MS-831: Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980–2008.
Series C: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE). 1988–2003.
Subseries 6: General Files, 1990–2000.

Box   Folder
50   15

Leadership and Vision for Jewish Education: An Institute for Leaders in Jewish Education, March 1996.

TUESDAY

MARCH 19, 1996

What Do Our Practices Tell Us About Our Vision?

Tuesday, March 19, 9:00 - 10:30 AM

Daniel Marom and Gail Dorph

Overview:

Using concrete examples, participants will examine the following question: What does the daily life of educating institutions reveal about their Jewish vision? Fund raising practices, curriculum choices, degree and nature of parental involvement communicate messages about what is Jewishly important to an educating institution. These messages are often in conflict with one another or with the school's explicit vision. This session offers an opportunity to explore vision in the light of practice.

5 A TOWER TO THE SKY

Genesis 11:1-9—Text, pp. 41-47

Important Concepts

> Heaven is beyond human reach
> Idolatry has disastrous results
> Language can bind us together, but sometimes blinds us to others

Background Information

Once more we are faced with a story best understood through a Hebrew play on words. In Babylonian parlance, the word *Babel* means "gateway to God." In Hebrew, it is closely associated with the root meaning "confusion."

The subject of the story was the actual temple-tower of Babylon. Evidence suggests that this tower was destroyed by the Hittites in 1531 B.C.E. In lines 60-62 of the Akkadian *Enuma Elish* epic we have an account which closely parallels the story: "The first year they molded its bricks. And when the second year arrived they raised the head of Esagila [the temple-tower] toward Apsu [the sweet waters above heaven]." It appears that there was a sacred custom involved in spending an entire year preparing the bricks, and the biblical account picks up on this practice.

A secondary aspect of the story arises from the Mediterranean tradition of viewing particular mountains as the "homes" of gods (Mount Sinai, Mount Horeb, the Temple Mount, Mount Olympus, and so on). In Babylonia the land was flat. And the Babylonians, perhaps in an attempt to compensate for this shortcoming of their landscape, built artificial mountains called "ziggurats." A ziggurat was a stepped, pyramidal-shaped structure, rising many stories above city buildings. Its prominent features included a stairway leading up one side from bottom to top, and a temple structure on the topmost platform or step. This was the classic "stairway to heaven."

In one sense, at least, this story parallels the account of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In that case, too, God was concerned with limiting the powers of human beings. In the garden, "God said, 'Now Adam knows good and evil. He might also eat from the tree of life, and live forever! And, if he did evil afterward, he could do evil forever!'" Here, God hears the people say "Together, we are very great. Together, we can do what only God could do before." In both cases, God closes a "gate." In the first instance, the gate of the Garden is sealed forever. In the second instance, God seals the "gateway to heaven."

Introducing the Lesson

Choose which of the major themes you plan to develop with the class during your lesson. You may wish to focus on (1) the inequities of "looking down" on other people, (2) how human beings sometimes try to replace God with idols or with worship of other human beings, (3) or the idea that things are never as important as people. Of course, you can combine these ideas into one lesson if you have the time.

(1) Read or tell the story. Ask students to find places in the story that show how some people felt bigger and better than others. Have they ever felt "left out" or "less important" than their friends? What made them feel that way? What did their friends say to them or how did their friends show them that they were considered less important? How could they show their friends that everyone is important? Proceed to the section called *What Does It Teach?* and then to *A Lesson about the Torah*.

(2) Bring a doll to class. Talk for a few minutes about idolatry. If we wanted to worship the doll, how would we make it into an idol? (Have a ritual to make it holy, bring it presents (sacrifices), set it up on a high place (the ziggurat), etc.) Read the story with the class. Proceed to *What Does It Mean?* and then to *A Lesson about the Torah*.

(3) Read or tell the story. Then read the section called *A Lesson about the Torah*. Talk about making bricks. Why did the builders think that bricks were more important than people? (It took many years to bring the bricks up.) Why did God decide to destroy the tower? Why did God decide to make the people speak many languages? How does being different from other people help us to remember that things are not as important as people?

Teaching Opportunities from the Text

In those days everyone on earth spoke the same language. The meaning here should be understood in context. As we have mentioned before, all the early stories use a single individual to represent an entire class of people. Here, the Bible uses the same literary device to point to "all people" as Babylonians.

"People will then remember us and praise our name." Meaning, people would praise the name of the Babylonians over the name of God.

"Together, we are very great. Together, we can do what only God could do before." This is the sentence which most fully explains the central conflict in the story. In essence, the Babylonians wanted to replace God entirely so that people would worship them instead. To this end, they wanted to "reach heaven." The Tower of Babel can stand for any human attempt—whether by words, fashion, money, or bricks—to displace God through idolatry. In biblical thought there is a sharp distinction between God and God's creation.

"When they talk, let them babble ..." The play on the word babble works almost as well in English as it did in the original, since our language includes the necessary biblical referents. You will want to point out this verse and the next in discussing the pun.

And, from that time to this, people call that place Babel. Actually the place was already called Babylon, but this final touch closes the story in a loop and makes it seem to the average reader that the story is included mainly for its etiological purpose (to teach how the name arose). As we have seen, this is a "cover story" for a far deeper purpose.

A CHILD'S BIBLE

Turn it, turn [the Torah] again and again, for everything is in it. Contemplate it, grow gray and old over it, for there is no greater good. —Avot 5:25

What you have in your hands—the textbook, *A CHILD'S BIBLE*, and this Teacher's Guide—are new materials for the teaching of the Holy Scriptures to young people. In one sense, they are an extension of our chain of tradition. Teaching and interpreting the Bible is canonized in the Bible itself—in Moses' reiteration of the Torah in Deuteronomy, in Joshua's paraphrase of the Torah history, in David's act of copying an entire Torah scroll by hand, in the renewal of public Torah study in the time of Josiah, in Ezra's insistence that every Israelite hear and understand the Bible text through public readings.

Each chapter of *A CHILD'S BIBLE* includes sections called *What Does It Mean?*, *What Does It Teach?*, and *A Lesson about the Torah* which correspond to a traditional teaching mode introduced by our sages. Over the centuries, teachers of Torah have utilized a four-Step model of instruction: Peshat, Derash, Remez, and Sod. In preparing *A CHILD'S BIBLE*, we have also adopted this model.

The Four Steps

Peshat or "exegesis"

The first step is comprehending the simple meaning of the words. In *A CHILD'S BIBLE* this is accomplished through a new translation. The translation is simplified for young people and refined by modern Jewish scholarship. The section called *What Does It Mean?* explores the peshat of a single verse in detail. And the Teacher's Guide includes Teaching Opportunities from the Text, making it possible for the teacher to explain many other verses in similar fashion.

Derash or "interpretation"

The second step is exploring the moral messages which bring the stories closer to our personal lives. The section called *What Does It Teach?* provides these everyday examples. The first two steps, peshat and derash form the basis for the commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, c. 1040-1105), who is called the Parshandanta, the "Commentator Without Peer." His influence is present throughout the text and Teacher's Guide.

Remez or "allegory"

The third step is applying the moral messages in new contexts. This is done in *A Lesson about the Torah*. Lessons are drawn from a wide range of traditional sources (cited in the text): from midrash to Ashkenazic and Sephardic commentaries. The Teacher's Guide provides applications for these traditional allegories.

INTRODUCTION

How to Use This Guide

The Structure of the Textbook

The book is divided into loosely-defined units. The first unit includes the stories from Creation to the Tower of Babel—the "pre-Hebrew" history. The second unit is the patriarchal history—from Abraham through Jacob. The third unit is the cycle of Joseph stories. And the fourth unit is the story of Moses. The book closes as God redeems the Israelites from slavery. It presages the long trek toward freedom and the Promised Land. You can use the four units in planning your course, or ignore them entirely. The structure is so natural that divisions and demarcations will basically take care of themselves.

Important Concepts

The section in each chapter entitled *Important Concepts* contains ideas that can be covered through discussion of the story in the text and the special topics associated with it. You will probably not wish to teach all the concepts each time (many ideas may be found in slightly variant forms in other chapters). Concentrate on one or two main ideas in order to provide a more effective lesson.

Background Information

The section in each chapter entitled *Background Information* contains some information you will want to share with the students directly, and some helpful information on meaning and interpretation, central themes and the biblical world.

Introducing the Lesson

The section in each chapter entitled *Introducing the Lesson* provides suggestions for introducing the subject matter to the students. In general, this section utilizes methods of set induction. These are only suggestions, and you may develop lesson plans along very different lines based on the same material. The guide assumes that you plan your lessons in ten-minute to twelve-minute segments. A segment of discussion can be followed by a segment of arts and crafts; a segment of reading can be followed by an activity from the text; a segment of classroom dramatics can be followed by a small-group activity. This constant alternation is recommended throughout the Teacher's Guide. It makes for a lively classroom atmosphere and typically heightens student interest and response.

Teaching Opportunities from the Text

The section in each chapter entitled *Teaching Opportunities from the Text* contains comments and clarifications on individual lines of the text.

Developing the Lesson

The section in each chapter entitled *Developing the Lesson* contains ways of utilizing the special topics in the textbook. These follow a set pattern. In some cases you will want to concentrate on only one of these special topics. At other times you may wish to utilize all three. Feel free to decide how much is appropriate for your class and your lesson.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? deals with a concept selected from the narrative, illuminating a major teaching idea from the chapter.

WHAT DOES IT TEACH? deals broadly with moral concepts derived from the narrative. It applies these concepts to the everyday world of the students.

A LESSON ABOUT THE TORAH contains selections from midrash, commentaries, and other extra-biblical literature bearing upon the story or its major concepts.

Teaching the Illustrations

The textbook is profusely illustrated in full-color. Nearly every chapter includes one or more photographs which are particularly worthy of note, and which can be used to further student understanding of the materials and concepts in the lesson. The Teacher's Guide makes suggestions for using some of these.

Exercises

The textbook chapters include exercises and activities designed to enhance comprehension, extend thinking, and promote discussion. Some of these take only a few minutes to complete. Others require more in-depth consideration. You should use these activities often in class, asking students to complete them (either as independent seat work or together in small groups). The Teacher's Guide promotes the use of homework throughout. The guide suggests activities that are likely to come back completed. Puzzles and rebuses, mazes and letter scrambles are all excellent candidates for homework since they are generally self-motivating, require little supervision, and do not take long to complete. Assigning and checking them in a regular rhythm will develop a homework habit. As the year progresses, students will find "homework" as much fun as in-class work. We then introduce optional, "extra credit" homework. The key to homework assignments is consistency—be sure to follow through each week by checking and reviewing the work.

The Teacher's Guide lists the exercises in each chapter, commenting on those that may be used in special ways and supplying answers for your convenience. An asterisk (*) following an exercise means that it is a good candidate for a homework assignment.

Arts & Crafts Idea

Arts & crafts are an important part of teaching on any grade level, but especially for young children. Each chapter contains at least one suggestion for an arts & crafts activity. A handy reference book is *Integrating Arts and Crafts in the Jewish School, A Step-by-Step Guide* by Carol Tauben and Edith Abrahams (Behrman, 1979).

Closure

Each chapter includes a section called *Closure* which will solidify what has been learned in the chapter and help to apply the learning to the everyday life of the child. In addition, it previews the next chapter, setting up a continuity for the entire course.

Sod or "Hidden"

The mystics added the concept of a hidden dimension which exists within each verse and story. The Teacher's Guide provides traditional examples. Yet, we thought of this in a new way. Through a striking use of color, dynamic illustration, and color photography, the book allows students to visualize the biblical world—its places, its tools, its costumes, and its customs. To traditional verbal teaching, we added art, architecture, and archaeology. The Teacher's Guide includes a section called *Teaching the Illustrations* to help you share this dimension with your students.

The Weekly Sidrah

The only traditional mode of Bible study which you will not find in A Child's Bible is the weekly sidrah or Scripture reading. While it might seem desirable to teach the Torah *sidrah* by *sidrah*, disparities between the calendar and the school year make this impractical. Also, many *sidrot* are best taught to adults, not to children.

Nevertheless, you should not ignore the concept of the *sidrah*. You should introduce this idea, explain how the Torah is read in the synagogue, and discuss the central importance Torah study plays in Jewish worship.

> *As a little wood can set fire to a great tree,*
> *so young students sharpen the wits of great scholars.*
>   *Therefore Rabbi Hanina said, "Much Torah have I*
> *learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but*
> *from my students most of all."* —Taanit 7a

Developing the Lesson

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? The text draws a startling analogy between "making war with God" and "looking down" on other people. You will have to help the students make this connection. Since God cares about each of us, when we stop caring about one another, we are no longer "walking with God." Then we are "making war with God." After reading the story, do the children feel that we can ever "win" a war with God? Why not?

WHAT DOES IT TEACH? The illustrations in the text include a picture of a ziggurat. Ask the students to turn to the picture (page 42). Talk about the steps leading up the side of the ziggurat and the temple at the top. Why did the builders choose to make this "mountain?" (They wanted to reach heaven. They lived in a plain and thought they would build something they could "look up to.")

Why did they think other people would want to be just like them? In what way were they setting themselves up in God's place? Why did God disapprove of their plan? What does God really want us to believe about other human beings?

A LESSON ABOUT THE TORAH What made the bricks so important? (See above.) What does this lesson from the midrash teach about how we should treat others? Why did the builders ignore this lesson?

Teaching the Illustrations

The illustration on page 42 shows a "ziggurat" like those common in Mesopotamia. The photograph on page 43 shows a "ziggurat" like those common to cities today (in this case, the Empire State Building). You will want to introduce your remarks on these structures by reading the special topic "A Tower to the Sky" on page 44. Then talk about skyscrapers and modern-day versions of ziggurats. But, be sure to point out the basic difference. We do not build our skyscrapers and monuments as places of worship.

Exercises

Assign exercises at appropriate moments during the lesson, as a way of keeping lessons from becoming too verbal. Note: An asterisk (*) following an exercise indicates that it is a good candidate for a homework assignment. Answers are given in brackets, in italics.

MAZE*

YOU BE THE TEACHER After teaching the main portion of the lesson, ask students to work individually or in small groups to complete this activity. Then share some of the student responses with the whole class. Try to leave enough time to share one or two responses for each of the lessons.

DO YOU KNOW WHY?

WORD SCRAMBLE [*Bricks; babble; tower; build; city; mighty.*]

PICTURE MESSAGE* [*The people decided to build a city so tall it would reach the clouds. They forgot what was really important.*]

Arts & Crafts Idea

Cover shoe boxes with construction paper to look like bricks. Using toy soldiers, ask students to retell the story of the Tower of Babel as they "build" a ziggurat by carrying

one shoe box after another to the top. Ask them to talk about how their toy soldier "feels"—about the people below, about building the tower, about carrying the bricks, etc. And, remember, half the fun is allowing the class to knock the tower over from time to time.

