hymenial.
There is also the possibility that the absence of blood meant that the hymen was
pierced by means other than intercourse, or there was naturally no hymen to
break.

Having to rely on the bloodstained cloth to prove their daughter's chastity put
the parents into a cruel dilemma. Not to produce the cloth would have given
credibility to the accusation against her, which would have resulted in her death
and their disgrace. On the other hand, if the evidence presented to the court
exonerated the girl, the 100-shekel fine the father would collect from the
husband would be cold comfort knowing that in exchange his daughter had to
remain married to a man who hated her and had slandered her. The same terms
that forbade the husband ever to divorce his wife would also prevent the father
from forcing a divorce, or using any other lawful means to recover his daughter
from a husband who brought this false charge against her.

It was rare but not unknown for a father to take back a daughter from her
husband. There is an example in the rivalry between King Saul and his son-in-
law David who, fearing Saul would kill him, left his wife Michal and went into
exile. Saul then gave her to another man (I Sam. 19:11-12;25:43). (David
eventually got her back [II Sam. 3:13-15].) In depriving the father of the right to
take back his daughter, Deuteronomy has taken concern for the reputation of the
bride to absurd and extreme lengths. Humanitarian concern for women is
certainly questionable here. Deuteronomy apparently raises the possibility that despite her acquittal by the court, people of her community might still harbor suspicions that she entered into this marriage as a non-virgin. If she returned to her parents' house with the stigma of the accusation not completely erased, it would be difficult to find a new husband for her. What we have here, for the sake of her reputation and future marriageability, is a marriage no decent parent would want for a child.

As for the bridegroom, he could have avoided permanent entrapment in an unsatisfactory marriage by simply divorcing the woman, as Hosea did with his adulterous wife (Hos. 2:2-3). That was all that would have happened, since it would have been impossible under the circumstances to identify the girl's lover or lovers. Indeed, if her husband were aware of this legislation, he would maintain a discreet silence about his suspicions rather than appear in court to make charges that would be difficult to prove. He could avoid being embarrassed before his fellow townspeople, forced to pay a heavy fine to his father-in-law (besides the bride-price he had already paid), and be stuck for the rest of his life with a marriage he would rather be rid of. But all that is irrelevant. When Deuteronomy wants to exemplify a woman's conduct, such practical considerations are side-stepped.

The same moral absolutism obtains in the law on rape of an unbetrothed virgin (22:28). It specifies that the perpetrator must pay a fine of 50 shekels to the girl's father, and, like the man who slandered his bride, was forced into a divorceless marriage. This law differs from the one in the Covenant Code, which says that if a man seduced an unbetrothed virgin, the father retained the right to withhold his daughter from the man who violated her (Ex. 22:16). If the father chose to exercise that right, the rapist was forced to pay his way out of a marriage he may not have wanted anyway. In any case, the right of the girl's father to act in accordance with what he felt to be in the best interest of his family was respected. Here the Covenant Code shows a more humane and practical approach than the moral absolutism of Deuteronomy. It respected the most important prerogative a father had; the right to choose a suitable spouse for his child.

For Deuteronomy, the widow in the law of levirate marriage is an especially strong exemplar of womanly virtue (25:5-10). According to this law, the
brother of a man who died without male offspring had to marry, or at least father a son for, his deceased brother's widow. The purpose of this law as stated in the text is to prevent the widow from marrying "a stranger" and to perpetuate the "name" of the deceased brother. As in the other places in the Bible where levirate marriage comes up, the man who was required to perform it might refuse to do so.

One of the ways in which the Deuteronomic law differs from the Judah-Tamar story (Gen. 38) is the consequence for the levir if he refused to do his duty. In Genesis, Onan was immediately killed at the hands of the Lord. In Deuteronomy, the consequence was not nearly as grave. If the levir was willing to undergo a ceremony of public humiliation, in which the aggrieved widow pulled off his sandal, spat at him, and berated him for not building the house of his brother, that ended the affair. No marriage or union between the widow and the levir took place. Without diminishing the role public shaming plays in the values of Deuteronomy, this ceremony may have been something the levir might have been willing to endure if it meant avoiding engendering offspring that would be his deceased brother's heir rather than his own, especially if the dead brother's share of the paternal estate was of considerable size.

Even more striking than the mildness with which the levir was punished in Deuteronomy as compared with Genesis was the leniency accorded the recalcitrant levir in comparison with other men whose conduct toward women was disapproved in Deuteronomy. We have already noted that the elders had the power to compel a rapist to marry his victim with right to divorce forfeited without reference the wishes of her father much less the victim herself, and they also could force a man to remain permanently married to a woman whom he falsely accused of non-virginity -- also without consulting the girl's father. Surely, that same court could have used that same authority to compel the levir to marry the widow at least long enough to produce an heir from her. But all the elders did, once the widow's complaint was verified, was to try to persuade the man to do his duty. If he still refused, the unsandaling ceremony took place. In short, the remedy the law offered the widow did not match her complaint.

Neither Genesis nor Deuteronomy tells how levirate actually worked, and any attempt to explain this institution in juridical or practical terms cannot succeed. By the time Genesis and certainly Deuteronomy took their present forms,
levirate was in desuetude. It was only a memory about which an author could compose a fictional narrative in which trickery and deceit were employed (a common motif in the patriarchal sagas), this time involving levirate. Deuteronomy could construct legislation the understanding of which was quite vague.

The purpose here was use this vaguely remembered custom as a means to exemplify virtuous female conduct. Taken is this light, it matters little if at all that the court, or, more accurately, Deuteronomy, did not provide for even a temporary union to take place between the widow and her brother-in-law. As far as Deuteronomy is concerned, the aggrieved widow in a levirate dispute with her brother-in-law eloquently pleding her deceased husband’s cause before the elders who sat in judgment at the gate of her town could not have afforded a better example of womanly virtue. After all, she could have accepted her brother-in-law’s decision not to marry her, leave with her dowry, and marry someone else. All perfectly legal on the woman’s part but not particularly virtuous.

No matter what the widow decided to do, the levir benefited. If she declined to make an issue of his recalcitrance, he avoided the unpleasantness of being taken to court and being publicly degraded. More important, he would be freed of any obligation to produce offspring who would deprive him and his own issue from succeeding to his brother’s share of the paternal estate. In addition, he would not have to feel obligated, legally or otherwise, to support the widow, at least until she gave birth to the unwanted heir.15

NOTES
2. Clemens Locher, Die Ehre einer Frau in Israel (Gottingen: Universitasverlag Friburg Schweiz Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) pp. 373-387, views this matter within the context of ancient Near Eastern traditions on swearing falsely. Outside the Hebrew Bible the matter of a false charge of non-virginity appears only in the Lipit-Ishtar collection (sec. 33), and it is not regarded as a major issue. The law states that if man asserted that another man’s daughter was not a virgin but failed to prove it, he paid a fine of 10 shekels -- compensation for a personal insult.
3. This phrase appears in Deuteronomy when the wrongdoing violated Divinely set social and religious values. See 13:6 (false prophets); 17:7 (idolatry), 12 (disobeying a priest or a judge’s decision); 19:19 (false witness); 21:21 (the rebellious son); 22:21 (a bride proved not to be a virgin), v. 22 (adultery), v. 24 (a betrothed woman having sex with another man), and 24:7
(kidnapping). All except the false witness law require the death penalty, but death would also apply if the witness swore falsely in a capital case (19:16-19).


5. The possibility of lingering suspicion might also be found in one of Hammurabi’s matrimonial laws (sec. 131) which is concerned with a wife whose husband accused her adultery on circumstantial evidence only. Even though the wife swore an oath that she was innocent, she had to leave and return to her house, not her husband’s.

6. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Deuteronomy," *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, Carol A. Newsom & Sharon H. Ringe eds. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) p. 57, maintains that by spreading false rumors about his new wife, he could divorce her for good cause and thus get back the bride-price he paid to her father. As stated above, given the difficulty the husband would have in proving his case, that would be very risky course of action. Anthony Phillips, *Israel’s Criminal Law* (N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1970) pp. 115-116, argues that the woman would be prosecuted for adultery, but the Deuteronomic law on the subject provides that the man must be “found” (Heb. yimnase) with the woman, in which case both were executed. This was not the case in the slandered bride law, because the girl’s lover or lovers are unknown, and the law on adultery in the Hebrew Bible is that both offenders must die.

7. By the same token, there is no mention of the man being barred from divorcing her.


9. I.e., Genesis 38, the story of Judah and Tamar, and Ruth 4, although the latter narrative concerns a male relative who is not a brother of Mahlon, Ruth’s deceased husband, but one more closely related to him than Boaz. I agree with Westbrook (p. 82) that the word ben in the Deuteronomic law should mean what it usually means, ‘son,” and also because women had no inheritance rights in the Mosaic law. Also, the word behor (v. 6), when used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to human offspring, never refers to a daughter. The same may be said of ben. Westbrook maintains that the change in the law of inheritance that was made in response to the petition of the daughters of Zelophehad, which gave women a limited right to inherit, (Num. 27:1-11, 36:1-12) resulted in a reform of the levirate law to include a daughter. This may be so, but since we are dealing with an institution that was in desuetude, it matters little. (See my "Legal Rules on Incest in the Ancient Near East," *RIDA*, 35 [1988] pp. 104-107, wherein I argue that the term goleh ervah, used in the incest laws in Leviticus 18, including the one forbidding a sister-in-law, (v. 16) meant that any sexual intercourse within marriage or outside it with all the relatives listed is life-long and permanent, thus making levirate impossible.)

10. Calum Carmichael, "A Ceremonial Crux: Removing a Man’s Sandal as a Female Gesture of Contempt, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977) pp. 321-336, has shown that the unsandaling of the levir and spitting at him as a way to humiliate him symbolized the *coitus interruptus* done by Onan in the Tamar-Judah story. This act should not be compared to Naomi’s relative handing a sandal to Boaz. This symbolized the legal transfer of property (Ruth 4:7-9).


Vol. 27, No. 3, 1999
12. For Boaz's unnamed relative there are no adverse consequences. All the man did was make the appropriate declaration to the elders that he relinquished his right to the property in question and symbolized this waiver by handing a sandal over to Boaz (Ruth 4:7-8).

13. In the Ruth narrative the court's function was even more limited. They were simply witnesses to the parties' declarations and the symbolic transfer (4:9-11).

14. There is also an element of deceit in the Ruth story when she had sex with Boaz when he was drunk (3:1-9).

15. Westbrook, (p: 84) argues that her real motivation for bringing this action was to avoid the stigma of being considered barren. But if the term ben prior to the Zetophehad reform referred only to male offspring (see above), the presence of a surviving daughter along with her mother would dispel any doubt about the widow's fertility. There is also the possibility that the widow's marriage to the deceased brother was of such short duration that her fertility was not yet in doubt. What is not taken into account here is that the widow may have just as good a reason to avoid the marriage as the levir did. The Mishnah (Behoroth, 1, 7) hints as much when it states that "at first the commandment to perform levirate took precedence over that of unsandaling, because it was done with the intention to fulfill a Divine commandment, but they now say that since it is no longer done with that in mind, the commandment of unsandaling takes precedence over that of levirate." Thus the unsandaling ceremony became a legal mechanism whereby both parties avoided a marriage that neither of them wanted. This became normative by the Middle Ages when monogamy became the rule (Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha'ezzer, 165, 1).