Closure

Ask students to restate, in their own words, the meaning of the Tower of Babel story. If they want to show their love for God, how would they go about it? (Refer back to the sentences in the text about watching a sunset or looking at flowers.) How do these things remind us of what is really important in the world?

Give students a preview of next week's lesson by telling them that we will be talking about other people who walked with God—a man called Abram and a woman named Sarai. From now on, we will be reading the Bible stories that are about Jewish history, not just about world history.

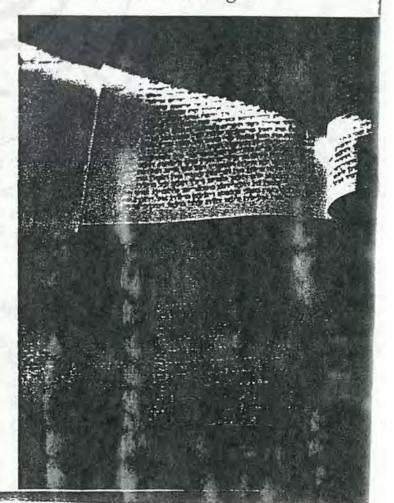Close the lesson by restating the themes you have chosen to teach.

INTROD

Time begins and ends—that is a Jewish idea. Before the beginning, there was God alone. At the end of days, God will remain. Our world is in-between.

We can never know what it was like before time began. And we can hardly imagine what it may be like when time comes to an end.

Some of our teachers say that our world is like a hallway. At the end of the hall a door opens to a wonderful dining room. Around the dinner table are all those who came before—Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Deborah—all your ancestors. Your job in the hallway, the teachers say, is to study and to do good deeds. Then you, too, will be ready to sit at the table. You, too, will be able to join in the great discussions of the wise.

But what shall we study? And how shall we know what deeds are good to do? Both questions have one answer: the *Torah*.

Our teachers saw people building, and saw how the builders first made a plan. As the builders worked, they checked their plan to be sure that the building would be a good one. Our teachers said, God worked in the same way. Before God began creating the world, God made a plan for the way the world should be. As God was creating, God checked to see if the world was "good." What was the plan that God used to build the world? It was the *Torah*.

The word *Torah* means "teachings." We sometimes use *Torah* to mean the first five books of the Bible: Genesis בְּרֵאשִׁית, Exodus שְׁמוֹת, Leviticus וַיִּקְרָא, Numbers בַּמִּדְבָּר, and Deuteronomy דְּבָרִים. We also call these "The Five Books of Moses" חוּמָשׁ: *Chumash*). But sometimes we use *Torah* to mean the whole Bible and everything that we Jews have learned about the world.
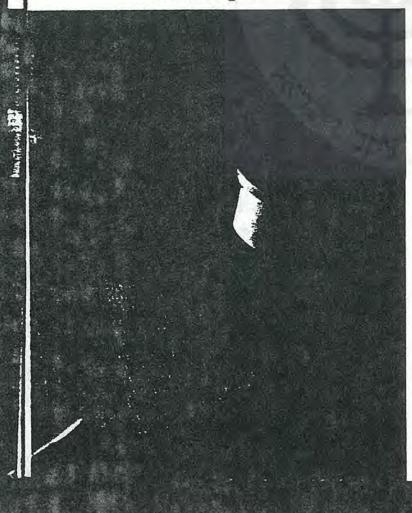
UCTION

Our teachers called the *Torah, Etz Hayyim,* "a tree of life." No doubt, they meant both the Five Books of Moses and all Jewish teaching.

God's commandments are a part of *Torah.* These instructions tell us how to live so that we will be good. Other parts of *Torah* are stories. The stories, too, are "teachings."

The stories tell us how people live, what people do, and how people behave. The people in the stories are always a lot like us. So the stories help us learn how we should live, what we should do, and how we should behave.
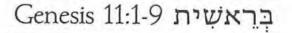
All the stories of the *Torah* are true. Yet this does not mean that the stories happened just as the *Torah* tells. When we talk about the *Torah,* we mean the stories are true in a different way.

The stories in our *Torah* are true because they teach us how to tell the difference between bad and good. So it does not matter if the world began in seven days or if it really took millions of years. The *Torah* story about how God created the world is still true. It is true because it teaches us that we are made "in the image of God." And it is true because it teaches us that resting on the Sabbath is good.

As you read the stories you should ask, "What truth is this story teaching me?" "What does this story say that I should do?" "How does this story say that I should behave?"

This book is made up of stories from the Bible. It is about the laws and the stories of the Jewish people, our *Torah.* Together, we will look at the teachings to see what they mean to us today. Along the way you may learn another thing, too. You may learn why our teachers call the *Torah* "a tree of life."

Genesis 11:1-9 בְּרֵאשִׁית

Chapter 5

A TOWER
TO THE SKY

In those days everyone on earth spoke the same language. They called things by the same names. And all together, they wandered as one tribe, living and speaking as one people.

Once they came to a green and rolling valley in the land called Shinar. It was there they decided to stay.

They said, "Come, let us take clay from the ground and use it to make bricks. We will bake the bricks to make them hard."

So they made bricks into stones for building, using tar to hold the stones together.

They decided to build a mighty city and a tower of brick. "We will make the tower so tall it will touch the clouds in the sky," they said. "People will then remember us and praise our name. People will want to live in our city forever."

For many years they built. As time passed, more and more people came to join them. It seemed that all the people of the earth were gathering together in one place. The people thought, "Together, we are very great. Together, we can do what only God could do before."

God saw the bricks becoming a city and a tower. God watched as the hearts of the people became as hard as bricks. The people of the earth stopped loving one another. They forgot how to love God. No more did

they stop to look at the flowers growing on the hillsides. No more did they pause to watch the splendor of a sunset. They cared only about building the tower and the city.

The tower was raised brick by brick. As it grew higher, the workers looked down on the people in the city below. The people below looked as tiny as ants. It made the builders feel mighty and strong. "We can build our tower into heaven itself," they said. "We can make war with God."

So God decided to teach them a lesson. God said, "When they talk, let them babble like the noise of water rushing over bricks. They will not understand each other. Then their building, and their evil, will come to an end."

God made their language into many languages. People wondered why no one could understand them. The making of bricks stopped. People argued and did not know what their arguing was all about. The building stopped.

People gathered together into small tribes that spoke one language. They said, "Let us leave this place and make a home together somewhere beyond these hills."
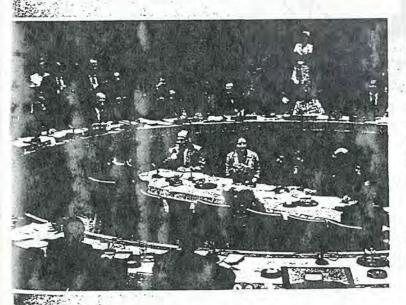
The city was never finished, and the tower never reached the clouds. People set out for places all around the earth.
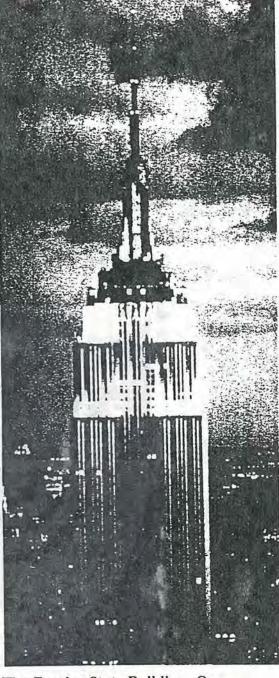
So, from that time to this, people call that place Babel, because in Babel God babbled the language of the whole earth.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

"We can make war with God."

The builders on the tower looked down and saw everything below getting smaller and smaller. It made them feel stronger and more important than the people below. They began to think that they were as mighty as God.

You do not have to be on top of a tall tower to look down on other people. You can just say or think that a person is someone to "look down on," someone less important than you.

But, really, God makes each of us special, so every person is important. Every person has something special to offer the world. "Looking down" on people is always a mistake. It's like "making war with God."

The Empire State Building: One of the most famous skyscrapers in the world. Can you imagine how the people of the city below looked to the workers who built this modern-day ziggurat?

43

At the United Nations people speak many languages, but try hard to understand one another so that the nations of the world can live together in peace.

God made each of us special and different. It is up to us to learn how to share one world, making it better for all.

WHAT DOES IT TEACH?

A Tower to the Sky

The tower in the story was a kind of pyramid called a *ziggurat*. Almost always, the reason for building it was to worship a false god at the top. The builders wanted the people below to worship them the way we worship God. They knew no tower could really reach the sky. But the builders wanted their tower to be the highest in the world. Then other people might think the builders were the greatest and mightiest people in the world and want to be just like them.
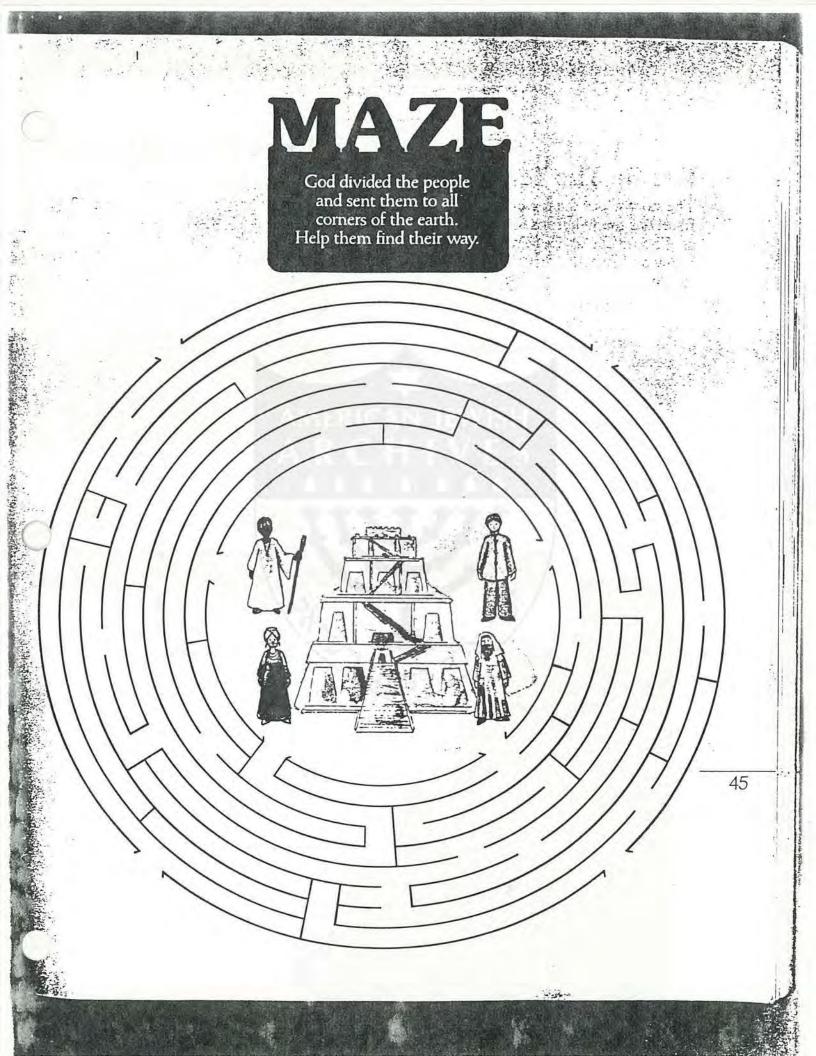
But God does not want us all to be alike. God did not give us one face, one color of skin, or one way of thinking. God wants each of us to be special. So God divided these people and sent them to all corners of the earth.

It is wrong to think that all humans should be one and the same. In truth, God is One and Unique, while we are many and different.

A LESSON ABOUT THE TORAH

What Is Really Important?

Our teachers say: The Tower of Babel had seven steps from the east and seven steps from the west. On one side they brought up huge bricks. On the other side people went down again. As the tower grew taller, it took many years to bring a brick to the top. So it seemed that the bricks were more important than people.

If a person fell off the tower, people did not even stop working. They paid no attention at all. But if one brick fell down, they would sit and weep. They would cry, "Woe to us! When will another brick be brought up to replace the one that fell?"

God wants us to remember what is really important. Bricks can never be more important than life. Things are never as important as people. That is what the builders forgot, and that is what we must always remember.

[Source: Pirke deRebbe Eliezer]

44

MAZE

God divided the people
and sent them to all
corners of the earth.
Help them find their way.

45

You Be The Teacher

The story about the tower of Babel has many lessons to teach us. Choose one of the lessons below and explain what it means to you.

1. "Looking down" on people is always a mistake.
2. God wants each of us to be special.
3. Every person has something special to offer the world.
4. Things are never as important as people.

DO YOU KNOW WHY?

The people decided to build a tall tower because

_____

The people stopped loving one another because

_____

The builders felt mighty and strong because

_____

The people left the place because

_____

The place is called Babel because

_____

WORD SCRAMBLE

Put the letters in each brick in the correct orde
Can you use the words to te
a story about the tower of Babe

SRB KCI _____

BLB EBA _____

WET RO _____

DBI UL _____

YCI T _____

ITM HGY _____

Can you read the message below?

The ple **D** cided

2 Bd A Ci

  tall it   reach

the   T

4 got W was   E

import

Write the message here.   47

_____

_____

_____

_____

FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

It is easy to imagine that many of the Torah's stories were first told around a campfire. The Torah is filled with exciting images that a listener needs to picture in his or her mind. We are taken on a stormy ride on a boat filled with animals, and then shown a peaceful rainbow. We look up a ladder ascending into the heavens and then wrestle a stranger in the dark. We are given a coat of many colors, thrown in pit, and then emerge to hear more dreams. The Torah has an oral impact. It haunts the listener with images, introduces him or her to significant role models, and evolves the first layer of a moral fabric. Like our ancestors, most children first encounter the oral dynamic of Torah, hearing its stories long before they study its texts. They are told or read stories which become the basis for crafts, drama, discussion, and other extensions of imagination.

The Torah, however, is more than a collection of bedtime stories. Its stories are precisely crafted texts that need careful closereading. Much of the Torah's depth comes from the way its stories are told. When we do look closely, we find stories written in specific patterns, with words being reused specific numbers of times, with significant insight being communicated through subtle word changes, and with word-symbols being evolved through a series of usages. We are taught to be "keepers," first of a garden, then of our brother, and finally of a covenant. We are made to feel like "strangers" in Canaan, "strangers" in Egypt, and then are taught to protect and help the "stranger in our midst." Moving through the mythic fabric of the Torah's tales is the concise evolution of a significant vocabulary of Jewish existence. The Jewish people's relationship with Torah is indeed rooted in an oral experience, but its foundation lies in the close reading of its text.

BEING TORAH has been designed to begin the development of this second relationship with Torah. It has been crafted so second to fourth grade students can apply their emerging reading skills to unlock their own discovered meanings in the Torah's texts. To facilitate this relationship, **BEING TORAH** has been constructed around special translations of the masoritic text. These have been designed to be true to the patterns, language, and style of the original, while limiting the vocabulary and syntactic complexity of the English. These translations have been prompted to reveal "theme-words," "word-echoes," and other elements of narrative artistry. In addition, the material has been edited to provide sequences of usable length and to allow for a nonsexist first encounter with this core source.

Accompanying these translations are three tools. After almost every chapter there is a set of Commentaries. Here, voiced as children's responses, is a set of model reactions to the text. These serve as discussion triggers. Next is a section called "A Close Look." This helps **students** to focus on the messages built out of the text's narrative, and to explore key biblical phrases. Finally, at the back of the book, are the answers which go beyond being a self-checking device toward setting the direction for additional discussion and learning. Used together, these tools make **BEING TORAH** the perfect book to introduce a child to Torah.

THE BEING TORAH CURRICULUM

An Introduction

Being Torah is a dynamic new tool. Teachers all over North America have had an exciting new way of introducing their students to the adventure of exploring the biblical text. They've shared wonderful stories with us.

In St. Paul, Minnesota, a teacher passed out copies of **Being Torah** to her class and gave them a few minutes to flip through its pages. She began her introduction, "Over the course of this year, you're going to learn to love this book." She heard some whispering, and stopped her presentation. One student raised his hand and explained, "We already love it."

In Los Angeles, California one third grade student managed to lose four copies of **Being Torah** between the time school began and winter vacation. The school principal was irate and sold him a new book, each time with a stronger warning. The morning after the first night of Hanukkah, the school principal received a phone call from this student's mother. A wonderful story unfolded. The night before, both parents and both siblings had been given copies of **Being Torah** as gifts. The "lost" books had been cleverly purchased—the student's only notion of how to procure the perfect gift.

Outside of Washington, D.C., a substitute teacher was called at the last minute and rushed into class, unsure of the lesson which was to unfold. She didn't have to worry. The students gathered around her desk and showed her the wonderful new text they'd been using. After only a few weeks of study, they showed her how to teach a **Being Torah** lesson.

Being Torah is more than a well written and beautifully designed text book. It is a process. It is an opportunity for transforming the Jewish classroom back to a setting where a learning-community evolves and where each student finds his/her own sense of value and importance. In a review in *Pedogogic Reporter*, Arthur Kurzweil helped us to understand the real impact what we had accomplished.

"**Being Torah**," he wrote, "will surely be called "radical" by some, and it is—in the original sense of the word *radical*, going back to the *root*. For **Being Torah** does not teach *about* Torah, it teaches Torah. It invites the student to jump in, to get involved, to study, to *be* Torah...The most remarkable feature of **Being Torah** is that the hero is not a biblical character, not an ancient sage, not a faceless commentator. Rather, the hero of **Being Torah** is the young person who has been given the opportunity to study Torah and to *be* Torah."

What is Being Torah?

Being Torah is a 3rd to 4th grade Bible text which uses real biblical texts (in careful translation) to teach the stories in the Torah. It is designed to introduce students to the process of close-reading and show them how the Torah conveys its message both in its stories and in the way its stories are told.

So why is it called Being Torah?

The Magid of Mezerich used to teach his students to do more than just learn the words in the Torah, he told them to BE TORAH. **Being Torah** is a book which is obsessed with evoking a student's personal sense of ownership of Torah. This is done through the design—Torah is visualized through student images, through the commentaries which conjure participation in the text, and through the study process created by the exercises which lead students to discover for themselves the text's workings. In each and every sense, this book strives to go beyond mere knowledge of Torah into a participation in living Torah.

That sounds nice, but what am I supposed to teach?

For each text, there are three things to accomplish.

First, there is mastery of the plot. (In Hebrew this is called *p'shat*—the plain meaning of text). For each story, you want students to know the characters, places and dramatic happenings.

With the "plot" will come some quests for meaning. Students will wonder about some

actions. They will have positive or negative feelings about certain characters. And, they will have questions. These elements will naturally lead to a search for the meaning and application of this story.

Second, **Being Torah**, allows you to look at how the story was told. For each text, students should have a sense of the way the Torah told the story, how the Torah taught its lesson. These narrative elements "echo" the stories message.

Third, for each story/text, students should have a sense that they have learned at least one lesson or value which they can "live" in their own experience.

Sounds good, but I don't understand this 'narrative echoes' business.

Learning Torah means relearning how to slow down and move our lips when we read. To work its magic, the Torah needs to be heard and its words need to echo and linger in our ears. The essence of **Being Torah** is the way it introduces the art of close-reading. This is slow, careful reading of the text. It involves the gathering of clues, the tracing of allusions, the asking of questions and the projecting of meaning. While the text is highly inventive, it uses five basic "patterns" to convey its messages. The narrative process is rooted in theme and variation. Once we can recognize these "elements," it becomes easy to follow the prompts and look for meaning.

MISSING INFORMATION   [M.I.]

The Torah has a precise style of story telling. When you read a biblical story, just about all you will find are two elements. There is the description of significant action, and there is a transcript of important dialogue. We look at events from the outside. We are forced to complete the picture. When a line of dialogue is spoken, we have to imagine the subtext; it is up to us to fill in the way it was spoken. When a person reacts to a situation, we will often be told what he or she does, while being left to project the reason or rightness of that action. Like radio drama, the burden of completion is on the audience. The Torah only records the big moments. What happens in between is often totally omitted. These holes and gaps are another way the text invites both our extrapolation and invention.

THEME-WORD   [T-WORD]

Torah was originally an oral experience. It was created to impact upon a listener. To this end, the text uses the nature of the HEBREW language to maximal efficiency. Hebrew is a language which is obsessively built out of word-stems (a.k.a. roots). The same two or three letter meaning-cluster can reconstitute itself as a verb (in a number of active and passive tenses), as a number of adverbs, as a number of nouns, and as a number of adjectives. Almost every word in Hebrew can be torn-down to isolate its word-stem and every word-stem can manifest itself as a great number of word-forms. The Torah uses this modular construction effectively.

In almost every biblical story, you can find one or two word-stems which are used repeatedly. Often the form or precise meaning of the word will change, but its core three-letter sound will be heard over and over. Sometimes, this is complemented by the presence of sound-alike combinations. While these are often lost to the casual reader, and are repeatedly ploughed under the surface by the act of translation, they stand out clearly to one focused on hearing the text. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig were the first to specifically identify this process. They labeled these repeating word-stems as "leading-words," for our purposes, we have relabeled them "theme-words," because they serve as a statement of the texts basic theme or purpose.

NUMBER-WORD   [#-WORD]

In the biblical universe, numbers are very important indicators. Even the casual observer knows that the numbers 7, 10 and 40 are important to the Torah. In its very careful embedding of clues within the narrative, the Torah sometimes uses the number of appearances of a word or element as a prompt. Often, theme-words are found 5, 7, 10, or 12 times within a single story. Sometimes these number clues are used to establish parallels. *Noah is the 10th in a family line and so is Abram.* Other times they are there to point out connections. *In the story of Cain and Abel, each of their name is used a factor of 7 times, so is the theme-word brother.* While the midrash makes some use of these number-patterns, the discovery of their true importance was made by Umberto Cassuto, an Italian Jew who did his scholarship in the early twentieth century.

REPEATS   [RE-RUN][+] or [-]

As we have already noted, the Torah is very careful in its use of words. Nothing seems extra or unnecessary. Almost every construction seems purposeful and able to release som prompt towards an insight or meaning. This is often contradicted by the frequent appearance o. repetitions in the text. Lists will reappear. A character will reflect upon a speech, foreshadowing its words; give the speech, repeating those words; and then report on its delivery, stating it a third time. Under the scrutiny of close-reading, almost every instance of a repetition reveals itself as a "hidden-message." When you look closely at such a passage, something has usually been changed. There may be small additions or careful editings. The change in the text is usually the key to finding a major insight. Every time the Torah repeats material, it is putting up a flag, instructing us to note carefully the way that material is presented this time.

WORD-ECHOES   [ECHO]

It is a mistake to think of the Torah as a collection of independent texts and stories. While you can isolate individual segments or sequences, everything is interconnected. The Torah very intentionally evolves the meaning of certain words through expanding their context each time they are repeated. *The word "keeper" is a perfect example. In sequence, people are told (1) to be keepers of the garden, (2) to be their brother's keeper, (3) to be the keeper of a covenant and the keepers of Shabbat, and (4) that God is Israel's keeper.* Other times, a phrase or two is repeated just to link two stories, two ideas or two characters. These echoes are the Torah's way of saying, "apply what we learned there, to this situation," or "compare these two moments." Every echo we can perceive is a clue that the Torah has revealed a nuance from which it wants us to draw meaning.

I'm impressed, but I'm no Bible scholar. I can't find these things.

Relax. You don't have to. We've built a whole series of support devices for the teacher. **Being Torah** is a curriculum which clusters three books, each of which enables your teaching process.

Being Torah: The Student Text. The student text has been specifically constructed prompt the discovery to these elements. In each chapter, we have included one or two insights into the "textual" message of this story. We have prompted this by printing the key words in bold. Then, we have called attention to these patterns in the CLOSE-LOOK exercises. Finally, we have guided the students' interpretation in the answer section found at the back of the book.

Being Torah: The Student Commentary and Workbook. To accompany **Being Torah**, we've developed an interactive student workbook. It guides the students through the text, helping them to identify and collect clues. Then it helps them to write their own comments about the text and collect others from their classmates.

For the teacher, the Student Commentary provides more than structured activities. It is built as a complete lesson for each chapter of the text. Most include the set-induction, the investigation, and a place where students can draw their own conclusions. To guide these activities, each page has its own A-B-C organizational outline.

Being Torah: The Teacher's Guide This volume is designed to provide you with complete resources for your teaching. On a chapter-by-chapter basis, you will find both a detailing of the needed background content as well as helpful pedagogic supports.

O.K.—You've told me a lot, but what if I need help? I'm not sure I can do all this on my own.

Fear not. Torah Aura Productions is here to help you through the process. If you would like help preparing a specific text, give us a call or drop us a note. If you would like to let us know what is wonderful or what is a pain about **Being Torah**—please give us a call. Don't worry about bugging us—we want you to be a success and we want **Being Torah** to be a helpful tool.

How do I contact Torah Aura?

Inside California, call 213-585-7312, elsewhere call toll free 1-800-BE-TORAH. Or you c write to us at: TORAH AURA PRODUCTIONS, 4423 Fruitland Avenue, os Angeles, Californi. 90058.

THE BEING TORAH TEACHER'S GUIDE

An Introduction
Debi's Prologue

Teaching Torah is one of my favorite activities. Even as a child, Bible stories were special to me. The people in them lived vividly in my imagination. I "met" the prophets as a camper at a Jewish Educational summer camp. Their ideals and values elevated me to a new level of awareness. As a university and graduate student, I became fascinated with the intricate weavings of the words of the text. I still get goosebumps when I study and/or teach certain passages.

Our goal is for you to get equally excited—or re-excited—through your explorations and explanations of the text. A rabbi once wrote of Torah: "Let us drink and taste it, breathe and speak it, hear and see it." For us, the time of collaboration and engagement which went into the creation of this guide was dedicated to helping you to create that spirit in your classroom.

Practical Considerations

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

NOTICE how each lesson is organized. For each chapter in **Being Torah**, this teachers' guide contains five sections: ABSTRACT, OVERVIEW, TEACHING TOOLS, ACTIVITIES and ADDITIONAL LESSON SEEDS.

The ABSTRACT is a quick, brief summary of the salient text-elements in the chapter. Each abstract is a compact capsule of an entire lesson. Each of the major elements of the text is listed and referenced by a number, which will later correspond the appropriate OBJECTIVE and still later to the correlative exercise in the Student Commentary.

The OVERVIEW is an introduction to the content of the Torah text you and your students are about to study. All important aspects of the text will be introduced: the story, the literary devices (TEXT CUES), and other information related to the text. We've taken great care to help you come to your own understanding of its meaning, by including this basic "crash course" for each chapter.

In the TEACHING TOOLS section, you will find all the significant elements of the chapter, those you'll need to plan your own (from-scratch) lessons. This includes three sections: OBJECTIVES, SLIDE-IN VOCABULARY and KEY HEBREW VOCABULARY. The OBJECTIVES delineate those behaviors which will demonstrate the skills and knowledge the students should have at the end of the unit. The SLIDE-IN-VOCABULARY includes those words in the **Being Torah** text we thought might be difficult for some students. We've included simple definitions which can be "slid-in" to your presentation (without pausing for formal explanations). KEY HEBREW VOCABULARY lists words and phrases central to the chapter which can be added to your students' Hebrew vocabulary (even without a "reading knowledge") to build a working Judaic vocabulary. You need not know Hebrew yourself in order to help your students learn these words and phrases.

The ACTIVITIES section delineates step-by-step lesson-plans; successful blueprints to guide you through each chapter—from the first reading through the final making-of-meaning. Each OBJECTIVE is developed, weaving the reading of the **Being Torah** chapter, the appropriate Student Commentary activities and additional activities.

ADDITIONAL LESSON SEEDS take you beyond the text and the Student Commentary. You may be directed to elements of the textbook not covered in the Student Commentary; creative lesson strategies may be suggested; further readings (or filmstrips or videos or records) may be presented. You will have the choice to pick and choose that which will be most appropriate for your students.

These lessons have been built around a specific vision of the Jewish classroom. They are designed to facilitate classroom-community and transform each instructional group into a Torah-circle.

LESSON STRUCTURE

Ordinary lessons are like meetings. they have beginnings, middles, and ends. Texts lesso. are more like conversations, they have a tendency to wander and grow with the relationship that evolves. **Being Torah** has been designed as a fusion. While it is possible to work your way through its texts verse by verse—just like in traditional text lessons, we have prepared the **Student Commentary** and this teacher's guide to provide a structured lesson pattern to these texts. While these structured lessons will never reveal all of the text's secrets, they do allow major features to become clear in a easily instructible manner.

Each lesson has been crafted to revolve around a five-step process.