The Triennial Bible Reading Calendar
Dedicated to the Memory of Chaim Abramowitz
1999

August 1 - August 31 Psalms 50 - 80

September 1 - September 30 Psalms 81 - 100

October 1 - October 31 Psalms 101 - 135

November 1 - November 15 Psalms 136 - 150

November 16 - November 30 Proverbs 1 - 14
BIBLICAL HISTORIOSOPHY

SHIMON BAKON

THE GREAT REVOLUTION

Those who maintain that Akhnaton, the pharaoh who tried to make worship of the sun the exclusive religion of Egypt, was the precursor of Moses, seem unaware of the essential nature of both biblical monotheism and paganism. Biblical monotheism is not merely a quantitative reduction of deities into one, nor is paganism's major characteristic the worship of many deities. As defined by Kaufman, paganism rested on four pillars: Myth, the birth of the gods, their jealousies and internecine struggles; magic, man's ability to manipulate them; deification of natural phenomena; and moira, some cosmic blind force which controls gods and men. Biblical monotheism obliterated the entire infrastructure together with the scaffolding of paganism. The One God is not only the sole Creator of the universe, beyond nature, but also the God of history.

A great majority of the books of the Bible deal with the history of the people of Israel, a people dedicated by sacred contract to conduct itself according to ethical and religious demands. It is a history of a special sort which we will call "historiosophy." It is no coincidence that the historical books such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, are known as the Early Prophets, for they view history sub specie eternitatis. Even the Later Prophets, though apparently addressing themselves to Israel's faithlessness to the Lord with scathing denunciations, predicting disasters and projecting the occurrence of events in the far distance, are a prophetic commentary on actualia. They evaluate whether the conduct of Israel is in keeping with eternal values of absolute morality. For a mere chronicle of events the reader is directed to consult the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:4), the Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:11) the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. Thus, for instance, King Ahab is denounced for doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him (1 Kings 16:33), for his marriage with Jezebel, the introduction of Baal-worship, his controversies with Elijah, and,

Shimon Bakon, Ph.D., is the editor of the Jewish Bible Quarterly
above all, the judicial murder of Naboth. Though adjudged by "normal" history as a highly successful king, Ahab is dismissed by biblical historiosophy in the following words: *Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* (I Kg. 22:39).

How far biblical historiosophy deviated from the ideas of history of the mighty neighbors to the south and to the east, Egypt and Mesopotamia, can be garnered from the following assessment:

The Egyptians had very little sense of history or of the past and future for they conceived their world as essentially static and non-changing . . . . Historical incidents were . . . no more than superficial disturbances of the established order or recurring events of never-changing significance. The past and the future -- far from being a matter of concern -- were wholly implicit in the present . . . .

In contrast to the Egyptian idea of history, where only the changeless is truly significant, the Mesopotamian concept of history, a concomitant of a religious conviction, was that nothing in the cosmos was permanent. To the Mesopotamians, the fate of the world depended upon decisions reached anew in the yearly convocation of the celestial court, presided over by their chief god. As a consequence, there were no enduring values which would offer a framework for a firm direction to the life of the Mesopotamians.

One of the revolutions wrought by the biblical view of history was the proposition that Israel engage in a serious quest for a way of life that had universal validity. That is what Jeremiah perhaps had in mind when he upbraided Israel for *Having forgotten Me, they offer unto vanity, and they have been made to stumble in their ways . . . . In the eternal ways* (Jer. 18:15).

It was the biblical view of history that established the spiritual, moral, and ethical roots of Western civilization. In addition, it was this view that enabled Jews and Judaism to escape the cultural death not only of these two, but also of other great civilizations.

Parenthetically, the Bible records more failures than successes of Israel in achieving this great ideal which, in all probability, gave birth to the magnificent ideal of Messianism.
THE BIBLICAL RECORD

GOD IN HISTORY

God's Presence in history is portrayed in the Bible in three ways. He intervenes, He is silent, He "hides His face." The biblical accounts of the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Exodus from Egypt, are the most graphic episodes of God actively intervening in human affairs. Characteristically for ethical Monotheism, in all three cases it is man's proclivity for corruption and violence that caused Divine intervention: And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the land . . . And it repenteth the Lord that He had made man . . . (Gen. 6:5-6). In the matter of Sodom it is stated: Verily the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and, verily, their sin is exceedingly grievous (Gen. 18:20). The brutality of Egypt's treatment of the children of Israel, whom they had enslaved, is evident: Whose cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage, God heard their groaning, and God remembered . . . (Ex. 2: 23-24). For the understanding of biblical historiosophy it is of great significance that in each of these instances there is a glimmer of hope. In the Flood, Noah, his family, and representatives of the animal world are saved and the rainbow turns into an eternal covenant that mankind shall never again be destroyed by flood. Lot and his two daughters are rescued from the holocaust of Sodom, and against the decree to destroy all male Hebrew infants, Moses is born and survives.

The masterful biblical account of Joseph and his brothers is a fine example of the "Silent God." He almost invisibly hovers over all the events that befall them. On the surface, each of the major protagonists acts autonomously. Jacob's preferential treatment of Joseph, plus the latter's arrogance, provoke the hatred of the brothers who are in Shechem tending their father's flock while Joseph, of course, stays at home. Jacob sends him to inquire about the brothers' well-being. Joseph is sold as a slave in Egypt. One event follows the other, seemingly unrelated, yet in the end we discover that all these occurrences were not coincidental, they all coalesce. Jacob and his family are rescued from destruction by famine, and only in the insulation and prosperity of Goshen and the subsequent
enslavement could the family of Jacob grow into a multitude, leading to the formation of a consciousness of peoplehood.

Before the discussion on deus abscondus (God hiding His face) the biblical concept of the Covenant should be introduced. We first encounter a correlation between the two concepts in Deuteronomy 31:16-18. Israel is warned: They will forsake Me, and break My covenant which I have made with them . . . . And I will surely hide My face . . . for all the evil which they shall have wrought.

While this term of God hiding His face is used quite frequently in the form of supplication in the Psalms, the prophet Ezekiel interpreted the tragedy of the House of Israel going into captivity for their iniquities, because they broke faith with Me, and I hid My face from them (39:23).

FROM ELECTION TO COVENANT

Ye are My witnesses and My servant whom I have chosen (Isa. 43:10). The biblical insistence on Israel being the chosen people has scandalized many. There is a well-known sarcastic quip, "How odd of God to choose the Jews." Regrettably, there are also Jews who reject the choseness of Israel, among them M. Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism, who declared it contrary to the democratic ideal. There are two fundamental questions that need to be raised. Was the election of Israel arbitrary? To what purpose were the children of Israel elected?

The Midrash, evincing remarkable sensitivity to the first question, tells us that only after Abraham had struggled through to the recognition of One God did He respond by telling him to 'get thee out of thy country . . . unto the land that I will show thee' (Gen. 12:1) and heap blessings upon him. Abraham's election as bearer of the Divine blessing is not arbitrary. He was singled out on the basis of certain knowledge that he will transmit Divine commandments to his progeny.

Later on in Egypt, God renews the election of Israel: 'Ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all the people (Ex. 19:5). Again, it was no arbitrary decision. The tradition beginning with the patriarchs must have been sacred and sufficiently powerful to keep the children of Israel as a definite entity, separate from the Egyptians. It was a sufficiently cohesive force to save them from disappearing in Egypt. God's trust in Abraham was justified through his son Isaac.
and his grandson Jacob, and when the children of Israel, oppressed by the Egyptians, cried out, God responded.

As to the second question, on the biblical view of the intent and purpose for which Israel was chosen, Scripture clearly states: 'You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:6). In accepting this challenge, Israel takes upon itself a double task. It becomes the guardian of eternal truths, and it turns into a vehicle through which God's purpose for mankind becomes manifest. Certainly Isaiah thus interpreted Israel's role: I created you and appointed you a covenant people, a light unto nations, opening eyes deprived of light (42:6,7).

There is always a danger that individuals or groups believing they are bearers of exclusive truth may be led to a conviction of superiority. Amos derides the danger of arrogance: To Me, O Israelites, you are just like the Ethiopians (9:7), and stresses that with the special status of being chosen, Israel has assumed grave responsibilities: You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth -- that is why I will call you to account for all your iniquities (3:2).

The other danger is forcing others to accept these truths. Again, there is a remarkable prophetic statement that addresses this issue. Micah proclaims the great prophecy, In the days to come, the Mountain of the Lord's house shall stand firm above the mountains (4:1). Then he states, Though all the peoples walk each in the name of its gods . . .we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever (4:5). What he seems to say is: We know for certain that we are in possession of the one and lasting truth. This, however, does not give us the right to impose our view on others. However, in "the days to come" the word of the Lord will prevail, and will be willingly accepted by all the nations.

The two seminal events that determined the course of Israel's history were the Exodus and the theophany on Mount Sinai, leading to the sealing of the Covenant between God and Israel. This dramatic event is described in Exodus 24. Moses transmits the Lord's commands to Israel. The people accept them unquestioningly. 'All the things that the Lord commanded we will do' (24:3). The rite of the Covenant is witnessed by Moses, Joshua, the priests, and 70 elders of Israel. From then on, the bilateral Covenant, in which both parties commit
themselves to fulfill certain obligations, was to have an incalculable influence on the historiosophy of the Bible, and subsequently on Jewish and perhaps Western world history.

FROM THEODICY TO THE SUFFERING SERVANT

The introduction of the Covenant into biblical history added a new dimension of theodicy and the human condition to historiosophy. In an uncomplicated equation a just God rewards justly, for to deny retribution is to deny a just God; people following Divine demands faithfully should be rewarded accordingly. But history is not a mathematical equation. In addition, let us consider the paradox of man's condition. To be an ethical being, he needs to have freedom of choice, even to rebel against God. As the Talmud (Niddah 16b) puts it: "All is in the hands of the Lord except the fear of the Lord."

As to theodicy, the vindication of Divine justice, we encounter discordant voices in the Bible. Jeremiah complains bitterly: *I shall present charges against You. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? (12:1)*. The entire Book of Job is devoted to the problem of theodicy. Habakkuk dares to ask: *You Whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil, Who cannot countenance wrongdoing, Why do You countenance treachery, And stand by idle while the one in the wrong devours the one in the right? (1:13)*.

We have noted before that biblical historiosophy is judgmental. In the biblical view, it is Israel's backsliding that brings penalty upon it. God uses vicious invaders and conquerors as the rod of His anger. Devastation and exile are often predicted by the prophets as consequences of Israel's failure to fulfill the Covenant. Surprisingly, Isaiah joins those who voice some reservations about theodicy, with the introduction of the powerful concept of the "Suffering Servant." Israel is that suffering servant. It is witness to God: *'You are my witnesses,' saith the Lord, 'and My servant whom I have chosen' (42:10).* It is also the innocent victim of the sins of others: *he was wounded because of our sins . . . and the Lord visited upon him the guilt of all of us (53:5,6).* This martyred servant of the Lord who was maltreated *did not open his mouth, like a sheep being led to slaughter (53:7),* is reminiscent of the Jewish people struck by tragic events not so long ago.
Isaiah does not deny Israel's responsibility for some of the Divine penalties visited upon it, but this is not entirely due to its sins, for Israel is both witness and victim. As a witness to God, the Suffering Servant exposed himself to death (53:12), and as a victim he was maltreated. Furthermore, it is the Lord Himself Who chose to crush him by disease . . . that through him the Lord's purpose might prosper (53:10). After being chastised, Israel will rise to great heights and become the vehicle to realize God's purposes for mankind: He shall startle many nations. Kings shall be silenced because of him, for they shall see what has not been told them, shall behold what they never have heard (52:15).