1. **SET INDUCTION:** The **Being Torah** process begins with SET-INDUCTION, the process of engagement. Here, questions are asked, elements of the students' own experiences are brought to the classroom and the students acquire the necessary mind-set to approach the text. Exploration is motivated.

2. **READING THE TEXT:** The translation and graphic design of **Being Torah** were constructed to reveal the text's inner structure, to help the reader identify theme-words and perceive echoing phrases, etc. In each chapter, we have designed a process of reading the text out loud which helps to further prompt the elements which will lead to its core meanings. You will find directions for this first encounter with the text. This first reading is designed to both raise issues and identify clues. It is only the beginning of the lesson.

3. **FINDING THE CLUES:** The material in the **Student Commentary** centers around specific questions in the text—questions which the Torah itself urges us to ask. Individually, in pairs or small clusters, students explore the text (for a second-time) and gather clues from which to work out their own solutions.

4. **MAKING MEANING:** Each chapter's exercise in the **Student Commentary** provides students with their own opportunity to decide on the solution which best meets the understanding of the text. With all of the clues amassed, students take time to write their ov solution/comments. Students are not simply retracing old understandings, but making the text meaningful on their own terms.

5. **NETWORKING COMMENTS:** Students now have the opportunity to share these solutions with their classmates. Saul Wachs has taught us that real Jewish learning takes place which each student values the opinions of his/her peers as well as the teacher. We have "institutionalized" this process by building active listening to the comments of others into the commentary process.

The best way to clearly explain this five part lesson, is to quickly take you on a visit to a **Being Torah** classroom. Here, a lesson from chapter 7, *Abram: Leaving Home*, is taking place.

Each of the twelve students has arrived carrying a suitcase, knapsack, or paper bag. Jane, the teacher begins: "I want to know everything you know about a guy named Abram." Hands are quickly raised. Information is volunteered. Jane writes each and every item on the board. Soon the board is covered with: "The first Jew." "Had camels and tents." "Smashed idols?" "Married to Sarah." etc.

This listing has taken three or four minutes

Next Jane reviews the homework assignment. Each student had been asked to bring from home, three things they would take with them if they had to leave home for ever. She has the students get ready to share their objects. The class goes through a minute of chaos and joking and then groups' attention is quickly refocused. Jane goes around the circle. Each of the kids opens his or her bag and reveals the hidden treasures. There are lots of laughs: teddy-bears, salamis, a tape recorder. There are also lots of very poignant touches: the family candlesticks, a photo-album, a most important book, etc. This portion of the lesson runs about twenty minutes, about ten-minutes longer than had anticipated. But, because it was a warm, fun, sharing moment, she didn't rush the activity. Instead, she just shifted her lesson plan.

The plan had been to move from the students objects to a fantasy list of what Abram ar Sarai might have brought with them. Instead, Jane made a quick transition. In three sentenc. Jane moves into the text. "Last week we watched Terah take the family from Ur to Haran. This week, the family is on the move again. Just like you pretended to do, they are going to have to leave home. Let's open up **Being Torah** to page 63, and we'll get to see him leave home and

become the first Jew.

Jane has just finished **SET INDUCTION**. *Not only has the class been motivated to engage the text, but they have also been focused into the text. They are ready to begin reading the Torah with an ear to understanding why Abram went on this pilgrimage.*

Quickly, Jane divides the class into two groups. She assigns one group to read the words printed in the bold-type, and the other group to read the words printed in all capitols. As teacher, she serves as narrator and master of ceremonies. The class reads the two page text; the bold word "land" and the capitalized word "bless" ring out from the two groups. Before Jane has a chance to ask her regular question, "What did you hear in the text?", Three hands go up. All three of them know that the word "land" is used seven times in this story. These are the best students in the class, but their insight is no miracle. After finding seven "goods" in *Beginnings*, seven "covenants" in *After The Flood* and seven "brothers" in *Cain and Abel*, a few of them have internalized the lesson.

READING THE TEXT *took only a couple of minutes, but it has focused the rest of the lesson. Based on what was heard and perceived in this quick reading, the rest of the lesson will unfold. All of this was a simple response to the word-patterns encoded in the* **Being Torah** *text.*

Jane writes "land" and seven. She then asks, "What else did you hear?" Quickly, the class contributes, "LORD," "Abram," "Bless," and "see"—all the prompted words. Jane carefully edits the list, writing only "bless" and "Abram" on the board. She divides the class in half, asking each half to count one of these words. The Abram group comes up with the word being used seven times in the text. The bless group reports five usages. Jane redirects the whole class to look at the text one more time, and count not the number of times the word bless is used, but the number of blessings given. With in seconds, every hand in the room is raised. The textbook is encoded with the blessings numbered one through seven. On board are now listed three words: Land, Abram, and Bless, each with the number seven. Jane then asks, "What do you think it means?" A number of answers are suggested: "Abram belongs on the land." "The land is blessed." etc.

The has been the **FINDING THE CLUES** *section of the lesson. Here Jane has led the class to gather information about one aspect of this text, carefully editing out other valuable insights which won't lead towards the completion of this lesson's object. In the course of this step, Jane has also prepared the class for the next step* **MAKING MEANING**. *This whole section took only 6 or 7 minutes.*

Next Jane directs the class to open their **Student Commentaries** to page 28 and complete the exercise. She asks students to work with a partner. They spend about ten minutes filling in the blanks and then writing their comments. Jane circulates throughout the room, stopping to encourage and assist.

The **MAKING MEANING** *section of this lesson is easy. Rather than breaking new ground, the written exercises in the workbook allow students record and collate material which was already introduced and explore as a class in the previous step. At the same time, the writing of comments allows students to individualize their own reactions to this material, and to develop a sense of ownership. The rehearsal of possible comments at the end of the* **FINDING THE CLUES** *stage of the lesson, allowed Jane to model possible solutions without imposing any single sense of meaning.*

Jane then regathers the class. She has each and every student share their comment. She records each and every one, along with the name of its author on the blackboard. Then she asks students to copy one comment from one of their classmates into their **Student Commentary**. After ten or eleven weeks of class, the students have the routine down. This is done quickly. Jane then reviews the lesson. Asking one last time, "So what did we learn?" She accepts a number of different comments (forgetting the one about Danny Kaufman's Teddy Bear which he brought in his suitcase). She then wraps up the lesson by writing, "Abram = Land = Blessing" on the board. Adding, "When Abram and his family is in the Land of Israel, there is blessing." The lesson ends with some compliments, a joke, and wish to have a good week.

In this last part of the lesson, Jane has the class share their insights—each of which are affirmed. She also insures by her insistence that every student add one of his/her classmates's insights to his/her commentary, that the lesson that Torah is a community experienced is reinforced. In a **Being Torah** *classroom, every student is a commentator and a teacher. Finally, in reviewing the lesson, she shapes the final conclusions making sure that lesson's major insight has been clearly expressed and restated.*

Debi's Post Script

The guidance offered here is really only a starting point. In the adventure of learning Tor together with your students, you will be the ultimate guide. Upon completion of one section study, a student commented to me: "You know, this is easy...but it's hard." She knew that our process was in one sense easy—we explored small sections, and developed concrete understandings. However, we stretched far and dug deep within our minds and hearts to do so. Her statement became a bemused rally-cry for our class. It is also our best encouragement for you. Your task will indeed be easy—teaching the delight of Torah study. The text, Student Commentary and this guide are all aides to ease the accomplishment of this task. But, it will also be a challenge. Nothing truly worthwhile comes easy. Enjoy your adventure. It will be easy, hard and definitely rewarding.

> Debi Mahrer
> Ruthy Levy
> Melanie Berman

An Appendix of Possibilities

The center of our work in this teachers' guide involves itself with the "unpacking" of biblical texts—the quest for meaning. Our attention has been directed towards the careful construction of this core of meaning. The creative teacher will want to build a more personal and more expansive framework, incorporating both extensions and opportunities for individual expression.

Rather than projecting specific activities for each chapter, trying to anticipate the style and tone of individual classroom development, we've collected the list here, knowing that teachers can selectively employ them in their instructional process. Obviously, this list is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. The best guide will clearly be your natural skill and ability. And, too, you are the best judge of your students, their needs and abilities.

Don't panic if you don't know how to do all the activities listed. Check with your princip' or various school specialists for help.

ARTS AND CRAFTS
Bulletin board display
Class mural or frieze
"Stained-glass" pictures, using tissue paper
Shoe-box diorama or shadowbox
Maps
Backdrop scenery for class decoration or for a dramatic production
Cartoons
Mobiles
Pictures: drawn, colored, pasted, cut
Grafitti
Collage
Montage
Soap carvings
Potato carvings
Finger paint, foot paint
Calligraphy
Seed/bean paintings & boxes
Modeling: clay, play dough, Plaster of Paris, Papier mache'
Sculpture: metal, wire, toothpicks
Mosaics: ceramic, paper, etc
Prints: sponge, linoleum, potato, styrofoam
Decoupage
Wall hangings
Stitchery: Weaving, embroidery, string art
Paper cuts
Masks

CHAPTER 5

THE TOWER OF BABEL
Being Torah: 56-59
Student Commentary: 22-24

ABSTRACT

5.1 What did they do wrong?
Find the reason that God destroyed the tower. **Answer:** The text is not specific. While a number of answers are suggested, none is specifically stated. This is a case of [M.I.] (missing information). This is a place where we must make midrash.

OVERVIEW

The story of *The Tower of Babel* presents us with a perfect example of Divine justice which is given "measure for measure." There is, however, no clear explanation of the crime.

Just like the story *The Flood*, the account of *The Tower of Babel* is built (like a pyramid) out of a series of X-patterns. It is told in nine verses which are divided into two paragraphs—one for human action and one for Divine response.

In the first paragraph we learn:

(1) **All the earth** had one **language**.
(2) People traveled to the east...and settled **there.**
(3) **People** said **to their neighbors,**
    "**OKAY, let us** make bricks...
(4) Let us build a **city and a tower.**"

In the second paragraph, as God intervenes to prevent the building of the tower, all of these elements are repeated in reverse order.

(5) The LORD came down to see the **city and the tower.**
(7) (The LORD said:) "**OKAY, let us**....babble their language
    so that **people** will not understand **their neighbors'** language
(8) So the LORD scattered them from **there**
(9) The LORD babbled the **language** of **all the earth.**

Each of the steps taken in creating the city are systematically undone in reverse order by God. The text however goes further in describing this ironic undoing. In the first paragraph, people express a specific desire: "Let us make a' name for ourselves to keep us from being *scattered over the face of all the earth.*" In the second paragraph, God's punishment is a direct negation of that desire, "the LORD *scattered them over the face of all the earth.*"

The structure of this story and the careful recasting of the human actions in the Divine response are clear indications of the way God enacts judgment. God's punishment here is a direct application of the acts which are being punished—what the rabbis called *midah k'neged midah*, "a measure for a measure." This much we can uncover and understand.

What is unclear and what is difficult to understand is the wrongdoing which motivated God to intervene. A number of verses suggest a direction, but none of them offer comfortable explanations. The most common understanding comes from the statement, "*Let us build a city and a tower with a top in the sky.*" Those who root themselves in this verse hold that it is wrong for people to try to reach heaven (and try to be like God). Others use the next verse, "*Let us make a name for ourselves*" equating "name" with pride and arrogance. A third possibility comes in God's comment, "*From now on, they will be able to do whatever they feel like doing.*" The words seem to imply that people could get too powerful for God.

At the beginning of this story, there seems to be a basic unity to people's actions. God's disruption of this peace seems inappropriate. A fear of people reaching heaven, developing pride or becoming "too powerful" doesn't seem to justify the interaction. Therefore, the commentators looked for other solutions.

Cassuto, an important commentator who worked in the early 20th century, finds his solution in the people's wish "*to keep...from being scattered over the face of the earth.*" He sees

this as a direct violation of the commandment given both to Adam and Noah, "fill the earth." While this explanation is consistent with prominent text clues, it is hard to see God destroying human unity in the name of better demographics.

Two Talmudic rabbis reach beyond the story revealed in the Torah. Building on the notion of "reaching heaven" and "making a name." Rabbi Shila suggests that people intended to cut a hole in the sky and cause a flood, just as God had done in Noah's age. Similarly, Jeremiah ben Eliezer concludes that people wanted to reach heaven and fight a war with God. For them, the division of humanity must have resulted from a kind of self-destructive tendency towards violence, making the separation an act of mercy as well as punishment.

In *Pirke D'Rabbi Eleazer*, Rabbi Pinchas suggests the explanation later popularized by Rashi. He also roots himself in the phrase "make a name." For him, the problem was not the building of the tower, but the way it was built. He teaches, "The tower grew so high that it took a year to walk up the steps to the top of the construction. If a person fell off, no one cared. If one of the bricks fell, people cried all day..."

Chapters 5 and 6 of **Being Torah** *provide us with an opportunity to introduce the tool of "midrash." The actual term "midrash" will not be introduced in this lesson; that will happen in chapter 6. In this chapter, we are doing a kind of "midrash-readiness," showing that the actual text sometimes calls for the making of midrash. Here, we are concerned with making explicit the reality that some answers can't be found by close-reading the biblical text and that* [M.I.], *missing information, really does exist. We also introduce the notion that the rabbis (of the Talmud and Midrash) engaged in the same kind of process that we do. They struggled to close-read the Torah and to make-meaning from its questions, just as we do.*

We begin with a simple story. People again do wrong, and God makes another change in their lives. The text quickly reveals that it is built out of a series of ironic x-patterns. God frustrates each of humanity's actions and preventing them from reaching their goal. It is good example of a biblical punishment fitting the crime. At the end of our first reading, we are unclear of that crime. When God finds something wrong with the construction in the valley of Shinar, God acts. No explanation is given to the builders. There is no warning and there is no interactive teaching moment—things just change radically. The biblical narrator reveals little more. The Torah has left us with an incomplete understanding. We learn that the building of the tower was somehow wrong and that we are supposed to learn from its prevention. Then we are abandoned. The text in essence says, "That's all I'm telling—now, you make sense out of it."

TEACHING TOOLS

OBJECTIVES:

5.1a The learner will attempt to choose one verse from the story which shows why God punished the people of Babel, realize that no such sentence exists, and then synthesize an original explanation.

5.1b Each learner will draw a picture describing her/his concept of what the people did wrong.

SLIDE-IN VOCABULARY
scattered—caused to spread

KEY HEBREW VOCABULARY
la'asot shem—to make a name

ACTIVITIES

5.1 What Did They Do Wrong?
Student Commentary: 22-24

The Torah's narrative style is predicated on leaving holes. Its tendency is to tells its story by describing the major actions and presenting key pieces of dialogue. It often tells little or nothing of what motivated these actions and words. That is its way of actively involving the reader by forcing him/her to come to his/her own understanding of these events. Such is the case in the story of the Tower of Babel. The Torah leaves us with no clear explanation of why God punished the people.

1 SET INDUCTION: READ page 22 in the **Student Commentary** with your class. *This exercise tells the story of how Mrs. Henderly's class made meaning of this story. Their experience will serve as a model to your students. Here, by reading the first page, students will have their first reading of the text focused. They will be directed to look for "the reason that God destoryed the tower."*

MAKE SURE that the students understand that focus. ASK: "What are we looking for?" ACCEPT answers such as "A sentence telling us what sin/crime the people did." or "A sentence telling why God punished them." You will NOT have them fill out part A on the bottom of page 22 until after they have read the text.

2 READING THE TEXT: OPEN **Being Torah** to page 57. ASSIGN the parts of the narrator, God and a chorus to read the part of "the people." REHEARSE the text to make sure that everyone knows their part. Then PERFORM it a couple of times. TAKE the time to make sure it sounds good. SPEND the time needed to enjoy this reading.

3 FINDING THE CLUES: Next, direct students to complete part A on the bottom of page 22 of the **Student Commentary**. Have students SHARE both the sentences they chose and the words they selected as their clues. ACCEPT all answers. Make NO COMMENT about any answer being right or wrong. ASK no questions except those which help students clarify their positions. WRITE each person's NAME, the NUMBER of the sentence they chose and a couple of words which describe their THEORY on the blackboard. Where more than one person has the same theory, ADD THAT NAME to the same item on the blackboard.

TURN to page 23 in the **Student Commentary**. DIVIDE the reading aloud of Ms. Henderly's class among your students. ASK one student to read each group. Have him/her EXPLAIN, in his/her own words, that group's theory about the punishment. COMPARE this process to that of learning Torah from the comments made by other students in your own class. COMMENT: "The circle of Torah study is bigger than just this classroom. We can learn something from every person who struggles with the meaning of the text."

COMPARE the groups in Mrs. H's class with your own results. ADD their opinions (in the proper place) to your chart on the blackboard.

SURVEY your class. ASK students to raise their hands in support of the 4 different groups in Ms. H's class. GROUP your students accordingly and give them time to WRITE their conclusions and reasoning *as a group.*

4 NETWORKING COMMENTS: SPEND a few minutes SHARING the results of your group work.

TURN to page 24 in the Student Commentary. SELECT a student to read the first paragraph. Then REVIEW the idea of [M.I.] with your class. READ the next paragraph and EXPAND Mrs. H's comment. EMPHASIZE that the Torah makes us work to fill in its holes.

READ the THREE RABBINIC opinions one at a time. STOP after every paragraph and have the students EXPLAIN IT in their own words.

COMPARE the rabbis' reasons for the punishment with your own. ADD these rabbis to your list on the blackboard.

5 MAKING MEANING: ASK students to draw their pictures of the wrongdoings of the people of Shinar. FIND art work depicting the tower and share it with the class. TALK about the students' drawings and the artists' views of the scene.

ADDITIONAL LESSON SEEDS

COMMENTARIES
   Andrea talks about God as a parent. Expand that metaphor. What kind of parental activity is this story? Is it like taking a dangerous toy away from a infant? Losing one's temper? Dividing trouble makers? etc.
   Joanna's comment focuses on the loss of unity. Work as a class or a group to devise a plan for bringing people back to having "the same language" and having one purpose.
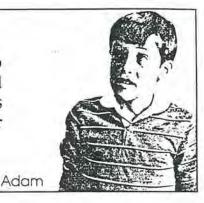
וְנַעֲשֶׂה־לָנוּ שֵׁם

CHAPTER 5

THE TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11 1-9

(1) **All the earth** had one language
and used one set of words.
(2) People traveled to the east
and found a valley in the Land of Shinar
and settled there.
(3) **People** said to their neighbors:
"**OKAY**, let us make bricks and burn them hard."
(For them bricks were stones.
For them tar was cement.)
(4) Then they said: "OKAY, let us **build** a city
and a **tower** with its top in the sky.
Let us make a name for ourselves,
to keep us from being scattered
over the face of all the earth."
(5) The LORD came down to see the city and the tower
that ADAM's children were building.
(6) The LORD said: "Now, they are one people
with one language.
This is only the beginning of what they will do.
From now on, they will be able to do whatever
they feel like doing.
(7) **OKAY**, let us go down and babble their
so that **people** will not understand
their **neighbors'** language."
(8) So the LORD scattered them from the
over the face of all the earth
and they stopped building the city.
(9) That is why the city is called Babel,
because there the LORD babbled
the **language** of all the earth.
And from there, the LORD scattered them
over the face of all the earth.

COMMENTARY

These stories are all the same. Adam and Eve do wrong and God punishes them. Cain does wrong and God punishes him. People are evil and God punishes the world with a flood. This story is about another punishment.

Adam

Wrong! When you are a parent, you've got to expect kids to make mistakes. Every one of these stories is about God setting people on the right path.

Andrea

In this story, people start out working together and cooperating. Then God breaks them up so that no one can understand anyone else. Today, people complain that different countries don't understand each other. It seems to me that this is God's fault.

Joanna

You read this story and the first question you ask is: "What is wrong with building a tower?" You think that God was afraid that the tower would reach heaven? I don't think that was the problem. God must have seen something wrong in the way people were working on the tower. The people wanted to make a name for themselves. I think they must have tried too hard to be famous.

Michael
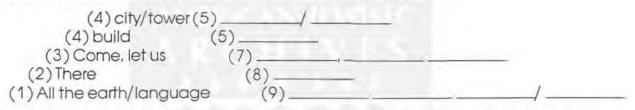
58

THE TOWER OF BABEL—A CLOSE LOOK

SECRET MESSAGES

SECRET PLANS

The story of the **Tower of Babel** is the story of a building. When we look at the way the story is "built," we can find the patterns for two different buildings. We can see a pyramid and a sky-scraper.

THE PYRAMID

Look at this story and fill in the second side to this pyramid.

```
        (4) city/tower (5) _____ / _____
        (4) build          (5) _____
        (3) Come, let us    (7) _____ , _____
        (2) There           (8) _____
(1) All the earth/language  (9) _____ _____ _____ / _____
```
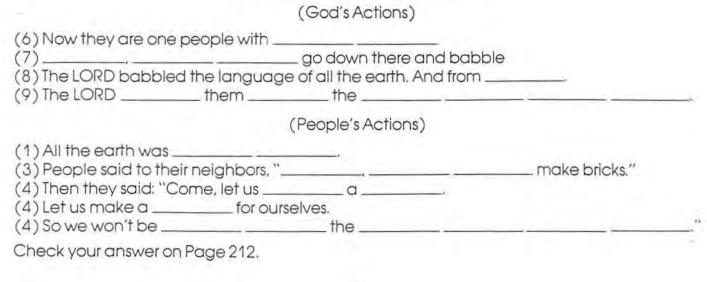
Can you find the **x-pattern** which works as book-ends for this story? Check your answer on page 212.
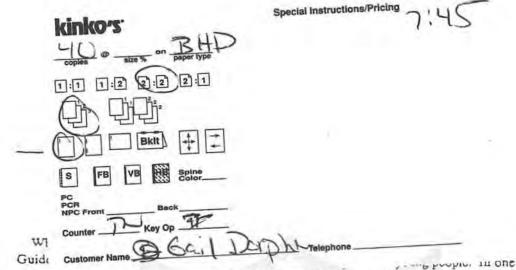
THE SKY-SCRAPER

The second pattern for this story is like a tall building. In a sky-scraper, all the floors are built using the same pattern. In this story, we are shown two floors. On the bottom floor we see people's actions. On the top floor we see God's reaction. Find the correct letters to fill the blanks in each sentence.

A. one language B. Come, let us C build/city D1 there (sham) D2 name (shem)
E. scattered/over/face of the earth

(God's Actions)

(6) Now they are one people with _____ _____
(7) _____ , _____ _____ go down there and babble
(8) The LORD babbled the language of all the earth. And from _____ .
(9) The LORD _____ them _____ the _____ _____ _____ .

(People's Actions)

(1) All the earth was _____ _____ .
(3) People said to their neighbors, "_____ , _____ _____ make bricks."
(4) Then they said: "Come, let us _____ a _____ .
(4) Let us make a _____ for ourselves.
(4) So we won't be _____ _____ the _____ _____ _____ _____ ."

Check your answer on Page 212.

59

sense, ___ ___ extension of our chain of tradition. Teaching and interpreting the Bible is canonized in the Bible itself—in Moses' reiteration of the Torah in Deuteronomy, in Joshua's paraphrase of the Torah history, in David's act of copying an entire Torah scroll by hand, in the renewal of public Torah study in the time of Josiah, in Ezra's insistence that every Israelite hear and understand the Bible text through public readings.

Each chapter of *A CHILD'S BIBLE* includes sections called *What Does It Mean?*, *What Does It Teach?*, and *A Lesson about the Torah* which correspond to a traditional teaching mode introduced by our sages. Over the centuries, teachers of Torah have utilized a four-step model of instruction: Peshat, Derash, Remez, and Sod. In preparing *A CHILD'S BIBLE*, we have also adopted this model.

The Four Steps

Peshat or "exegesis"

The first step is comprehending the simple meaning of the words. In *A CHILD'S BIBLE* this is accomplished through a new translation. The translation is simplified for young people and refined by modern Jewish scholarship. The section called *What Does It Mean?* explores the peshat of a single verse in detail. And the Teacher's Guide includes Teaching Opportunities from the Text, making it possible for the teacher to explain many other verses in similar fashion.

Derash or "interpretation"

The second step is exploring the moral messages which bring the stories closer to our personal lives. The section called *What Does It Teach?* provides these everyday examples. The first two steps, peshat and derash form the basis for the commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, c. 1040-1105), who is called the Parshandanta, the "Commentator Without Peer." His influence is present throughout the text and Teacher's Guide.

Remez or "allegory"

The third step is applying the moral messages in new contexts. This is done in *A Lesson about the Torah*. Lessons are drawn from a wide range of traditional sources (cited in the text): from midrash to Ashkenazic and Sephardic commentaries. The Teacher's Guide provides applications for these traditional allegories.

INTRODUCTION

How to Use This Guide

The Structure of the Textbook

The book is divided into loosely-defined units. The first unit includes the stories from Creation to the Tower of Babel—the "pre-Hebrew" history. The second unit is the patriarchal history—from Abraham through Jacob. The third unit is the cycle of Joseph stories. And the fourth unit is the story of Moses. The book closes as God redeems the Israelites from slavery. It presages the long trek toward freedom and the Promised Land. You can use the four units in planning your course, or ignore them entirely. The structure is so natural that divisions and demarcations will basically take care of themselves.

Important Concepts

The section in each chapter entitled *Important Concepts* contains ideas that can be covered through discussion of the story in the text and the special topics associated with it. You will probably not wish to teach all the concepts each time (many ideas may be found in slightly variant forms in other chapters). Concentrate on one or two main ideas in order to provide a more effective lesson.

Background Information

The section in each chapter entitled *Background Information* contains some information you will want to share with the students directly, and some helpful information on meaning and interpretation, central themes and the biblical world.

Introducing the Lesson

The section in each chapter entitled *Introducing the Lesson* provides suggestions for introducing the subject matter to the students. In general, this section utilizes methods of set induction. These are only suggestions, and you may develop lesson plans along very different lines based on the same material. The guide assumes that you plan your lessons in ten-minute to twelve-minute segments. A segment of discussion can be followed by a segment of arts and crafts; a segment of reading can be followed by an activity from the text; a segment of classroom dramatics can be followed by a small-group activity. This constant alternation is recommended throughout the Teacher's Guide. It makes for a lively classroom atmosphere and typically heightens student interest and response.

Teaching Opportunities from the Text

The section in each chapter entitled *Teaching Opportunities from the Text* contains comments and clarifications on individual lines of the text.

Developing the Lesson

The section in each chapter entitled *Developing the Lesson* contains ways of utilizing the special topics in the textbook. These follow a set pattern. In some cases you will want to concentrate on only one of these special topics. At other times you may wish to utilize all three. Feel free to decide how much is appropriate for your class and your lesson.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? deals with a concept selected from the narrative, illuminating a major teaching idea from the chapter.

WHAT DOES IT TEACH? deals broadly with moral concepts derived from the narrative. It applies these concepts to the everyday world of the students.

A LESSON ABOUT THE TORAH contains selections from midrash, commentaries, and other extra-biblical literature bearing upon the story or its major concepts.

Teaching the Illustrations

The textbook is profusely illustrated in full-color. Nearly every chapter includes one or more photographs which are particularly worthy of note, and which can be used to further student understanding of the materials and concepts in the lesson. The Teacher's Guide makes suggestions for using some of these.

Exercises

The textbook chapters include exercises and activities designed to enhance comprehension, extend thinking, and promote discussion. Some of these take only a few minutes to complete. Others require more in-depth consideration. You should use these activities often in class, asking students to complete them (either as independent seat work or together in small groups). The Teacher's Guide promotes the use of homework throughout. The guide suggests activities that are likely to come back completed. Puzzles and rebuses, mazes and letter scrambles are all excellent candidates for homework since they are generally self-motivating, require little supervision, and do not take long to complete. Assigning and checking them in a regular rhythm will develop a homework habit. As the year progresses, students will find "homework" as much fun as in-class work. We then introduce optional, "extra credit" homework. The key to homework assignments is consistency—be sure to follow through each week by checking and reviewing the work.

The Teacher's Guide lists the exercises in each chapter, commenting on those that may be used in special ways and supplying answers for your convenience. An asterisk (*) following an exercise means that it is a good candidate for a homework assignment.

Arts & Crafts Idea

Arts & crafts are an important part of teaching on any grade level, but especially for young children. Each chapter contains at least one suggestion for an arts & crafts activity. A handy reference book is *Integrating Arts and Crafts in the Jewish School, A Step-by-Step Guide* by Carol Tauben and Edith Abrahams (Behrman, 1979).

Closure

Each chapter includes a section called *Closure* which will solidify what has been learned in the chapter and help to apply the learning to the everyday life of the child. In addition, it previews the next chapter, setting up a continuity for the entire course.

Sod or "Hidden"

The mystics added the concept of a hidden dimension which exists within each verse and story. The Teacher's Guide provides traditional examples. Yet, we thought of this in a new way. Through a striking use of color, dynamic illustration, and color photography, the book allows students to visualize the biblical world—its places, its tools, its costumes, and its customs. To traditional verbal teaching, we added art, architecture, and archaeology. The Teacher's Guide includes a section called *Teaching the Illustrations* to help you share this dimension with your students.