MESSIANISM

Messianism and eschatology are the jewels in the crown of biblical historiosophy. Through them, God's purposes for mankind will become manifest. With eschatology -- the "days to come" -- the sweep of history encompasses not only pre-history (life in paradise) and history (the real life in which we live), but also post-history (the time ushered in by the Messiah). This is another major achievement in the Bible. As noted before, great civilizations such as the Egyptian and Mesopotamian had little concept of history altogether; surprisingly, even the brilliant Greeks were not exempt. Thus Gordis writes: "The sense of history moving toward a great consummation was not present in Greek and Roman thought, which saw life as unchanging and human history going through repetitious cycles."

With messianism, for the first time the future is not what will be, but what should be. It is the logical sequence to God's Presence in history, when evil and sin will be expunged and God's kingdom on earth established. Likewise, it is the consequence of the election of Israel, whose role in the biblical view is to serve as the instrument for achieving this exalted goal. For from its midst: There shall come forth a shoot of the stock of Jesse . . . . And it shall come to pass in that day that the root of Jesse standeth for an ensign of the peoples (Isa. 11:1, 10). Israel is Jeremiah's "righteous shoot" that the Lord will raise unto David, who will execute justice and righteousness (Jer. 23:5).
However, for the purpose of linking messianism to biblical historiosophy, the question of what the messianic era will be like is more relevant than who is the Messiah. In the part of the **Alenu** prayer recited by observant Jews three times daily, it is the vision and expectation of the time "when the world will be perfected under the Kingdom of the Almighty."

Much has been written and said about the messianic expectations. Here we shall limit ourselves to some of the prophetic visions. In some, it is that day on which the Lord will execute judgment on all peoples, including Israel. After the process of purification from sin, Zion will be restored, and will become the abode of God's glory (Isa. 40). It is also the End of Days, when Zion is the center from which true knowledge of God will be disseminated to the world (Isa. 2:2-4, Mic. 4:1-3). As a result, all nations will submit spontaneously to the Lord's authority, which will lead to the abolition of warfare. In a similar vein, Zechariah prophesies that in *that day the Lord shall be King over all the earth, and He shall be One and His name one* (14:9). Human relations will be controlled *Not by might, nor by power but by My spirit* (4:6).

In another beautiful prophesy, Isaiah envisions an era of peaceful relations among nations that had been arch-enemies:

*There shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria. And the Egyptians shall worship [the Lord] with the Assyrians . . . . In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth. For the Lord of hosts hath blessed him, saying: 'Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands and Israel My inheritance'* (19:23-25).

**NOTES**

4. See also Jeremiah 6:16.
SAVING THE AKEDAH FROM THE PHILOSOPHERS

BEREL DOV LERNER

THE PHILOSOPHER'S AKEDAH

Genesis 22 tells how God called upon Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on a mountaintop in the land of Moriah. Abraham dutifully went about executing the Divine request. He set off with Isaac for the appropriate spot, built an altar, bound him as a sacrificial victim, and drew his knife to slay the boy. At the last possible moment, an angelic voice from heaven called off the slaughter. Abraham sacrificed a ram in place of Isaac, and the angel announced the blessings which God bestowed upon Abraham in recognition of his faithfulness. This astonishing series of events is usually referred to as the Binding of Isaac or the Akedah [עֲקֵדָה--binding].

Few stories in the Torah have aroused as much philosophical interest as the Akedah. Philosophers usually discuss it under the disciplinary rubric of "Divine Commands and Morality." Their reading of the story is seemingly straightforward: God commanded Abraham to murder Isaac. Murder (and especially murder of one's own child) is obviously immoral. Therefore, the Akedah story offers the classic example of a clash between the demands of God and those of morality. Which authority deserves our ultimate allegiance? The great philosopher Immanuel Kant suggested a solution which reflects his typically Enlightenment willingness to question the authority of Scripture:

Abraham should have replied to this putative divine voice: "That I may not kill my good son is absolutely certain. But that you who appear to me are God is not certain and cannot become certain, even though the voice were to sound from the very heavens." . . . [For] that a voice which one seems to hear cannot be divine one can be certain of . . . in case what is commanded is contrary to moral law. However majestic or supernatural it may appear to be, one must regard it as a deception.

Like other issues brought up by philosophers and theologians in connection with the Akedah, Kant's point has its own intrinsic interest. However, it is my

Berel Dov Lerner is a member of Kibbutz Sheluhot and is currently completing a Ph.D. in philosophy at Tel Aviv University.
contention that the association of these issues with the Akedah is based on a complete misunderstanding of the biblical story itself. In fact, while the Akedah is crucial for Judaism, it is useless for philosophy.

Kant's interpretation of the Akedah takes into account only two of the factors Abraham had to consider before taking the knife to Isaac: God's putative command and the moral prohibition against murder. The philosopher forgot a third all-important element: God's promise to Abraham that Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac; and I will maintain My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring to come (Gen. 17:19). If Abraham had put a permanent end to Isaac's life, God's word would have been broken. One might say that while God's command tested Abraham's obedience, Abraham's obedience tested God's faithfulness to their covenant. On Mount Moriah, both God and Abraham proved their devotion to the fulfillment of the Divine word.

Given the promised covenant with Isaac, how was Abraham to understand his situation at the Akedah? On the one hand, Abraham's faith demanded that he obey God's command to slaughter Isaac. On the other hand, his faith equally demanded that he believe God would keep His covenant with Isaac. Abraham knew that he must do what he must do, but that somehow Isaac would live to inherit his blessings none the less.

Abraham's faith in the Divine promise must modify our appraisal of the moral implications of his intended sacrifice of Isaac. Since the fulfillment of the covenant required that no evil befall Isaac, Abraham had no need to fear that in obeying God he would injure his own son. Even if he had slit Isaac's throat, he would not invite moral reproach. Surgeons cut open the bodies of patients and there is nothing wrong with that. Similarly, there is nothing morally reprehensible about a father slitting the throat of his son if he knows for a certainty that this could not possibly injure the boy in any way. Given God's absolute guarantee of Isaac's safety, Abraham's predicament is of no particular interest for ethics.

Foremost among the philosophical interpreters of the Akedah is Soren Kierkegaard in his classic treatise Fear and Trembling. In contrast to Kant, Kierkegaard is well aware of the importance of God's promised covenant with Isaac for the understanding of Abraham's predicament. He explicitly mentions
that "Abraham believed . . . that he was to grow old in the land, honored by the people, blessed in his generation, remembered forever in Isaac, his dearest thing in life." Though Kierkegaard was aware of God's promise, this did not save him from misinterpreting the Akedah. In his eagerness to make Scripture speak to moderns, Kierkegaard refused to take seriously the possibility of the miraculous. While Abraham may have believed that things would work out for the best, Kierkegaard calls this belief "preposterous." Such irrational faith certainly cannot solve the challenge to morality in the Akedah. Abraham's trust in God was too absurd to excuse his behavior before the tribunal of rational ethics. Kierkegaard was left with no choice but to understand the Akedah in terms of "the teleological suspension of the ethical."

From the viewpoint of biblical Judaism there was nothing "preposterous" about Divine intervention in earthly events. Abraham, who had just witnessed the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah, would have every reason to believe that God could intervene, even in the worst possible situation, to save Isaac. Furthermore, the abstract issue of Divine Commands and Morality which concerned Kierkegaard and his fellow philosophers is out of place in the scriptural context. Just a few chapters before the Akedah, God proclaimed that

'I have singled him [Abraham] out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right, in order that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him' (Gen. 18:19).

According to this verse, the way of the Lord and doing what is just and right are identical. God charged Abraham with the mission of instructing adherence to Divinely-endorsed morality. What would be the point of testing his adherence to Divinely-endorsed immorality? There is no need for Genesis to discuss a conflict between Divine Commands and Morality, because this was simply not considered a problem for biblical Judaism. The Torah sees itself not merely as a collection of amoral religious fiat, but rather as offering a system of law whose ethical validity should be evident to any thinking human being:

Observe [God's commands] faithfully, for that will be proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples, who on hearing of all these laws will say, 'Surely that is a great nation of wise and discerning people . . . . What great
nation has laws and norms as perfect as all this Teaching that I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:6-8).

Kierkegaard wrote ironically of a reader of the Akedah narrative that "had [he] known Hebrew, he perhaps would [have] easily understood the story and Abraham." Indeed, if he had only understood the ancient Hebrew mentality, Kierkegaard may have easily understood the story himself. From the biblical standpoint, Kierkegaard's openness to the possibility of a conflict between morality and duty to God seems "preposterous," while Abraham's faith in the covenant was perfectly reasonable.

THE UNPHILOSOPHICAL AKEDAH

By now, many readers of this essay will be exasperated. I have, it would seem, too "easily understood" the Akedah. Abraham knew that no harm would come Isaac's way, so he could cheerfully climb the heights of Moriah without a second thought. The great test of faith appears trivial. This reaction reveals how thoroughly we have become ensnared in the philosopher's reading of the Akedah. All we look for is the conceptual puzzle, the theological paradox. We read the story as if it were an example from a textbook on ethics, and we are disappointed by its lack of intellectual interest.

Often, what is trivial in theory is profound in practice. Had Abraham been asked to "solve" the problem of the Akedah in a philosophy examination essay, there would be nothing impressive about the story. However, Abraham was called upon to take not merely a pencil to a sheet of paper but rather a knife to his son's throat. His faith in the covenant was so great that he was actually prepared to perform the terrible deed, knowing that God would somehow spare Isaac. The Akedah did not test Abraham's grasp of existential theology, but rather the true mettle of his obedience to God's command and his trust in God's promise.

A test of trust need not strain reason. Consider the exercise made popular by psychologists, in which I am asked to fall straight back into a friend's arms. If the friend does not catch me, I may be seriously injured. I know my friend realizes this and would never allow such a thing to happen. In principle, I should be prepared to participate in the exercise without hesitation. However, at the moment of truth, my faith may easily fail me. While my conscious mind com-
mands that I fall, my very body resists. My entirely rational trust in my friend has not penetrated into my muscles and bones. Yet Abraham's hand did clutch the knife. The Akedah teaches us that absolute trust in God had permeated every aspect and level of Abraham's existence. That Abraham had no reason to question his faith on intellectual grounds makes his adherence to it in practice no less impressive.