The Weekly Sidrah

The only traditional mode of Bible study which you will not find in A Child's Bible is the weekly sidrah or Scripture reading. While it might seem desirable to teach the Torah *sidrah* by *sidrah*, disparities between the calendar and the school year make this impractical. Also, many *sidrot* are best taught to adults, not to children.

Nevertheless, you should not ignore the concept of the *sidrah*. You should introduce this idea, explain how the Torah is read in the synagogue, and discuss the central importance Torah study plays in Jewish worship.

> *As a little wood can set fire to a great tree,*
> *so young students sharpen the wits of great scholars.*
> *Therefore Rabbi Hanina said, "Much Torah have I*
> *learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but*
> *from my students most of all."* —Taanit 7a

5 A TOWER TO THE SKY

Genesis 11:1-9—Text, pp. 41-47

Important Concepts

> Heaven is beyond human reach
> Idolatry has disastrous results
> Language can bind us together, but sometimes blinds us to others

Background Information

Once more we are faced with a story best understood through a Hebrew play on words. In Babylonian parlance, the word *Babel* means "gateway to God." In Hebrew, it is closely associated with the root meaning "confusion."

The subject of the story was the actual temple-tower of Babylon. Evidence suggests that this tower was destroyed by the Hittites in 1531 B.C.E. In lines 60-62 of the Akkadian *Enuma Elish* epic we have an account which closely parallels the story: "The first year they molded its bricks. And when the second year arrived they raised the head of Esagila [the temple-tower] toward Apsu [the sweet waters above heaven]." It appears that there was a sacred custom involved in spending an entire year preparing the bricks, and the biblical account picks up on this practice.

A secondary aspect of the story arises from the Mediterranean tradition of viewing particular mountains as the "homes" of gods (Mount Sinai, Mount Horeb, the Temple Mount, Mount Olympus, and so on). In Babylonia the land was flat. And the Babylonians, perhaps in an attempt to compensate for this shortcoming of their landscape, built artificial mountains called "ziggurats." A ziggurat was a stepped, pyramidal-shaped structure, rising many stories above city buildings. Its prominent features included a stairway leading up one side from bottom to top, and a temple structure on the topmost platform or step. This was the classic "stairway to heaven."

In one sense, at least, this story parallels the account of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In that case, too, God was concerned with limiting the powers of human beings. In the garden, "God said, 'Now Adam knows good and evil. He might also eat from the tree of life, and live forever! And, if he did evil afterward, he could do evil forever!'" Here, God hears the people say "Together, we are very great. Together, we can do what only God could do before." In both cases, God closes a "gate." In the first instance, the gate of the Garden is sealed forever. In the second instance, God seals the "gateway to heaven."

Introducing the Lesson

Choose which of the major themes you plan to develop with the class during your lesson. You may wish to focus on (1) the inequities of "looking down" on other people, (2) how human beings sometimes try to replace God with idols or with worship of other human beings, (3) or the idea that things are never as important as people. Of course, you can combine these ideas into one lesson if you have the time.

(1) Read or tell the story. Ask students to find places in the story that show how some people felt bigger and better than others. Have they ever felt "left out" or "less important" than their friends? What made them feel that way? What did their friends say to them or how did their friends show them that they were considered less important? How could they show their friends that everyone is important? Proceed to the section called *What Does It Teach?* and then to *A Lesson about the Torah.*

(2) Bring a doll to class. Talk for a few minutes about idolatry. If we wanted to worship the doll, how would we make it into an idol? (Have a ritual to make it holy, bring it presents (sacrifices), set it up on a high place (the ziggurat), etc.) Read the story with the class. Proceed to *What Does It Mean?* and then to *A Lesson about the Torah.*

(3) Read or tell the story. Then read the section called *A Lesson about the Torah.* Talk about making bricks. Why did the builders think that bricks were more important than people? (It took many years to bring the bricks up.) Why did God decide to destroy the tower? Why did God decide to make the people speak many languages? How does being different from other people help us to remember that things are not as important as people?

Teaching Opportunities from the Text

In those days everyone on earth spoke the same language. The meaning here should be understood in context. As we have mentioned before, all the early stories use a single individual to represent an entire class of people. Here, the Bible uses the same literary device to point to "all people" as Babylonians.

"People will then remember us and praise our name." Meaning, people would praise the name of the Babylonians over the name of God.

"Together, we are very great. Together, we can do what only God could do before." This is the sentence which most fully explains the central conflict in the story. In essence, the Babylonians wanted to replace God entirely so that people would worship them instead. To this end, they wanted to "reach heaven." The Tower of Babel can stand for any human attempt—whether by words, fashion, money, or bricks—to displace God through idolatry. In biblical thought there is a sharp distinction between God and God's creation.

"When they talk, let them babble ..." The play on the word babble works almost as well in English as it did in the original, since our language includes the necessary biblical referents. You will want to point out this verse and the next in discussing the pun.

And, from that time to this, people call that place Babel. Actually the place was already called Babylon, but this final touch closes the story in a loop and makes it seem to the average reader that the story is included mainly for its etiological purpose (to teach how the name arose). As we have seen, this is a "cover story" for a far deeper purpose.

Developing the Lesson

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? The text draws a startling analogy between "making war with God" and "looking down" on other people. You will have to help the students make this connection. Since God cares about each of us, when we stop caring about one another, we are no longer "walking with God." Then we are "making war with God." After reading the story, do the children feel that we can ever "win" a war with God? Why not?

WHAT DOES IT TEACH? The illustrations in the text include a picture of a ziggurat. Ask the students to turn to the picture (page 42). Talk about the steps leading up the side of the ziggurat and the temple at the top. Why did the builders choose to make this "mountain?" (They wanted to reach heaven. They lived in a plain and thought they would build something they could "look up to.")

Why did they think other people would want to be just like them? In what way were they setting themselves up in God's place? Why did God disapprove of their plan? What does God really want us to believe about other human beings?

A LESSON ABOUT THE TORAH What made the bricks so important? (See above.) What does this lesson from the midrash teach about how we should treat others? Why did the builders ignore this lesson?

Teaching the Illustrations

The illustration on page 42 shows a "ziggurat" like those common in Mesopotamia. The photograph on page 43 shows a "ziggurat" like those common to cities today (in this case, the Empire State Building). You will want to introduce your remarks on these structures by reading the special topic "A Tower to the Sky" on page 44. Then talk about skyscrapers and modern-day versions of ziggurats. But, be sure to point out the basic difference. We do not build our skyscrapers and monuments as places of worship.

Exercises

Assign exercises at appropriate moments during the lesson, as a way of keeping lessons from becoming too verbal. Note: An asterisk (*) following an exercise indicates that it is a good candidate for a homework assignment. Answers are given in brackets, in italics.

*MAZE**

YOU BE THE TEACHER After teaching the main portion of the lesson, ask students to work individually or in small groups to complete this activity. Then share some of the student responses with the whole class. Try to leave enough time to share one or two responses for each of the lessons.

DO YOU KNOW WHY?

WORD SCRAMBLE [*Bricks; babble; tower; build; city; mighty.*]

*PICTURE MESSAGE** [*The people decided to build a city so tall it would reach the clouds. They forgot what was really important.*]

Arts & Crafts Idea

Cover shoe boxes with construction paper to look like bricks. Using toy soldiers, ask students to retell the story of the Tower of Babel as they "build" a ziggurat by carrying

one shoe box after another to the top. Ask them to talk about how their toy soldier "feels"—about the people below, about building the tower, about carrying the bricks, etc. And, remember, half the fun is allowing the class to knock the tower over from time to time.

Closure

Ask students to restate, in their own words, the meaning of the Tower of Babel story. If they want to show their love for God, how would they go about it? (Refer back to the sentences in the text about watching a sunset or looking at flowers.) How do these things remind us of what is really important in the world?

Give students a preview of next week's lesson by telling them that we will be talking about other people who walked with God—a man called Abram and a woman named Sarai. From now on, we will be reading the Bible stories that are about Jewish history, not just about world history.

Close the lesson by restating the themes you have chosen to teach.

Time begins and ends—that is a Jewish idea. Before the beginning, there was God alone. At the end of days, God will remain. Our world is in-between.

We can never know what it was like before time began. And we can hardly imagine what it may be like when time comes to an end.

Some of our teachers say that our world is like a hallway. At the end of the hall a door opens to a wonderful dining room. Around the dinner table are all those who came before—Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Deborah—all your ancestors. Your job in the hallway, the teachers say, is to study and to do good deeds. Then you, too, will be ready to sit at the table. You, too, will be able to join in the great discussions of the wise.

But what shall we study? And how shall we know what deeds are good to do? Both questions have one answer: the *Torah*.

Our teachers saw people building, and saw how the builders first made a plan. As the builders worked, they checked their plan to be sure that the building would be a good one. Our teachers said, God worked in the same way. Before God began creating the world, God made a plan for the way the world should be. As God was creating, God checked to see if the world was "good." What was the plan that God used to build the world? It was the *Torah*.

The word *Torah* means "teachings." We sometimes use *Torah* to mean the first five books of the Bible: Genesis בְּרֵאשִׁית, Exodus שְׁמוֹת, Leviticus וַיִּקְרָא, Numbers בַּמִּדְבָּר, and Deuteronomy דְּבָרִים. We also call these "The Five Books of Moses" (חוּמָשׁ: *Chumash*). But sometimes we use *Torah* to mean the whole Bible and everything that we Jews have learned about the world.

UCTION

Our teachers called the *Torah, Etz Hayyim,* "a tree of life." No doubt, they meant both the Five Books of Moses and all Jewish teaching.

God's commandments are a part of *Torah.* These instructions tell us how to live so that we will be good. Other parts of *Torah* are stories. The stories, too, are "teachings."

The stories tell us how people live, what people do, and how people behave. The people in the stories are always a lot like us. So the stories help us learn how we should live, what we should do, and how we should behave.
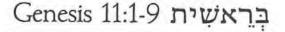
All the stories of the *Torah* are true. Yet this does not mean that the stories happened just as the *Torah* tells. When we talk about the *Torah,* we mean the stories are true in a different way.

The stories in our *Torah* are true because they teach us how to tell the difference between bad and good. So it does not matter if the world began in seven days or if it really took millions of years. The *Torah* story about how God created the world is still true. It is true because it teaches us that we are made "in the image of God." And it is true because it teaches us that resting on the Sabbath is good.

As you read the stories you should ask, "What truth is this story teaching me?" "What does this story say that I should do?" "How does this story say that I should behave?"

This book is made up of stories from the Bible. It is about the laws and the stories of the Jewish people, our *Torah.* Together, we will look at the teachings to see what they mean to us today. Along the way you may learn another thing, too. You may learn why our teachers call the *Torah* "a tree of life."

Chapter 5

A TOWER
TO THE SKY

n those days everyone on earth spoke the same language. They called things by the same names. And all together, they wandered as one tribe, living and speaking as one people.

Once they came to a green and rolling valley in the land called Shinar. It was there they decided to stay.

They said, "Come, let us take clay from the ground and use it to make bricks. We will bake the bricks to make them hard."

So they made bricks into stones for building, using tar to hold the stones together.

They decided to build a mighty city and a tower of brick. "We will make the tower so tall it will touch the clouds in the sky," they said. "People will then remember us and praise our name. People will want to live in our city forever."

For many years they built. As time passed, more and more people came to join them. It seemed that all the people of the earth were gathering together in one place. The people thought, "Together, we are very great. Together, we can do what only God could do before."

God saw the bricks becoming a city and a tower. God watched as the hearts of the people became as hard as bricks. The people of the earth stopped loving one another. They forgot how to love God. No more did

41

they stop to look at the flowers growing on the hillsides. No more did they pause to watch the splendor of a sunset. They cared only about building the tower and the city.

The tower was raised brick by brick. As it grew higher, the workers looked down on the people in the city below. The people below looked as tiny as ants. It made the builders feel mighty and strong. "We can build our tower into heaven itself," they said. "We can make war with God."

So God decided to teach them a lesson. God said, "When they talk, let them babble like the noise of water rushing over bricks. They will not understand each other. Then their building, and their evil, will come to an end."

God made their language into many languages. People wondered why no one could understand them. The making of bricks stopped. People argued and did not know what their arguing was all about. The building stopped.

People gathered together into small tribes that spoke one language. They said, "Let us leave this place and make a home together somewhere beyond these hills."

The city was never finished, and the tower never reached the clouds. People set out for places all around the earth.
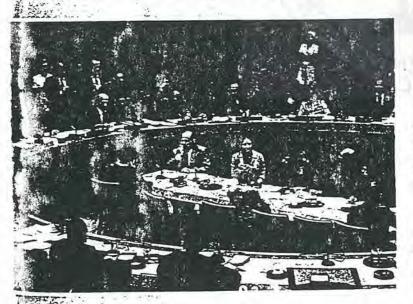
So, from that time to this, people call that place Babel, because in Babel God babbled the language of the whole earth.
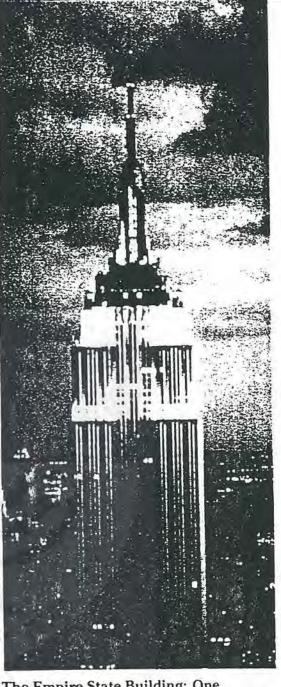
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

"We can make war with God."

The builders on the tower looked down and saw everything below getting smaller and smaller. It made them feel stronger and more important than the people below. They began to think that they were as mighty as God.

You do not have to be on top of a tall tower to look down on other people. You can just say or think that a person is someone to "look down on," someone less important than you.

But, really, God makes each of us special, so every person is important. Every person has something special to offer the world. "Looking down" on people is always a mistake. It's like "making war with God."

The Empire State Building: One of the most famous skyscrapers in the world. Can you imagine how the people of the city below looked to the workers who built this modern-day ziggurat?

At the United Nations people speak many languages, but try hard to understand one another so that the nations of the world can live together in peace.

43

God made each of us special and different. It is up to us to learn how to share one world, making it better for all.

WHAT DOES IT TEACH?
A Tower to the Sky

The tower in the story was a kind of pyramid called a *ziggurat*. Almost always, the reason for building it was to worship a false god at the top. The builders wanted the people below to worship them the way we worship God. They knew no tower could really reach the sky. But the builders wanted their tower to be the highest in the world. Then other people might think the builders were the greatest and mightiest people in the world and want to be just like them.

But God does not want us all to be alike. God did not give us one face,

one color of skin, or one way of thinking. God wants each of us to be special. So God divided these people and sent them to all corners of the earth.

It is wrong to think that all humans should be one and the same. In truth, God is One and Unique, while we are many and different.

A LESSON ABOUT THE TORAH
What Is Really Important?

Our teachers say: The Tower of Babel had seven steps from the east and seven steps from the west. On one side they brought up huge bricks. On the other side people went down again. As the tower grew taller, it took many years to bring a brick to the top. So it seemed that the bricks were more important than people.

If a person fell off the tower, people did not even stop working. They paid no attention at all. But if one brick fell down, they would sit and weep. They would cry, "Woe to us! When will another brick be brought up to replace the one that fell?"

God wants us to remember what is really important. Bricks can never be more important than life. Things are never as important as people. That is what the builders forgot, and that is what we must always remember.

[Source: Pirke deRebbe Eliezer]

MAZE

God divided the people
and sent them to all
corners of the earth.
Help them find their way.

You Be The Teacher

The story about the tower of Babel has many lessons to teach us. Choose one of the lessons below and explain what it means to you.

1. "Looking down" on people is always a mistake.
2. God wants each of us to be special.
3. Every person has something special to offer the world.
4. Things are never as important as people.

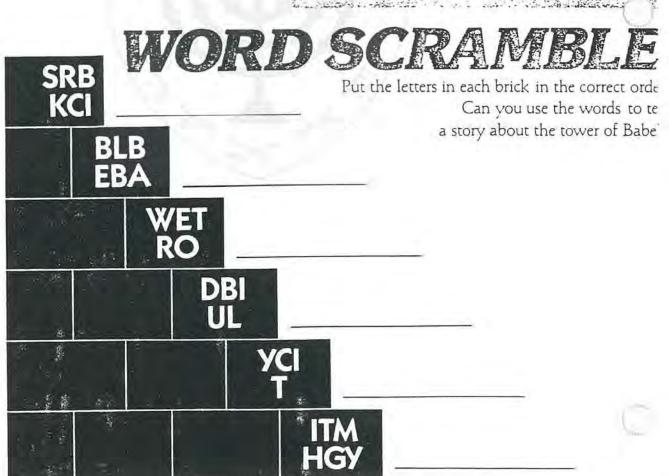# DO YOU KNOW WHY

The people decided to build a tall tower because _____

The people stopped loving one another because _____

The builders felt mighty and strong because _____

The people left the place because _____

The place is called Babel because _____

WORD SCRAMBLE

Put the letters in each brick in the correct orde
Can you use the words to te
a story about the tower of Babe

SRB KCI _____

BLB EBA _____

WET RO _____

DBI UL _____

YCI T _____

ITM HGY _____

PICTURE MESSAGE

Can you read the message below?

The [peapod]ple **D** cided

2 B[head]d A Ci[teabag]

[needle/sewing] tall it [wood] reach

the [clouds] T [hay]

4 got W[hat] was [reel] E

import [ant]

Write the message here. _____ 47

_____

_____

_____

_____

Adult Development in the Context of Work:
A Meaning Making Experience

Tuesday, March 19, 10:45 - 12:15 PM

Bob Kegan

Reading:

- Kegan, Robert. "Peter and Lynn at Work: A Case"

Study Question:

- Both Peter and Lynn are having a hard time at work. How do you understand their difficulties? How do you understand the differences between them?

"PETER AND LYNN AT WORK: A CASE"

Robert Kegan. In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Peter and Lynn are both up early today. Hurrying through morning routines, their minds already out of the house, they are thinking of work before they even leave the bathroom. Both of them could say, "These days my work is too much with me." Different as their work is, they have noticed that in each of their jobs a similar circumstance has gotten them both stirred up.

Lynn has been at Highland Junior High School for twelve years, originally as an English teacher. Although she still teaches several classes, three years ago she also became chair of the English department. Then last year it was decided that several department chairs, including English, would be part of the principal's newly formed Leadership Council, and Lynn added that to the usual duties of leading a department. The Council, which she had initially been eager to join, was the outgrowth of Highland's decision to "go SBM," as the lingo in the school district would have it. "School-based management," as it was explained to Lynn and the rest of the faculty, meant that the responsibility and authority for running the school would no longer be vested in the single person of the principal, but shared mainly among the principal and the faculty or its representatives. There would be more work, more meetings, more to worry about for the faculty, to be sure, but they would also have a greater hand in how the school was run. This sounded good to Lynn, who reasoned that especially with such a veteran faculty (over 70 percent had been at the school for more than ten years; their average age was forty-one) Highland's teachers were up to the challenge. Appar-

ently Lynn's colleagues agreed, since—along with the principal and a majority of the parents association—two-thirds of the faculty had to approve the new governance structure before it could be tried, and they did.

Peter has worked at BestRest Incorporated for nineteen years. The country's third largest bedding manufacturer, it has twelve regional factories shipping to furniture and department stores in all forty-eight contiguous states. Peter began working for BestRest during the summers while he was still in college. His earnest sincerity and intelligence were immediately appealing to Anderson Wright, the plant manager, who took it upon himself to provide Peter with a "real-world business education" to go along with his classroom college education. "If you want to learn the manufacturing business, the place to begin is in the factory," Anderson said, introducing Peter to the sisal room, a noisy, messy place where box springs were filled with the hemplike material. "The very word 'manufacturing,' Peter, means 'made with the hands,'" Anderson said, "and no matter what your future in this business, you should understand the sweat and craft that go into the making of the product. We're making money here, sure, but it's no shell game. We're making money because, first and last, we're making something people *need* and we're making it *well*."

Peter was impressed with Anderson's integrity, energy, and vision, and so were the people in the national office of BestRest. As the charismatic Anderson Wright rose to positions of greater authority he brought Peter along with him. When government regulations mandating flame-retardant fabrics threatened to mire the mattress industry nationally, it was Anderson who turned lemons into lemonade, spinning off a new product line of flame-retardant bed linens, comforters, mattress pads, and even children's pajamas. Using the same treatment equipment they had been forced to purchase for the twelve plants, he turned an enormous additional cost into a fatter bottom line. When Anderson—now a corporate vice president—became intrigued with other challenges three years ago, he put Peter in charge of this new product line with the responsibility to report directly to him. Peter enjoyed the job and the continuing close association with Anderson, whom he consulted frequently and easily. Their years together had only deepened the admiration and devotion Peter felt for Anderson.

But life has definitely become more complicated for Peter of late. The focus of Anderson's curiosity and creativity has evolved from an interest

in improving how BestRest made what they sold, to expanding the line of what BestRest made, to his current interest in the way the company itself is "made." "Everybody in the company is manufacturing something, Peter," Anderson told him one day. "The people in our factories are manufacturing sleep products. Our sales force is manufacturing customers. And those of us in the front office, we're manufacturing the company itself. Ever think of it that way?" Peter said that he hadn't and thought to himself that he wasn't even sure what Anderson really meant. "We're the executives," Anderson said. "And the way we're executing is shaping the way the company works. *Our* product is the company, how we're designing this company. Every manufacturing process can stand some refining, Peter, and so can ours." It wasn't long after this that Anderson began talking about "worker participation" and "collaborative management philosophy." And at their next quarterly check-in on the newer product line, Peter finally learned what all this meant for him.

"If you're game, Peter—and I think you're ready—I want you to think of the new line as a company on its own—SafeSleep Products—and I want you to run it. I want it to be your baby and I want you to think of me more as your banker. Plans, directions, and initiatives will come from you, not from me. You'll have to come to me, sure, when you need more resources to fund your initiatives, just like you'd come to your banker, but it's your baby. I'll review your plans like a banker would, evaluate their soundness, and extend credit or not. But if I do, it's still your project that's getting funded, not mine; it's your plan that's rising or falling, not mine. It'll be your responsibility to come through, make your payments, make a go of *your* business. My responsibility is to the shareholders and owners of the 'bank.' And if I'm skeptical about extending credit or don't want to risk the bank's resources, well, it's still your baby. Tell me why I'm wrong, or tell me to stick it in my ear and find yourself a new banker. Because it's your company, Peter, whaddaya think? You wanna be president of BestRest's SafeSleep division?" Peter could hear the excitement in Anderson's voice, his pleasure in offering Peter what Anderson clearly regarded as a wonderful present. He could feel how much Anderson loved the place to which he had just moved the relationship. So Peter, without hesitation or conscious deliberation and true to his deepest commitment where Anderson was concerned, moved himself to rejoin Anderson in this new place. "I love it," said Peter, like the spouse of a newly restationed military officer, happy to

be reunited with one's partner but looking around in sheer terror at the unfamiliar surroundings, wondering what life here could possibly be like.

Thus Lynn and Peter, the school teacher and the business executive who seldom feel their work has anything in common, find themselves contending with a similar circumstance at work. One job is service-oriented, the other product-oriented; one is nonprofit, the other for-profit; one involves a predominantly female environment, the other a male environment; one has an organizational "culture" distinguished by gentleness, safety, and nurture, the other a culture distinguished by competition, maneuvering, and results. Yet Lynn's and Peter's work lives are both out of equilibrium for the same reason: worker-participation initiatives have recast the issues of responsibility, ownership, and authority at work. One of the central aspirations of such initiatives is surely the revitalization and increased morale of the workforce. But no one would know that by looking at Lynn and Peter. Both are miserable and demoralized about the changes at work. Let's take a closer look to find out why.

"I can give you a typical example of why this thing is not working at Highland," Lynn says. "Probably every department chair and most of the faculty would agree that there are big flaws in the way we do faculty evaluations. First of all, except for the first-year teachers, of whom there are very few, faculty evaluations are based on two class visits by the principal. Two visits, that's it. And it's the principal who does them. They are announced visits, so teachers end up preparing for a perfor-mance, which they resent and which is a lousy basis for evaluation. The teachers don't feel that the principal gets a fair sample of what their work is like. The kids know what's going on and act weird—they're on 'good behavior' too, and completely unspontaneous. The principal writes up a generally innocuous report, which the teacher then pores over like an old Kremlinologist trying to detect the hidden meaning in some routine public communiqué. Usually there is no hidden meaning. The principal is just discharging a duty that she finds as unpleasant and unrewarding as the teachers. Nobody is learning a thing, but at least the principal can tell the central office that 'everyone's been evaluated' and she has the paperwork, neatly typed in the files, to prove it.

"I went along with this like everyone else, but by the time I'd become the English department chair I'd begun to form some very different

ideas about evaluation, about everything, really. I got the idea that the school should be a Learning Place for *everyone*, that we're supposed to be experts on learning, that we could evaluate everything we're doing on the basis of whether it's prolearning or not. I know my own kids are unbelievably aware of what Peter and I do; we teach them more by modeling than by explaining. I decided that if we want kids to be learning in school it would help them if we modeled learning ourselves. It was actually some version of this that got me excited about being on the Leadership Council in the first place. When Highland was deciding whether to go to school-based management, at first I felt, 'What business do I have *administering* the school? That's management stuff, the kind of thing Peter knows about, and, to give her her due, the kind of thing Carolyn, our principal, knows about. It's not what I know about.' But then I felt, 'Well, it's good that Carolyn knows about how organizations work, and that's the special expertise she brings and why she's the principal. But I know a lot about what promotes learning and what gets in the way of it, and if I could get people to buy my idea of the school as a Learning Place, then this might be the one organization where what I know about would come in handy at the management level.' Something like that.

"Anyway, I had some different ideas about faculty evaluation. I wanted to return the emphasis to learning, not file-filling. I wanted the teachers to identify what their learning agenda was and what they needed to fulfill it. And I wanted to use my chairmanship to advocate that the administrators be interested in supporting the teachers' learning. Especially, once the teacher was tenured, as most of our faculty is, I wanted the principal to get out of the evaluation business. I felt it was better handled within the departments. I thought Carolyn was a good administrator and that that was an honorable profession—after all, I'm married to one—but that it was different from being a school teacher. I felt that she was less effective when she crossed over from her profession into mine. My feeling is that a good hospital administrator runs the hospital well, but she doesn't tell the surgeon where to cut.

"So when Carolyn proposed SBM to our faculty I admired her for being willing to let some other voices come into the leadership of the school, but I wasn't thinking, 'Good, now we're going to take over.' I don't want to take over. I don't want to be the principal. But I don't want Carolyn being the department chair either, and I felt that we had

a better chance of clearing these things up in group discussions, like we'd have on the Council, than in one-on-one meetings in Carolyn's office.

"The whole thing started to fall apart for me this semester around just this issue of faculty evaluation, and it wasn't even my initiative. It's not as if we don't all know each other pretty well by now, but when Alan—he's the history chair—brought in his proposal, it was a complete surprise to me. It was not, as I think Carolyn was suggesting, some kind of conspiracy. There had already been a lot of behind-the-back grumbling about the Council by the faculty before Alan's proposal. The 'Becky and Betty' incident earlier in the year, for example, people found demoralizing.

"Without going into it at great length, two spunky ninth-grade girls—the school goes up to ninth grade—created a stir because they decided they were going to the 'Grad Prom' together as a couple. It's not even what you think. They weren't 'coming out.' They're not gay. And even if they were, Highland has a newly minted nondiscrimination policy. They weren't flouting sexual mores, they were flouting contradictions in *Highland's* mores! Although the graduation prom is a 'couples only' affair, the conventional definition of 'couple' was successfully challenged last year by two senior high school girls who were openly lesbian and were allowed to attend their prom together. Now this year, these two ninth graders, one a class officer and just a super kid, decide that it's ridiculous that they can't go to their own prom just because they don't have dates. 'We could go together if we were lesbians,' one of them says to the other laughing, and then it occurs to them that it's ridiculous that because of what is essentially the private matter of their sexuality they are unable to attend the prom together, when two girls *were* allowed to attend together.

"You can see where this is leading. They insist they have a right to attend together, and claim that the school or the prom committee have no right to inquire into the private matter of their sexuality. Just a wonderful mess! Exactly what happens with kids. They find the flaws in the system, and head right for them. Anyway, the issue was so attractive beyond the school that it became an embarrassment for Carolyn. Or she made it into an embarrassment. There were inquiries from the American Civil Liberties Union. We talked about it at length on the Council and I think the predominant position was that the kids were just pointing out that the whole 'couples only' policy can't be defended;

it no longer makes sense. Once we acknowledged that a homosexual couple was an acceptable couple, then it was no longer possible to decide who was an unacceptable couple without prying into matters that were none of our business. Most of us felt we should drop the 'couples only' rule, congratulate the kids on making an effective point, and laugh at the difficulties we are all having adjusting to a changing world. Besides, where did this 'couples only' craziness for fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds get started in the first place?