THE DEFENSE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

Once we understand that Genesis is more concerned with the spiritual development of living, embodied human beings than with posing abstract theological paradoxes, other episodes in Abraham's career become more intelligible. For instance, from the philosopher's standpoint, Abraham's haggling with God over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah seems ridiculous. When it came to sacrificing his own son, Abraham knew better than to question Divine justice. What was the point of arguing about God's plans to punish blatantly corrupt cities? Abraham might be regarded as having failed in regard to Sodom and Gomorrah. Such is the view proposed by James Rachels, a leading writer on ethics:

[Abraham at the Akedah] subordinated himself, his own desires and judgments, to God's command, even when the temptation to do otherwise was strongest. Abraham's record in this respect was not perfect. We . . . have the story of him bargaining with God over the conditions for saving Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction. God said that he would destroy those cities because they were so wicked; but Abraham gets God to agree that if fifty righteous men can be found there, then the cities will be spared. Then he persuades God to lower the number to forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally ten. Here we have a different Abraham, not servile and obedient, but willing to challenge God and bargain with him. However, even as he bargains with God, Abraham realizes that there is something radically inappropriate about it: he says, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes . . . Oh, let not the Lord be angry (Gen.18:27, 30).

Taking into account that in the Sodom and Gomorrah episode Abraham had not actually been commanded to do anything, Rachels's comments lose much of their force. If God wants to hurt someone, that is His affair. Our business re-
mains, as always, to help each other in times of need. The Torah never denies our moral responsibility to ameliorate any and all human suffering, even suffering resulting from Divinely inflicted, (and ultimately justifiable) punishment. For instance: God's curse on Eve, 'I will make most severe your pangs in childbearing; in pain shall you bear children' (Gcn. 3:16) was never understood as undermining the moral standing of the midwife's vocation of easing the birth process. Despite the curse on Adam, 'By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat' (3:19), we remain obligated to share our bread with the needy, even (especially!) when this lightens their burden of work. Although these considerations weaken the case against Abraham, we may still wonder whether Abraham was right to question God's decision. Was it not pointless to question God's obviously perfect and unchanging justice?

Here again we must remember that the Torah is concerned with Abraham as a complete human being rather than as an abstract theological cogitator. Of course, from a strictly theoretical standpoint, there is no room for Abraham's argument with God. Setting oneself against the almighty, omniscient and perfectly just Divinity is irrational. However, there are times when the spiritual price of strict rationality is too great. Entire cities stand to be annihilated; can theological casuistry silence Abraham's appeal? How coldhearted would Abraham have to be in order to resign himself to the cold logic of philosophy? What would have been left of Abraham's human solidarity had he stood idly by while God spoke of destroying whole communities?

Abraham could march forth to Moriah with the faith that God would keep his promise to make Isaac prosper. Faced with the terrible knowledge that God intended to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham came forward to defend them. Neither occasion involved a test of his theological acumen. In each case, Abraham acted as befits a living, caring, human being who is completely permeated with faith in the reality of God's words and actions.

THE MEANING OF THE AKEDAH FOR JUDAISM TODAY

What the Akedah has lost in philosophical interest, it gains in its importance for Judaism and the Jewish people. Kierkegaard's brand of paradoxical theology has not traditionally appealed to Jews. It is true that Christianity has, at times, gloried in the "scandal" of its doctrine and praised the pure faith of those who
believe in spite of their reason. However, as Leo Strauss pointed out, "Jewish orthodoxy based its claim to superiority over other religions from the beginning on its superior rationality." Far from invoking "the teleological suspension of the ethical," Judaism has traditionally dealt with apparent clashes between Divine commands and morality by reinterpreting the Divine commands (i.e., halakhah or Jewish Law) in a way which takes into account moral concerns.

What Jews must attend to in the Akedah story is Abraham's active trust in God and obedience to His word. Such trust and obedience were essential for Abraham, and later for the entire Jewish people, to fulfill their respective historic missions. Judaism today does not demand that we take our children up to some new Moriah, but it does ask that we educate them to form the next generation of Jews. History has taught that such a destiny may bring to them its own real dangers. While Abraham witnessed miracles and conversed with God, our experience of the Divine is limited. Will we find the strength to share Abraham's trust in the covenantal promise, and will our trust be as well justified? Such are the questions which the Akedah poses for Jewish existence today.

NOTES
1. Immanuel Kant, Streit der Fakultaten, trans. Emil Fackenheim, in Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy: A Preface to Future Jewish Thought, ed. Emil Fackenheim (New York: Schocken, 1973) p. 34. What I call the "philosophical" reading of the Akedah has such a strong hold on modern thinkers that even so staunchly Jewish a philosopher as Fackenheim admits to the importance of Kant's problematic for Judaism.
3. Kierkegaard, p. 35.
4. Kierkegaard, p. 35.
5. Kierkegaard, p. 28.
7. See my "'And He Shall Rule Over Thee,'" Judaism 37:4 (Fall 1988) pp. 446-449. This principle does not contradict the requirement of our obedience to Divine commands which call upon us to inflict justified suffering on the wicked, i.e. the punishments due to criminals under Jewish law.
ON THE INADEQUACY OF TRANSLATION
AS EXEMPLIFIED BY A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF
FOUR TRANSLATIONS OF PSALM 102
PART II

DOV RAPPEL

Part I of this article appeared in issue 27:2 (April-June 1999). It analyzes verses 1-14, in which the psalmist writes of his own time. Part II analyzes verses 15-23, in which the psalmist gives a vision of the future, and verses 24-29, on awakening and prayer.

The Psalm is analyzed verse by verse, with the Hebrew Masoretic text and four translations in the following chronological order:
A: Authorized Version (King James Bible), 1611;
R. Revised Version, a corrected version of the Authorized Version, 1880;
K. Knox translation, a modern, scholarly Catholic version, 1949;

THE VISION

Verse 15. כי דאז נבจอ אלה אבותי והא בפרה ינוחו
A. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones; and favour the dust thereof.
R. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and have pity upon her dust.
K. See how thy servants love her even in ruin, how they water her dust with their tears.
J. Your servants take delight in its stones, and cherish its dust.

It seems that our verse gives another explanation of כי בז מנוח in the previous verse. There we said that the time of restoration of Zion was fixed by God and announced to Jeremiah. Our verse seems to suggest that the time of restoration depended on men and on their resolve to return and to rebuild Zion. This will explain the "כ" which echoes the "כ" of the previous verse. It is difficult to decide whether our verse is an interpretation of 14b, or is a concurrent argument for the restoration.

Dov Rappel is a member of Kibbutz Yavne in Israel and was Professor of Education at Bar Ilan University.

JEWSH BIBLE QUARTERLY
All versions except K translate אבניים as "stones." K translates it by "ruin." "Stones" offers itself naturally, not only because this is the most common meaning of אבניים but also because Jerusalem is built on rocks and is a city of stones, not of bricks and mortar. But it seems that the second half of our verse gives preference to K. In Leviticus 14:34-63, the Bible describes the case of a plague-stricken house. In certain cases the house is to be torn down, and its components, אבניים and סוף, thrown away. The same words are used in our verse, and maybe this suggests the ruined houses of the city.

**Verse 16:** ירואים גוים את השם ה, כל מלכי הארץ את כבודו
A. So the heathen shall feare the Name of the Lord; and all the kings of the earth thy glory.
R. So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord; and all the kings of the earth thy glory.
K. Will not the heathen learn reverence, Lord, for thy glorious name, and all those monarchs of the earth.
J. The nations will fear the name of the Lord, all the kings of the earth Your glory.

The correct translation of גוים is "nation"; no doubt about it. The translation "heathen" was adopted for theological reasons. "Nations" includes Christians as well as idolaters and separates the Jews as the only true believers. This is not acceptable to some of the Christian translators, and they preferred 'heathen' which placed them and the Jews in the same class.

**Verse 17:** כי בנוח הוא ציון נראית בעבודה
A. When the Lord shall build up Zion; he shall appeare in his glory.
R. For the Lord hath built up Zion, He has appeared in his glory.
K. When they hear that the Lord has built Sion anew, that he has revealed there himself in glory.
J. For the Lord has built Zion; He has appeared in all His glory.

The meaning of בנוח in our verse is quite clear. To emphasize the contrast between past and future, some translators added the "up," to denote the
completeness and perfection of the new Zion. From the second clause of the verse one can infer that גי is the central word and our author wishes to say that the restoration of Zion will be miraculous, accompanied by the revelation of Divine glory. This interpretation is in line with Isaiah 14:32 and Psalm 127:1. One interpretation stresses the material restoration, the other the spiritual, and it is hard to decide which is the correct one.

Verse 18: פותי אל תִּמָּנֶס מִכְּלָל וַעֲנָס וַתִּמָּנֶס
A. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.
R. He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute, and hath not despised their prayer.
K. Has given heed to the prayer of the afflicted, neglects their appeal no more.
J. He has turned to the prayer of the destitute, and has not spurned their prayer.

In Hebrew, the verse consists of eight words. Two words, a quarter of the total, are the repeated נזק [prayer]. This underlines the centrality of prayer in this verse. In translation, the verse has 12-15 words and "prayer" is less prominent.

In all the versions, נזק is translated by "destitute" or "afflicted". This is not the literal meaning of נזק, which is a plant, the juniper bush (juniperus phoenica) that grows in dry places. Both here and in Jeremiah 17:6 it symbolizes hopeless loneliness. A juniper bush does not pray, and therefore the translators could not translate literally. But "destitute" lacks the vividness of the simile. How much the simile and its meaning are entwined can be seen from the plural form of נזק. There is nothing in the sentence requiring the plural. But, clearly, the juniper stands for a whole congregation and it is their prayer that will not be despised.

Verse 19: תִּכְתְּבָה זֶאת לָדוּר אַהֲוָרוּ עָזְנָנוּ נִבְּרָא יִהלֵל יְהֹוָה
A. This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people that shall be created, shall praise the Lord.
R. This shall be written for the generation to come; and a people that shall be created shall praise the Lord.
K. Such legends ascribe we for a later age to read it, a new people will arise to praise the Lord.
J. May be this written down for a coming generation; that people yet to be created shall praise the Lord.

Where does הָדָע point, forward or backward? To verses 16-18 or to the second part of 19, or to verse 20 and onward? Those who think that הָדָע refers to the past put an "and" between the two clauses, so that they are mutually independent. Those who translate by "that" make the second clause subordinate to the first, but it still does not say what is to be written down, what was already said or what follows.

הָדָע is a quite common word, but here it is used in a special sense. J is the only translation which stresses the continuity of generations. The new people are but a new generation of the old nation. That is to say, there will arise a new generation of Jews who will have good reason to praise God. K stresses the novelty of the people to be created. It seems that in his opinion the verse refers to Christianity, which fits the description.

Even those who think that the first clause of our verse points backward will agree that the second clause is closely tied to verse 20. The subject of verse 20 is דָע of our verse.

Verse 20:  
כִי חָפֵץ נָמוֹדַשׂ ה' מָשָׁמְיוֹ אֶל אָרֶץ הבָּיִם
A. For he hath looked downe from the height of his Sanctuarie; from heaven did the Lord beholde the earth.
R. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth.
K. The Lord who looks from his sanctuary on high, viewing earth from heaven.
J. For He looks down from His holy height, the Lord beholds the earth from heaven.

Verses 18 and 20 are dealing with the same phenomenon -- the apparent indifference of God to the toils of the returnees -- from two points of view, the human and the Divine. In Psalm 33:13-14 there is a parallel to what is said in verse 20, expressed in similar words but formulated as a general principle. This interpretation of verse 20 has the advantage that verse 21 is a direct continuation of this line of thought.

Vol. 27, No. 3, 1999
In order not to be repetitive, all the translators except K translated "באהב" by "beheld." It is true that the archaic sense of "behold" was "to consider, to watch" (OED), that is, to look attentively, which is what is intended in our verse. But the modern use of "behold" is "to see, to perceive," and this is surely not what the author has in mind. He wants to say that God looked to the earth sympathetically, and not like an indifferent spectator.

Verse 21: לָשֹׁם אֲנֹכָּה אֲסָיְרֵי לְפָתָה בֵּנֵי תְמוּתָה
A. To heare the groning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.
R. To hear the sighing of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.
K. Who has listened to the groans of the prisoners, delivered a race that was doomed to die.
J. To hear the groans of the prisoner, to release those condemned to death.

The reader unaccustomed to biblical Hebrew might wonder at the discrepancy between verses 20 and 21. Why should God look if He wants to hear? Even if both looking and hearing are metaphors in relation to God, there should be some consistency. In biblical Hebrew it is no problem. We read about the people "seeing the sounds" (Ex. 20:15) and "taste and see" (Ps. 34:9). More to the point, as was felt by some translators, is that לָשֹׁם should not be translated by "hear," which is indifferent, but by "listen," which testifies to involvement.

A comparison between our Psalm and Isaiah 42 shows the difference in reaction to the same event between an intensely lyrical poet, who sees everything in the light of his personal experience, and a prophet whose vision is worldwide. What one presents autobiographically, the other describes historiosophically. Another comparison shows the intensity of our author's feeling. In Psalm 79:11 we read הנְבוֹא לָפְנֵינוּ אֲנֹכָּה אֲסָיְרֵי בֵּנֵוָה וְרֹעֵר הָוהָה בֵּנֵי תְמוּתָה. The author entreats that his prayer be heard. Our author has no doubts about it. Even in ruined Jerusalem his faith remains firm.

Verse 22: לָשֹׁם בְּצֵיר שֵׁם ה', וְתֹוֹלֵות בֶּרֶדֶשֶׁלַם
A. To declare the Name of the Lord in Zion; and his praise in Jerusalem.
R. That men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion; and his praise in Jerusalem.

K. There will be talk of the Lord’s name in Sion, of his praise in Jerusalem.

J. That the fame of the Lord may be recounted in Zion, His praises in Jerusalem.

So far, the author dealt with two interrelated subjects -- the justification of his faith and the justification of his behavior. Those who, judging by the present situation, denied Divine providence and maintained that the return to Jerusalem was a folly; could be refuted by fact and faith. The fact was that unconquerable Babylon lay in ruins. The faith was that God did hear his prayers and will grant him his request. This made him forget what should have been foremost in his thought -- Jerusalem. Zion was already mentioned in verses 14 and 17, but in a subordinate place. Here, Jerusalem is central and its centrality is emphasized by its place in the chiastic sentence. This centrality is lost in all the translations which do not preserve the chiastic construction.

Verse 23:

Bekuv'im Nomi'ah ve'memlakhath Lebana ha 'a

A. When the people are gathered together; and the kingdoms to serve the Lord.

R. When there peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

K. When peoples and kings meet there to pay their homage.

J. When the nations gather together, the kingdoms -- to praise the Lord.

One of the characteristic features of biblical poetry is parallelismus membrorum coupled with short stichoi of two to four words. This requires that sentences of more than five words be divided into two short ones. This happened in our verse too. The sentence should normally run as follows: Bekuv'im Nomi'ah ve'memlakhath Lebana ha 'a. The word belongs to the apodosis and the meaning of the whole verse is that the nations will gather in order to worship God together, in unison. This meaning escaped J, where the protasis stands by itself, redundant.
Verse 24:  עֲנֹה בּוֹדָרִים כָּחַי קָפָר יִתי.  
A. He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.  
R. He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.  
K. Here on my journey he has brought my strength to an end, cut short my days.  
J. He drained my days in mid-course, He shortened my days.

Verse 24 has a vowel indicating the definite article "the way." It is the well-known itinerary of the returning Jews. The fact that he had gone this way in response to the call of the prophets gives moral strength to his plea. Therefore, it is strange that J dropped it.

The author described his sufferings in verses 4-10. Our verse is not a continuation of that description. It stands here as the introduction to verse 25 which is the prayer.

Verse 25:  אַמָּר אֶל אֱלֹהֵי בְּעֵץ יִתי בּוֹדָרִים וּתְרוּמָתָנִי  
A. I said, o my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy yeres are throughout all generations.  
R. I said, o my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are through all generations.  
K. What, my God, wilt thou snatch me away, my life half done? Age after ages the years endure.  
J. I say: O my God do not take me away in the middle of my life; Your whole years endure generations on end.

Verse 25 is a euphemism for עליה וּתְרוּמָת (cf. Ezek. 31:16; Ps. 55:24). All translators understood it correctly. But K apparently thought that it is a vulgarism and translated by "snatch away."

All translators understood correctly that בּוֹדָרִים means "all generations" and the word "generation" is not repeated. K and J made a further improvement and made it clear that what the author had in mind was "eternity." But none of them was able to bring together all the words for time, as they are in Hebrew יִתי בּוֹדָרִים וּתְרוּמָתָנִי.
Verse 26

A. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

R. Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

K. It was thou, Lord, that didst lay the foundations of earth when time began, it was thy hand that built the heavens.

J. Of old You established the earth; the heavens are the work of Your hands.

The first clause of our verse is very much like the first clause of Psalm 74:17, but the ideas behind the words are different. There the accent is on God's omnipotence, here on His eternity. Therefore, כלים is the opening word of our verse. Most translators overlooked this point and only three started with "of old."

J is better than the others in translating 米. The Hebrew word implies a firm foundation for an edifice brought to completion. Therefore "established" is better than "laid the foundation."

Verse 27

A. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea all of them shall waxe old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.

R. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.

K. They will perish, but thou wilt remain. They all will be like a cloak that grows threadbare, and thou wilt lay them aside like a garment, and exchange them for new.

J. They shall perish, but You shall endure; they shall all wear out like a garment. You change them like clothing and they pass away.

Any translation of our verse raises a literary point. In biblical literature, heaven and earth are considered literary symbols of eternity. This is how the Midrash interprets Deuteronomy 32:1 and similar passages. Yet we find several passages in which heaven and earth are doomed to destruction (Isa. 51:6, 65:17). From the context of the passages concerned, it is clear that the prophecy of doomsday is but a literary device. Such imagist exaggerations are favorite means of expression of the Second Isaiah, who was most probably a contemporary of our author. But what is natural in the Bible sounds strange in modern English.
Verse 28: אַחֲרֵיהֶכָּה וַהֲוָאָהָי וְהֵוָאָהָי לַאֲיָדוֹת
A. But thou art the same, and thy yeeres shall have no end.
R. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.
K. Thou art unchanging; thy years can never fail.
J. But thou art He, whose years are without end.

Our author surely believes that God is unchangeable. But what he maintains here is that He is eternal, unlike heaven and earth. Therefore K's translation is doubly wrong -- in his omission of 'but' at the beginning and in translating "unchanging" instead of "eternal."

Verse 29: בְּנֵי נְבֵדֶדֶרִי יִשְׂכְוַבָּה וַיַּרְדִּים לֶפֶזַּר יְבוּלָה
A. The children of thy servants shall continue; and their seed shall be established before thee.
R. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.
K. The posterity of thy servants shall yet hold their land in peace, their race shall live on in your keeping.
J. May the children of Your servants live securely, and their offspring endure in Your presence.

This verse, like verse 28, has an untranslatable homonym: ישכון וּלְפֶזַּר יְבוּלָה. The first part of the concluding verse asks for tranquillity. It is material, political, social; in a word, earthly. The second part is spiritual. The word difficult to translate is the otherwise simple לְפֶזַּר. In the context it is equivalent to "find grace in God's eyes." It comprises the mutual relationship of man fulfilling God's commandment and of God granting man his requests. Since the denotation of the word is so extensive, all translations cover only part of the ground.

GLOSSARY
1. CHIASMUS: inversion in second phrase of order followed in the first
2. PARALLELISMUS MEMBRORUM: the complete verse consists of two short sentences, the second being a repetition of the first (or almost repetition; e.g. Isaiah 1:4)
3. STICHOS: line of poetry
4. APODOSIS: concluding clause
5. PROTASIS: opening clause
HESED -- MERCY OR LOYALTY?

HAROLD M. KAMSLER

A widely quoted Italian phrase declares *traduttorre traditore* [translators are traducers]. A prime biblical example of this is found in the familiar line in Psalm 136, repeated in each of the 26 verses which we read regularly on Shabbat and holidays: דועו עלמה ח יב [*Ki l'olam hasdo*] -- rendered as *For His mercy endureth forever*.

This interpretation of the noun דועו [*hesed*] appears as early as the Septuagint translation of the second century BCE, where the Hebrew *hesed* becomes the Greek ελεος, ευμεταλευσεν that has in turn been translated into English as "mercy." It works satisfactorily for the earliest verses, but how does it apply to statements that describe acts of slaying (e.g. *To Him that smote great kings*) that were probably necessary but surely not merciful? Yet, the Septuagint translates the phrase "οτι εις τον αμωνα το ελεος αυτου"which rendered into English becomes "for his mercy endureth forever." This pioneering Septuagint translation was carried along in the Latin Vulgate as "quoniam in aeternum misericordia ejus."

Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German was also influenced by the Septuagint. We read in his Bible "denn seine Guete wahret ewiglich." A German-Hebrew Prayer Book printed in Berlin in 1866 continues the same pattern. It translates "denn ewig wahrt seine Gnade." The French follows with "car sa grace est éternelle" and the Italian makes it "che la Sua misericordia e eterna."

Even the new JPS translation, which was designed to incorporate the most modern scholarship, has *His steadfast love is eternal*. (The 1917 version follows the familiar pattern of *for His mercy endureth forever*). The Russian-Hebrew Prayer Book given to Russian immigrants to Israel, published by Al Tidom with the imprimatur of the Ministry of Religion, continues the pattern.

All these translations use *hesed* as a single, one-way rather than reciprocal relationship. *Hesed*, however, describes a mutual relationship between man and

*Harold Kamsler is rabbi emeritus of Congregations Tiferet Israel and Bnai Jacob in Pennsylvania and taught at the Dept. Of Sociology at New York University. He is now living in Ra'anana, Israel.*
man or between man and God. Translating it as "mercy," "compassion," or "love" destroys the concept of mutuality.

A clear example of the greater accuracy of translating hesed as "loyalty" is evident in I Samuel 20:8. David asks his comrade Jonathan to make excuses for him when he absents himself from the Rosh Hodesh observance, for he knows that King Saul is plotting to destroy him. He says to Jonathan,

Therefore you shall deal with your servant with hesed, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. If there be any iniquity in me, then kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?

Jonathan turns to David and asks that David reciprocate and remember him, and asks for his hesed:

And you shall not only while yet I live show me the hesed of the Lord that I die not, but also thou shalt not cut off thy hesed from my house forever (20:14).

It is evident again in II Samuel 9:1, where David manifests this hesed not only to Jonathan but to his family. We read:

And David said, 'Is there any left of the House of Saul, that I may show him hesed because of Jonathan?'

There was one son still alive and David searched for him. But Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth was very fearful.

And David said to him, 'Fear not for I shall surely show you hesed because of Jonathan, your father'. (9:7).

A further very early biblical indication that man may call upon God for His hesed when a mutual relationship has been established is found in the story of Abraham and his servant, whom he sends to Haran to find a wife for Isaac. As the servant nears the entrance to the city he prays:

And God Almighty blessed Abraham, and said to him, 'Fear not, for I will enrich you greatly, so that you will be father of nations and father of kings; and I will give to your servant Isaac.' (22:18).
HESED — MERCY OR LOYALTY?

And he said, 'O Lord God of my master Abraham, send me good speed this
day and show hesed to my master Abraham' (Gen. 24:12).

We use hesed very appropriately when currently we give the title of Hasidim
to those who are loyal to the covenant with God.

NOTES
1. For a complete discussion see, Nelson Glueck, Hesed in the Bible (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union
2. The verses of Psalm 136 speak to two different levels. Verses 10-24 are concerned with the
specific relationship of God to the people of Israel, established in the covenant made with Abra-
ham and renewed at Sinai with all who came out of Egypt. Verses 4-9 plus the final verse 25 are
directed to the universal relationship between Him and all mankind, through the Noachide cove-
nant.

In the earlier verses, we read that He made the heavens by His wisdom and the great lights, the
sun, the moon and the stars -- all for the benefit of mankind. Verses 10-24 are specially directed to
the people of Israel. There we read that with a strong hand and an outstretched arm He freed them
from Egyptian slavery, divided the Red Sea, smote great kings . . . delivering them from difficul-
ties and saving them from perils. How do we reconcile "mercy" or even "steadfast love" with the
human destruction in verses 10, 15 and 17-20? Try "loyalty" instead of "mercy" or even "steadfast
love" in Psalm 136. It is eminently appropriate in all the verses.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!
The AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE JEWISH BIBLE ASSOCIATION is devoted to pro-
moting and advancing knowledge and appreciation of the Tanakh in the United States, Israel, and
throughout the world. The AFJBA provides financial and other support for a variety of educa-
tional, scientific and literary activities, including:

* Publication of the JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY
* Internet website: http://www.jewishbible.org
* Offering correspondence courses in Bible for American college credit and for adult education
* Sending the JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY free to all 130 Hillel Houses on American col-
lege campuses and to all 34 active duty American Jewish chaplains
* Participation in the planning of the International Bible Contest for Jewish Youth and the Bible
Art Contest for Children
* Public lectures on Biblical themes

By supporting the AFJBA, you will be demonstrating your commitment to the unparalleled sig-
nificance of the Tanakh in the modern world, its message and insights. Your greatest benefit will
be knowing that you are participating in a world-wide effort to spread understanding and appreci-
cation of the Tanakh to people everywhere.

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE JEWISH BIBLE ASSOCIATION
P.O.B. 29002, Jerusalem, Israel

Vol. 27, No. 3, 1999
THE TEN AND THE TORAH

JACOB CHINITZ

There seems to be a tension within the Pentateuch about the nature of God’s revelation of His teaching; between the emphasis upon the Ten Words and an almost equal emphasis on the entity of Torah as a whole.

In Exodus 19, we have the build-up to the dramatic revelation, and in Exodus 20 we have the Ten Words. No one can dispute that they are central to whatever God is delivering to Israel. It is these words that are inscribed on the stone tablets and entrusted to Moses, and then shattered in the aftermath of the incident of the golden calf. Thereafter, Moses is ordered to make a second set. Yet there is more, besides this climax. In Chapter 24, there are several statements that are in addition to the Ten Words.

*And Moses came and told the people all the words of The Lord, and all the ordinances (v. 3).*

*And he took the book of the Covenant . . . (v. 7).*

*And I shall give you the tablets of stone, and the Torah and the mitzvoth (v. 12).*

It is not plausible that these verses refer to the Ten Words alone. There is more to them. Whether that "more" consists of the Book of Genesis and the first half of Exodus, up to the point of revelation, or whether it is the entire Pentateuch, is subject to commentary and speculation. But our point is that the revelation at Sinai produced two entities: The Ten Words and the Torah.

If the Ten Words and the Torah are two entities, how does the Torah itself regard these two? Are the Ten the essence and the Torah the elaboration? Do the Ten have some character that does not apply to the rest of the Torah? Were the Ten earlier in origin and the Torah later? Our contention is that all the above are true, to some extent.

Jacob Chinitz was ordained at Yeshiva University and is a member of The Rabbinical Assembly. He has served numerous congregations, the most recent in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from which he retired in 1992. He has taught at several colleges, and written over 100 articles for many journals. Since July 1998, he has been Rabbi of Congregation Shaare Zedek, Montreal.

JEWSH BIBLE QUARTERLY
We shall now elaborate by examining relevant Torah texts, not from the viewpoint of Talmud and halakhah or biblical criticism, but by looking at the Pentateuch text itself. Does God reveal His moral code, in the sense of specific injunctions as distinguished from general moral principles, in the climactic event of the giving of the tablets at Sinai? Does He do this also by revealing other bodies of material, subsumed under the general heading of Torah? How much of this Torah is given before the event at Sinai, and how much afterward?

Genesis speaks of emunah [faith], tzedek [righteousness], mishpat [justice], derekh [way], and yirat Elohim [fear of God], all of which may be said to be of a qualitative, emotive nature. The first reference to a moral or legal code seems to be in Genesis 26:5: 'Because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws . . . .' The four Hebrew terms are mishmeret, mitzvah, hag, and torah. All of them are found later in the other four books of the Pentateuch as terms for specific demands -- legal if you will -- by God upon Israel. The manner of the revelation of them is left moot. It is not even indicated that they were revealed especially to Abraham.

In Exodus we find two of these words used with regard to the ritual of Pessah and matzoh, not as part of a code but as individual acts to be performed: And you shall keep it (12:6), and Observe this day for your generations as an ordinance (12:17). In 15:25, we have what seems to be more than an individual law, but the text is vague: There He made for them a statute and an ordinance. In 16:26, we have a specific command concerning the Sabbath: Six days you shall gather it but on the seventh day is Sabbath. And yet in 16:28 the text refers to what seems to be some pre-existing collection of laws: How long refuse you to keep My commandments and My teachings? Here the words mitzvah [commandment] and torah [teaching] are introduced for the first time.

In Exodus 18, Moses sat to judge the people (v. 13), so it can be assumed that he was using some code of civil law. His father-in-law, Jethro, counseled him to 'teach them the statutes and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow' (v.20). Here there are references to hag [statute], torah [teaching] and derekh [way]. If we accept the chronology of the narrative, no Ten Words and no Torah had yet been given at Sinai.
At the burning bush, God speaks to Moses not of a revelation of torah but of an act of worship: 'When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain' (Ex. 3:12). Later, in 'keep My Covenant and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (9:15), the central word is brit [covenant] not torah. In, And God spoke these words (20:1), the term used is d’varim [words], and there are none of terms that indicate "law" -- torah, hag, mitzvah, mishpat, mishmeret, ot, or edut. We must conclude that even though the Ten Words are called "Ten Commandments" in English, and seem phrased as commandments, they are really "principles," and different from all the other commandments in the rest of the Torah.

It is not by chance that "words" is used only with reference to the Ten, and not with reference to any other commandments. The Ten are principles, and more general in nature than the specific commandments. They are more similar to Deuteronomy 1:1: These are the words [d’varim] spoken by Moses, referring not to specific commandments, but to general principles or preachments delivered by Moses in his final orations.

Beyond the Pentateuch, the phrase "Ten Words" [Aseret HaD’varim] never occurs in the Tanakh. The word "tablets" [luhot] occurs only once, in the account of Solomon placing the tablets in the Ark of the Temple: There was nothing in the Ark save for the two tablets of stone, which Moses had placed there at Horeb, when the Lord [made a Covenant] with the children of Israel (I Kg. 8:9). The absence of any other mention of the tablets suggests that the concept of Torah as the all-inclusive law for the people overshadowed the Ten Words. The latter remained as a symbol, perhaps the stone tablets more prominent than the Words written upon them. The word torah occurs many times in the Prophets and the Writings, most notably in Malachi: Remember the Torah of Moses My servant, which I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel, statutes and judgments (3:22). The prophet does not call on his people to remember the Ten Words.

In Exodus, there is a concentration on the tablets inscribed by Moses, both the first and second sets. In Deuteronomy, in contrast, there is a description of the closing of the Torah as a book.
When Moses finished writing the words of this Torah upon a book, until they were concluded . . . then Moses commanded the Levites, 'Take the book of this Torah and place it at the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God . . . ' (31:24).

Here we see, as it were, the installation of Torah, the full form of the narrative and the laws of the Pentateuch, including the Ten Words, as equal in authority and symbolism to the tablets actually bearing those Words. In fact, Torah becomes more than equal to the Ten. It becomes the whole of which the Ten are only a part. Thereafter, the Ten are venerated as symbol, just as the scroll of the whole Torah is venerated as symbol. But Torah is more than a physical symbol. It is a text, the basis for all the law and lore of the religion, the constitution of the people. And after the loss of the tablets, it is only by being part of Torah that the Ten are remembered. The tablets are lost but the Torah remains.

The distinction between d'var, representing a general principle, and other more technical terms for specific laws, is borne out by the language of the first of the Ten. I am the Lord your God who took you out of the land of Egypt . . . (Ex. 20:2) does not sound like a commandment. Some have such difficulty with this problem that they begin the count of the Ten with: You shall have no other gods . . . (v. 3). However, in view of our analysis, it is quite in order to start the count with verse 2, because it qualifies as a Word, even if it does not qualify as a commandment.

Another support for our position is Deuteronomy 1:18: 'At that time I commanded you all the d'varim you should do.' Although the number Ten is not mentioned here, Rashi, basing his commentary on Sanhedrin I, attempts to interpret this phrase as referring to ten laws concerning the administration of justice in the courts. Ramban takes the more rational view that the reference is to the general corpus of the law that Moses was teaching to Israel. Here we have another illustration of the nature of the word d'var; namely, its significance as a principle rather than a specific law.

Cassuto explicates this concept, that the Ten are not a total code or even specific commandments per se, but a kind of prologue to the more complete code of the Covenant between God and Israel.
The precepts are preceded by the Decalogue in the form of an address by God to the entire people. Thus the Ten Words are not the substance of the covenant, nor its conditions, but the introduction to it. Before the particulars and terms of the Covenant are conveyed. God Himself makes a prefatory declaration that establishes the basic principles on which the Covenant will be founded.

The use of the words "introduction," "prefatory," and "basic principles," bear out the thesis we have been presenting. The Words are principles; the Torah contains them as well as the detailed laws.

The word d'verim occurs again in Exodus 34:27: *Write for yourself these d'verim, for it is according to these d'verim that I cut the Covenant with you and with Israel.* Which d'verim are meant here? We could say they are the Ten Words that had been inscribed on the first tablets. Now Moses is being told to write them on the second tablets. Indeed, verse 28 makes it clear: *He wrote on the tablets the Words of the Covenant, the Ten Words.*

In Exodus 24:3, in contrast, we must interpret d'verim as referring not to the Ten Words, but to additional "words" apparently given to Moses as supplementary to the Ten. One stream of tradition even has it that the entire Pentateuch is meant here. This position becomes difficult to maintain in view of the verses in Deuteronomy where the text of the Torah seems to be completed 40 years later. For our purposes, it is sufficient to point out that the Torah text obviously conceives of d'verim other than the Ten Words given at Sinai: *And Moses came and told them all the words of the Lord, and all the mishpatim* (Ex. 24:3) . . . . *And Moses wrote down all the words of The Lord* (Ex. 24:4) . . . . *And he took the book of the Covenant and read it into the ears of people* (Ex. 24:7). The use of the term mishpatim makes it unlikely that this verse refers to the Ten Words. Furthermore, we are told that Moses wrote all these d'verim, while we had been told earlier that God Himself inscribed the first tablets. The mention of a "book" of the Covenant, rather than tablets, makes it evident that more material than the Ten Words was involved here. We have here, if not the entire Torah, certainly the beginning of the Torah, sharing the status of revelation at Sinai.

We can find support for our thesis in other analyses of the biblical texts. For example, Martin Buber commented that "Moses . . . can be believed to have
been capable of compressing the basic demands of religiousness and morality in this Decalogue. . . . " The idea of the Ten Words serving as symbol, rather than as the full meaning of the message of Sinai, is expressed well by Samson Raphael Hirsch."

We have to broaden the concept contained in the word Devarim. It is not the Words, written and revealed to the reader, that carry the Covenant between God and Israel, but their full and living content which were present in the spirit of Moses, even before they were committed to writing. Even after the writing, they exist in the spirit, and the written Words are memorials to their full content.

Finally, a most felicitous formulation of our thesis can be found in De Vaux: "The Decalogue is the deed of the Sinaitic covenant." There is more in the Covenant than there is in the deed. That "more" is the full content of the revelation at Sinai.

NOTES

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

Detailed Instructions for Authors and journal style can be found on our Internet website: http://www.jewishbible.org
ISRAEL'S DEFINING EXPERIENCE:
FROM FAMILY TO NATION

BENJAMIN GOODNICK

In the years before the descent into Egypt, the creation of Israel had emerged out of travail and pain, conflict and gradual coherence. The travels of Jacob with his family and followers portray the original transformation and development into a distinct people. In fact, the biblical motif presents the personal life of a patriarch blended with the destiny of a nation.

In the journey of Jacob from Aram (Gen. 31:1-35:14), the first step in this profound change is his escape from and complete severance from his northern relatives led by Laban (31:14-16). Note that Jacob's wives say they no longer have any share in their father's inheritance. This separation may be said to parallel that of Abraham's leaving the faith of his ancestors to start anew in another land (12:1). Indeed, Jacob's encounter with Laban at Mount Gilead results in a formal treaty -- a "non-aggression pact" -- between two separate peoples.

The next step in the formation of nationhood is the meeting of Jacob with his brother, and Esau's people who are now established in Edom. The separation between "Israel" and "Edom" is more peaceful than Jacob had expected, yet the severance is complete. Despite his statement, if not his intention (33:14-17), Jacob does not follow Esau to Edom. He settles in Canaan, which had been promised to him, and purchases land for his people near Shechem.

The two encounters, with Laban and Esau, are fraught with fear and danger. Jacob has no assurance of favorable outcomes. He flees from his father-in-law and is terrified of meeting his brother. Between the two encounters, he undergoes a tormenting, soul-shaking and exhausting experience, a revelation coming in the context of a physical and emotional struggle which transforms the individual into the leader and identifies him with his people -- that is, renames him "Israel." In the throes of this struggle, he suffers a physical injury that left an indelible effect not only on him but on his people to this day.²

Benjamin Goodnick, Ph.D., is a diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology in private practice in the Greater Philadelphia area. He is a consultant to government agencies and private religious schools. His articles have appeared in Jewish and professional journals.

JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY
In this brief period of time, there are other intimations that a nation is evolving. After the parting with Laban, Jacob has a vision of heavenly forces encamped nearby. He thus calls the site "dual camps" [םִּבְנֵי -- m'hanaim]. The use of this word may suggest Jacob's placing his own camp on a par with that of a heavenly host, a designation of elevated status and future destiny.

Within this context of the birth of a people, the rape of Dinah, the overwhelming reaction of her brothers, and the annihilation of the Shechemites, becomes more understandable. Even if not acceptable from a modern viewpoint. The violation is inflicted on an unmarried maiden, not a betrothed or married woman. In such a case, the biblical provision is clear: The culprit must pay a stipulated fine (50 shekels) to the father of the maiden, must marry her, and can never divorce her (Deut. 22:28-29). When the victim was betrothed or married, the penalty was death, depending on various conditions. Note that if the girl had been seduced (implying willingness on her part), the seducer must offer her father the dowry offered for a maiden and may marry her if the father so chooses (Ex. 22:15-16).

Contrast the approach to this act by the kinsmen of the would-be bridegroom and those of the violated maiden. Hamor, ruler of Shechem and father of the offender, approaches Jacob in a positive tone and offers any bride-price or dowry demanded for the woman his son loves and seeks to marry (Gen. 34:12). Furthermore, he invites these sojourners -- Jacob and his family -- to intermarry with the Shechemites and share in their territory and wealth (34:9-10). Apparently, Hamor (and his son) feel that ravishing a maiden is a deed that can be appropriately rectified. Indeed, the biblical regulations may have been the norms practiced by various peoples in this region.

The children of Israel, however, react with dismay, shock and anger, calling such a deed intolerable and an outrage in Israel; her brothers assert that their sister has been treated as a prostitute. Jacob's responses to the murderous action of his sons nowhere condemn them for their slaughter of the people of Shechem. Rather, he points out with profound concern that the brutality left their own people exposed to vengeful attack from other neighboring tribes and cities. How do we account for this wide gap in perceptions of the same act? Apparently, the Israelites, like other groups, viewed acts and the laws that apply
to them differently when committed by members of the group or by outsiders. In this light, the act of defilement was not perceived as committed against an individual (Dinah) but against the whole people of Israel (34:7).

Observe the sharp contrast with the mild treatment extended to Reuben after he bedded his father's concubine; a most serious offense, considered so serious in biblical law that it could possibly lead to loss of life. For this misdeed, to which there are three biblical references (Gen. 49:3ff.; Deut. 33:6; I Chr. 5:1), his punishment was a loss of his birthright and diminished regard among his brothers and brother-tribes (e.g., Jud. 5:15ff.).

However, the episode of the rape focuses on much more significant, even vital, issues. It represents the first and immediate challenge to the newly acquired and established integrity of the Israelites as a people. The brothers sense the underlying danger that what Shechem offered might actually come about; that intermarriage and acceptance of another peoples' way of life could bring about the gradual disappearance of the people of Israel. This was the crisis that confronted the children of Israel and apparently forced them to undertake drastic action.

In the aftermath of this show of power, the Israelites strengthen their security (Gen. 35:5). Moreover, the next scene in the Bible reaffirms the name Israel and its implied attribution to the people as a whole, and their claim to the promised land (vv. 10-12). The culminating scene of this long drama shows that "Edom" (Esau) became the eponym of the people (including his descendants) living in the land of Se'ir, just as "Israel" became the eponym for the descendants of Jacob (36:1-43). Esau's history is thus summarized, while the story of Israel's heirs goes on toward their attainment of their assigned land far in the future.

NOTES
2. This event made such an impact that the people of Israel still refrain from eating the sciatic muscle of an animal, corresponding to the sciatic muscle on which Jacob was smitten (Gen. 33:33). This appears to be the only instance in which an injury or a mishap to a person resulted in a prohibition accepted and observed by the whole people.
3. The absence of any response on Jacob's part at the meeting with Hamor may be due to the father's awaiting the arrival of his sons who then gathered in tribal counsel to decide on appropriate action.

JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY
THE FERTILITY OF THE EARLY ISRAELITES

JEFFREY M. COHEN

The Book of Exodus opens with a statement of the remarkable growth rate of the Israelites in Egypt: *And the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them* (1:7). It has challenged the wits of commentators, ancient and modern, to provide an adequate explanation of this fecundity, dramatic enough in its proportions as to make the new Pharaoh conclude that *the people of the children of Israel are too numerous and too mighty for us* (v. 9).

Nahum M. Sarna seemingly evades the problem. His only observation on this verse is that

...this description of the extraordinary fertility of the Israelite population carries strong verbal echoes of the divine blessings of fertility bestowed upon humankind at Creation and after the Flood. It suggests a conception of the community of Israel in Egypt as a microcosm, a miniature universe, self-contained and apart from the larger Egyptian society -- the nucleus, spiritually speaking, of a new humanity.

He makes no attempt, however, to deal with the practical issue raised by the verse, namely how to account for the birthrate. He similarly evades the issue in his comment on verse 9, though he utilizes the opportunity there to deal with the Hyksos invasion of Egypt, as if suggesting that this was implied in the rapid population increase. The verse does not say, however, that the Israelite presence was "swelled" by the arrival of any newcomers. It affirms unequivocally that the Israelites were themselves fruitful and prolific.

Samuel David Luzzatto quotes, and disposes rather disdainfully of, the views of the distinguished German theologian Johann David Michaelis, who appears to have been one of the earliest "modern" (19th century) scholars to have addressed the problem. In the context of his treatment of the *about six hundred thousand men on foot, beside children* (Ex. 12:37), Luzzatto observes that this

Jeffrey M. Cohen is rabbi of the Stanmore Synagogue in London, and a frequent contributor to JBQ. He is the author of several books, the most recent of which is 1001 Questions and Answers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, published in 1997.
suggests at least two million people left Egypt. But it defies the norms of human increase that such a large number could amass in the course of only 400 years. Now, Michaelis has attempted to rationalize this in several ways. First, that the men married when they were about 13 to 15 years of age. But this is not reasonable, for marrying so young has the effect of weakening the body and reducing its procreative power.

Secondly, he asserts that Israelite men married more than one wife. This is also not reasonable, for the number of males and females is fairly even, and if one man married two or more women, that would leave other men without wives.

He further explains that Israelite men had a longer life-span, living to a 100 years and more. This is also not reasonable, since the psalmist says that the days of our years are three score years and ten (Ps. 4:10).

Now, the sages have suggested that mothers bore six babies at one time, a tradition corroborated by ancient writers, such as Aristotle, Pliny and Seneca, who note that Nile waters increase fertility and Egyptian women generally bore twins. It could also be that circumcision had an effect on the birthrate, as Philo suggested.

It was, in fact, the blessing of God and His providence that preserved the Hebrews from falling victim to illnesses that killed other babies, in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:13) that at the end of 400 years his descendants would become a nation which could exist and prosper in the land of its inheritance.²

However, in considering Israelite fertility it is vital not to overlook that the increase already reached phenomenal proportions in the very earliest period of their sojourn in Egypt (Ex. 1:7). It behooves us, therefore, to see if we can explain that phenomenon in terms of our present knowledge of demography. We know from studies of ethnic minorities under repressive regimes and from the high birthrate of free refugee minorities, particularly in the first few generations, before they become acculturated, that such groups compensate for physical and economic powerlessness by building up their internal human resources, seeking refuge and solace in the security of offspring and family. Numerical strength gives the illusion of power, even if it is merely creating cannon fodder.
Now, to put into perspective the assertion that such a dramatic increase of the 70 souls of Jacob's family is impossible in the generations up to the reign of the king who did not know Joseph (1:8), and that we should consequently regard this biblical description as mere hyperbole, we might consider some pertinent statistics about the growth rate of the Jewish people during the 19th century.

At the dawn of that century, the Jewish population of Europe numbered some two million. By the beginning of the 1880s this had grown, by natural increase, to nearly seven million, with a Jewish rate of increase that was twice as high as that of the gentile population. H.H. Ben-Sasson lists several factors to account for this "demographic miracle." Notable among them is the improved hygienic conditions during this period, including improved methods of garbage and sewage disposal and provision of clean water, which banished many of the causes of disease, epidemic, death and infant mortality.

The gentile population also enjoyed such benefits, and there was no significant difference between the Jewish and gentile birthrates. The extraordinary Jewish increase derived from a much higher-than-average life span, with a very low infant and adult mortality rate. Ben-Sasson attributes this to "the specific character of Jewish society, with its religious and cultural traditions." He defines these to include, primarily, the unique Jewish devotion to and care of their sick, and

the greater stability of the family . . . the infrequency of venereal diseases, the higher status of the woman within the family, the care lavished on babies and small children, abstinence from alcohol, the readiness of the individual and the community to undergo considerable economic sacrifice in order to help others, and the lengthy tradition of charitable deeds.3

In the light of such considerations, and given the prosperous conditions under which the families of Jacob lived in the early period of their sojourn in Egypt, we suggest that it is not inconceivable that their demographic increase might well have been in accordance with the dramatic proportions described in Exodus 1.

We have now outlined two diametrically opposite scenarios which could account for such growth: Either repression, creating a situation of ethnic withdrawal from the host society, or, on the other side of the scale, freedom and
prosperity, bringing with it a dramatic improvement in standard of living, with a consequently healthy diet, relaxation, sanitary conditions and care.

We suggest that a combination of both of these conditions, at different periods during the sojourn in Egypt, might have been responsible for the Israelite population explosion. In the time of Joseph and its aftermath, it was the good life in Goshen where they enjoyed the best the land had to offer (Gen. 47:6,11). They were "sustained" by Joseph, at a time when there was no bread throughout the rest of the land (vv. 12-13). Thus, the Israelites thrived physically and the women were healthy and strong, to the extent that the midwives could offer a plausible excuse to Pharaoh as to why they were not destroying the Hebrew male children at birth: 'The Hebrew women are not like the [sickly] Egyptian women, for they are lively [בר נוחה]' -- that is, blooming with health and vitality.

By contrast, the Egyptian population was undernourished and weak, with the famine taking a high toll on mortality: 'Why should we perish before your eyes, both us and our land?' (v. 19”). These condition would impair fertility of undernourished Egyptian women, or lead to miscarriage or difficult birth.

In the later period, when the new Pharaoh introduced extensive measures to enslave the Hebrews and make their conditions of life and work intolerable, this very opposite situation could very likely have had the identical effect of sustaining an increase in the Israelite birth rate, to the extent that the rabbis -- perhaps with a touch of exaggeration -- speak of "sextuplets arriving at each birth."

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand Pharaoh's fear of the Israelites and his assertion that they were more numerous and strong than the indigenous population. The latter was being reduced by starvation and disease, while the proportion of Israelites in the over-all population was increasing dramatically.

NOTES
4. Midrash Shemot Rabba 1:7. Other traditions (ad loc.) speak hyperbolically of 12 or even 60 being born at a time, clearly reflecting the attempt of different sages to express the uniqueness of the demographic development at that period.

JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY
DARSHANUT

Darshanut, derived from the Hebrew darash [explicate, expound], presents the expository, homiletic interpretation of the Bible. Its origins are as old as the most ancient aggadic and midrashic teachings and as new as the sermon or D'var Torah delivered on the most recent Shabbat. The intent is a challenge to relate the Bible to the problems, issues and goals of daily living.

We encourage our readers to contribute to Darshanut. The submission should be based on the Bible, no more than 750 words in length, and as relevant and current as you would like to make it. For more information on submissions, see the inside back cover.

JONAH: A TRANSITIONAL PROPHET

YOSSI FEINTUCH

Despite broad disagreement about the historicity of the Book of Jonah, the prophet of Nineveh might reasonably be associated with Jonah son of Amittai from Gath-Hefer, who prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (II Kg. 14:25). That would mean that the prophet lived during the first half of the eighth century BCE.

Jonah, in fleeing to Tarshish, stands with one foot in the theological world of earlier prophets who recognized no possibility of Divine absolution of sin following repentance. When, for instance, the prophet Samuel informs King Saul of the imminent demise of his kingship, he makes it abundantly clear that Israel's Glory does not lie or have a change of mind; God is not [like] human beings who change their minds (I Sam. 15:29). Indeed, as Samuel understands it, Saul's sincere remorse and repentance for failing to carry out the word of God exactly in the war against Amalek, would not change God's resolve to punish him.

Yossi Feintuch, author of U.S. Policy on Jerusalem, has a Ph.D. from Emory University in American History and was ordained at Hebrew Union College. He is currently rabbi of Congregation Beth Shalom, Columbia, Missouri and an adjunct lecturer at the University of Missouri—Religious Studies Department.
Jonah, who subscribes to this out-going Hebrew theology, refuses to go to Nineveh because of his similar belief that one's sin can be expiated only by punishment. Indeed, Jonah is greatly displeased and grieved when Nineveh is not overthrown; its residents' elaborate and sincere repentance does not affect him at all. He evidently ascribes no import or significance to the sinners' remorse and return to God.

But Jonah's other foot stands right at the threshold of a new prophetic epoch that begins with the Writing Prophets. The new theme, as expressed by Hosea in the middle of the eighth century BCE, announced that a prophet may help the people to keep out of harm's way by warning them of sin (Hos. 12:14). This new direction of Israel's prophecy explains Jonah's flight to Tarshish.

It has been widely suggested that Jonah first shunned his mission to Nineveh because he did not wish to facilitate "salvation" for the "Assyrians," who were destined soon to destroy Israel in 722 BCE. He, therefore, wished that Nineveh should go down to its doom before it was able to devastate the Israelite kingdom. Truth is, the Book of Jonah provides no historical backdrop which may associate the account with any particular time or locale; it is apparent that neither the "national" nor the geographical identity of Nineveh has any relevant meaning in the narrative.

Further, it is equally clear that Jonah does not reveal his "national" feelings towards Nineveh. As far as he is concerned, this city does not represent anything besides its single characterization as a morally sinful city. Nowhere do we find a reference to any other sins, such as the oppression of foreign people.

Moreover, Jonah does not represent the people of Israel in the narrative, nor does Nineveh represent Assyria either before or after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. Indeed, if Nineveh were to represent the Assyrians, Israel's bitterest enemies in pre-exilic times, it stands to reason that the narrative would not have thrice characterized Nineveh as "the great city." By contrast, another prophet, Nahum, who did deal in his prophecy with the historic Nineveh, gave it the epithet "city of blood." In light of these factors, Jonah's attempt to escape from before the Eternal cannot be attributed to his feelings or premonitions about historic Nineveh – the Assyrian capital.

How, then, would we explain the public reading of Jonah on Yom Kippur? The theological significance of the story is in the ethical transition that Nineveh
undergoes. Indeed, even the king of the city is aware of the possibility that God may turn back and relent, so that we do not perish. Moreover, Jonah himself is transformed, albeit willy-nilly. From a prophet who would only prophesy Divine retribution for sin, Jonah's prophecy brings about the possibility of Divine absolution and pardon for those who repent and return.

Hosea 11:9, in contrast to Samuel whom we quoted before, states:

I have had a change of heart . . .
I will not act on My wrath . . .
For I am God and not man.

Similarly, we see Isaiah (active during the second half of the eighth century BCE), prophesying doom to the seriously ill King Hezekiah. But after the King had desperately prayed and repented, God reversed Isaiah's prophecy of King Hezekiah's imminent demise (II Kgs. 20:1-6; Isa. 38:1-8).

Still, it is Jonah who is the harbinger of this new era which represents a radical change in Israel's old theology. Jonah's action in Nineveh reveals that God does not seek to punish a repentant sinner and that genuine repentance might avert Divine retribution. It is Jonah who heralds these themes of the new Yom Kippur.

---------

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Blondheim ("Obstetrical and Lexicographical Complications: The Birth of Benjamin and Death of Rachel" JBM 1999:27:15-19) asserts that Buber-Rosenzweig translates Genesis 35:17 in the future tense. In my opinion, this is not so.

In the phrase in question, auch dieser wird dir ein Sohn, the word wird does not indicate a future tense, but rather means "to become" or "to be in progress." If a future tense were intended, the rendition should read wird dir ein Sohn werden.

Max Selinger
Ocala, FL

Vol. 27, No. 3, 1999
36TH INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR YOUTH

JOSHUA J. ADLER

This year, 63 young people came to Israel as contestants in the annual International Bible Contest for Youth. This is an all-time high, up from 55 overseas participants in 1998. They came from 32 countries, including, for the first time, Uzbekistan, Belarus, and Norway. One of the participants arrived from war-torn Belgrade.

After arriving, they participated first in a contest for Diaspora youth, held this year in Migdal, near Tiberias. First place went to Liora Silk from Belgium. Second place in the Diaspora Contest went to Yochai Shulman from Teaneck, NJ.

On Independence Day in Jerusalem, the twelve highest-scoring Diaspora contestants competed with the four highest-scoring contestants of the Israeli Contest. First prize of the International Contest went to Orit Turin from Bnei Brak. This is remarkable since she is legally blind and had to prepare for the contest by having someone read the Tanakh to her.

The hidon on Independence Day was broadcast live on Israel radio and television. Conspicuous by his absence due to illness was Dr. Yosef Burg, who for years headed the panel of judges. In addition to touring the country, as part of their once-in-a-lifetime experience, the contestants had private meetings with the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Knesset and the Chief Rabbis.

Diaspora communities that would like information on how their youth can participate in the Bible Contests are urged to make contact with local Jewish Agency representatives, or write to: Mr. Yitzchak Ben Ari, Jewish Agency Department of Education, P.O.B. 92, Jerusalem 91000 (FAX: +972-2-6759230).
WE ENCOURAGE OUR READERS TO SUBMIT ARTICLES ON BIBLICAL THEMES

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

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

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

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

υ and Ν assume the sound of the accompanying vowel = e.g., Amen, Alenu, Olam, Eretz.
 Υ = H e.g., Hodesh.
 ԣ and Ԝ = K e.g., Ketuvim, Kadosh.
 ԣ = Kh e.g., Melekh.
 Ԡ = Tz e.g., Tzaddik
 .. = E e.g., Ben.

Standard transliteration of biblical names remains unchanged.

FOOTNOTES:
For a book: Author's name, Title of Book, (place, date of publication), p.
For an article: Author's name, "Title of Article," Title of Book or Periodical, vol. (date), p.
In second and subsequent references, give only name of author and page number. If there are two or more books by the same author, add a key word from title.