"But Carolyn felt differently. She thought the kids were making a mockery of the school's rules and traditions, that they were taking advantage of an open-minded, inclusion-oriented rule—that gay couples were legitimate couples—for their own purposes, and that those purposes included making fools of the grown-ups. Carolyn felt the last thing kids need is to be successful at making the grown-ups in charge into fools. She also objected to the idea of dropping the couple rule entirely, claiming it was a bad message to say that acknowledging diversity leads to giving up the whole idea of couples. Or something like that. I never quite understood the argument. But anyway, the point is not that Carolyn's position was unreasonable. The troubling thing was that her position was *clearly* a minority position on the Council, but because the case was briefly a tempest in a teapot and Carolyn had to respond to the world outside the school, she represented her own opinion as the school's opinion. This made the rest of us on the Council feel upset: 'Wait a minute! Who are *we*? An advisory committee to the principal?' Granted, she was in a difficult position. You always are when there's negative publicity and the local station wants to bring in television cameras. And it's even worse if you have to represent a position you do not completely agree with yourself. But, hey, that's what team management is all about. She could have represented the division within the Council. She could even have said she was not herself neutral with regard to this division. But a lot of us felt that she undermined the Council when she didn't even include the prevailing view.

"People on the Council started to have their doubts. You know, 'Oh, I guess "school-based management" means that the principal still calls all the shots, but she just consults with more people before she makes up her mind.' Some people felt they weren't interested in the time commitment or the pretense to collaboration if they were just going to be a consultative group. I felt it was bad timing and not a fair test of Carolyn's relation to the Council. School issues that make the local

newspaper are scary, and the new management system is in an early phase. We're *all* getting used to it. I didn't like how Carolyn handled it, but I could see how, under pressure, she might have reverted to the more familiar and well-tested format for how the school is run. Still, you can see there were already some misgivings when Alan made his proposal about faculty evaluation.

"Alan's proposal, basically, was that the history department be allowed to run a one-year experiment on evaluation. He wanted to get the performance-anxiety, test-taking dimension out of it. He wanted people to have the option of entering supervisory relationships with him or a few other senior members of the department that would really be more consultative than supervisory. No write-ups or evaluations of the teacher by the supervisor/consultant. The supervisor/consultant would, in effect, be 'hired' by the faculty member to advance the faculty member's learning goals. The teacher could 'fire' the consultant without consequences. No visits by the principal. If the teacher wanted the consultant to visit some classes for the teacher's purposes, that could certainly be arranged, but not for the purpose of entering something in the faculty member's file. No file entries for one year. Alan proposed that he would study and document the project over the year, try to get a sense of how the faculty used it and how much and what kind of learning was going on, but all anonymously, evaluating the experiment, not the teachers. That was basically it.

"I loved the idea, of course. I was envious that I hadn't thought of it myself. It seemed like a good way of putting into operation my idea that the faculty member should run his 'evaluation,' that the evaluation should be aimed at learning, not putting on a show, that the chair could serve as a consultant and a resource to self-directed learning.

"We've now had three long discussions about this on the Council, and we still haven't had the first word about the real merits of Alan's proposal. As I now realize I should have been more aware, the issue for Carolyn had less to do with promoting faculty learning than with the precedent it sets about accountability in general and accountability to her specifically. Stop visits by the principal? Let the faculty decide what they need to learn? No evaluations for the files by *anybody?* These didn't go down easily with Carolyn. Rather than take her usual stance of speaking last in a conversation in order to give everyone a chance to weigh in on the matter, she was the first to speak after Alan made his proposal, and what she had to say pretty much silenced the rest of us.

She didn't identify any merits in the proposal. She didn't even acknowledge the implicit problems the proposal was at least trying to address. She didn't present her problems with the proposal as just *her* problems, which could still leave open for discussion whether these needed to determine the *group's* actual decision. She didn't invite anyone to help her with her problems with the proposal. She just said basically, 'This is something we can't do.'

"I'm not proud of the way I responded, but it was just such a unilateral and imperial stance for her to take, and I guess I got mad. What I said was, 'Why, Carolyn? Is it illegal what Alan is proposing?' and everyone else laughed and I could see that Carolyn was very angry. I hadn't meant it exactly the way it came out. I didn't mean she was out of line to object to the proposal. I was reacting to the way she framed it. I meant that Carolyn is the principal, and where the Council strays into areas that may violate civil ordinances or the district charter, she has every right to take a unilateral position. But where the Council is not straying into this kind of territory I didn't feel she had the right to just shut down the conversation. At the time I attributed my overreaction and sarcasm to the fact this was an especially important issue to me personally, and I resented how it was being dismissed. That didn't justify my sarcasm, but it did dignify it somehow.

"Anyhow, after that Council session Carolyn asked to meet with me in her office, and she read me the riot act: How could I do that to her? Didn't I know how much she counted on my loyalty? Didn't I realize how powerful I was as a department chair, and that to take such a doubting view when she had clearly committed herself was terribly undermining? That she thought of us as partners, that we had worked so well together all these years, and how it was even more important with SBM that we read each other's signals well and be a good team. I had to say, 'Whoa, Carolyn, time out, I'm having too many reactions to all this.'

"We ended up having a good conversation, actually, one of our best in years, but it was really difficult. I had to tell her I thought it was unfair of her to trade on my loyalty to her, that that felt like a risky business. I told her I *did* respect her, and that we *were* friends, and I *was* grateful to her for her support to me professionally over the years, but that I was sure she was not interested in a friend who was a clone or in promoting a colleague because she was a yes-man. I had to puzzle through all the different 'teams' we were on because I felt that I was still very much a

team player even when I disagreed with her, although she seemed to feel I was abandoning the team if I disagreed. This got us into the whole SBM, Leadership Council thing, and whether that was itself a team, and what were the expectations about how we functioned as members of that Council. Carolyn broke down and cried and said she was finding SBM terribly hard, that she had had no idea what she was getting into, that half the time she had nightmares that the school was going to fall apart because there was more chaos than leadership, and the other half of the time she had nightmares that the school was getting along too well without her running things and that she was slowly being relieved of her job, that SBM was about gradually making the principal irrelevant.

"So I'm not sure where we are now in this great experiment, but I do feel that the superintendent's office was incredibly naive about the way they instituted SBM. A couple of explanatory meetings and a faculty discussion do not prepare you to vote on a change of governance as profound as this. When people voted for SBM they voted for their own fantasy of what a more collaboratively run school would look and feel like. People weren't voting for a messy process, perhaps a very *long* process, in which everyone involved, faculty and principal, gradually *learn* how to collaborate. I left my meeting with Carolyn feeling that I and a lot of the other faculty had been unfair in blaming her for derailing SBM. If Highland's going to be a Learning Place for everyone then Carolyn has a right to a Learning Place, too, and it's obvious to me that SBM is a challenging curriculum for Carolyn, and those of us on the Council were doing a lousy job making it a good Learning Place for her. I was expecting her to just jump right into this collaborative mode, no problem. I was feeling very impatient with her for not knowing how to do it. It was like being mad at your students in the fall for not already knowing what you're hoping they'll learn by the end of the year!

"And I realized that my sarcasm toward her in that meeting was not just about my sacred commitment to a learning approach to faculty evaluation. There was a less noble side to it. I'm not the greatest person at actually living out everything I say I believe. I run into my own roadblocks, the things I get afraid of, and deep down I think I'm quite ashamed of my own inhibitions. I don't like experiencing myself that way, and so, like most people, I find ways to make sure I do *not* experience myself that way too often—not by being less inhibited, mind you, but just by finding ways to avoid facing that I am. Anyway, I'm sure

something of this gets involved in my annoyed impatience with Carolyn for not living up to the spirit of what SBM is supposed to be about. I don't like the 'me' I see in her, so I take it out on her instead, or something like that.

"So that's it. I'm not sure we're going to succeed at this thing. I don't know if Carolyn will really want to support SBM as she learns more about what it really means. I don't know if the rest of us can be good enough supports to her learning. I don't know if it's possible for everyone to readjust their expectations about the learning *process* we all have to go through to get from unilateral to collaborative leadership. I guess we can all share some of the responsibility for the fix we're in. The district may have been naive in their planning and preparation, but we're supposed to be educators ourselves, and we were naive to think you can go from not knowing to knowing with no messy learning phase in between."

Nothing has felt quite right to Peter since Anderson established Safe-Sleep as a company-within-the-company and made Peter its president. In congratulatory teasing his friends and family have asked Peter if he felt any different, now that he was a president and he always said, "No, I have the same office, same desk, same secretary, and, at least as of now, the same salary. I'm running the same operation I've been running for the last three years." It was the same operation, but in truth he did not feel the same. He noticed that he did not say, "I have the same boss," even though, as far as he was concerned, Anderson Wright was still his boss. "I have the same boss," Peter thought to himself, "but my boss is not the same."

Were Peter to tell us what it *really* felt like to be "Mr. President," he might say something like this: "Honestly? It's definitely a different ballgame! What game is it? Well, let's see. I guess you could say before I was president, I was playing a game of catch. Anderson would throw things at me and I'd catch them. I'd throw things back at him and he'd catch them. A good long game of catch. And now? Now I'd say I'm a juggler. There's not one ball, there are five, and then there are ten, and then there are fifteen! People keep tossing more in to me to add to those I'm juggling. But I'm not throwing to anyone. I'm just throwing them into the air. As soon as I get them I just toss them back into the air. And my job as the juggler is to keep them all going up there, not let any of them drop to the ground.

"You couldn't believe the number of things that come across my desk. 'Anderson says to take this to you now.' 'Anderson says he's not the guy on this anymore; you are.' I bet I heard that twenty times the first month we set up SafeSleep. If it wasn't one thing, it was another. You have to deal with a lot of people's feelings about this change. Everybody thought the company concept for SafeSleep was a hot idea when Anderson proposed it, but now that we're actually doing it, a lot of people aren't so sure. I told Lynn the other night I'm not even sure *Anderson's* so sure at this point. People keep asking me how I feel about the change, but the truth is, I don't have time to think about how I feel about it because I spend half my day dealing with how everybody *else* feels about it."

"Take Ted, for example. He's one of our salespeople. I've known Ted ten years in this business. His son and my Matthew are like brothers; they grew up in each other's homes. I probably see Ted's son as much as my own. Ted's putting a lot of pressure on me not to separate him from the SafeSleep line. Ted's a mattress salesman and a damn good one. He does excellent work for his customers. His customers are furniture stores and the mattress departments of two large chains of department stores. They love him and he loves them. The SafeSleep line got its start by accident, or what Anderson called 'entrepreneurial jujitsu,' turning a weakness into a strength. New government codes mandated that we manufacture flame-retardant mattresses and it cost millions of dollars to set up the capacity. Since we had the capacity, Anderson reasoned, why not use it for other things, too? Presto! The SafeSleep line. But originally these products were just an 'extra' that the mattress salespeople offered their furniture stores. The store used them as 'sweeteners' to sell their customers our top-of-the-line mattresses. They'd throw in a king-size quilt along with the purchase of a king-size mattress and box spring. Stuff like that. Everybody was happy. The furniture store's customer liked the freebie; the store liked the mattress sale; our salespeople liked the increased mattress orders they got from the stores. And that's just the problem. Everybody was happy. 'So why are you ruining a nice thing?' Ted wants to know. 'Peter, I'm family,' he says to me. 'And Harold is not,' which is true. 'So why are you letting this guy take the bread off my table?' he says.

"I hired Harold soon after I became president of SafeSleep because Harold had sales experience in bedclothes. He was the first nonmattress salesperson in the place, and I thought we needed that for the new com-

pany. He's turned out to be a dynamo. The guy's got more ideas per square inch than I've ever seen, and most of them make sense. But they're also making some people, like Ted, mad. And I'm not so sure Anderson's very keen about him either.

"Harold's take was that BestRest was choking SafeSleep, that the best reason for setting up SafeSleep as a separate company was that its growth was stunted in the shadow of the mattress company. Furniture stores, he said, were not the place to be selling pajamas and not even the best place to sell quilts. He said our products were better than premium giveaways and should be promoted on their own merits. We should be placing them in the bed linen and pajama departments of our department stores, not the furniture and mattress departments. We should be making flame-retardant pajamas for grown-ups, not just kids. Grown-ups smoke in bed and are more likely to set themselves on fire than kids are. And on and on. It all made sense to me, but whenever you start talking about doing things differently people get worried about what it means for them. Harold said our real problem was that BestRest had a national sales force of mattress salespeople, not pajama salespeople. BestRest's customers were furniture stores, not pajama stores, that the conventions, shows, trade press, and brand recognition for BestRest are all oriented to the furniture trade, not bedclothes, white sales, or children's clothing. His view is that if SafeSleep is really going to be its own company, it needs its own *identity*, its own *purpose*, and its own *sales force* selling to its own *customers*. It has to get out of the hip pocket of BestRest.

"The problem with this is that as soon as you pull the SafeSleep line away from the mattress sales force, a guy like Ted, who has gotten a lot of mileage out of it, yells 'ouch.' I think Harold's basically right when he says that you can't establish the quality of a product by giving it away in one place and hoping to sell it somewhere else. But Ted's probably right, too, that his mattress orders will go down, at least for a while, if we pull the SafeSleep line from him, because that's what's already happened where we've begun to separate the line from the mattress business. Ted's not just worried about his volume, he's worried about his bonus benefits. He's doing one helluva job making me feel guilty, that it will be on my head to explain to both of our wives why he and Ada won't be along on this winter's 'customer cruise' since he'll be coming in under quota and won't qualify for the trip. Why doesn't he go make his *stores* feel guilty? It's their fault if they short-order him, not mine.

But the truth is, Lynn and I had dinner with Ted and Ada last week and it was not a good time. You could feel the tension. By the end of the evening, I'd gone from feeling bad that I was making them both unhappy to being angry at them for making me so miserable. What right did they have making me feel guilty? I'm trying to run a business and they're upset about the Bahamas. Give me a break!

"I consider Ted and Anderson two of my best friends and if this new job ruins both of these friendships I won't be surprised. When Anderson offered me the presidency he said it was a way to move our relationship to a whole new level, that we were becoming true colleagues, that he couldn't wait to see what would come of it. It's a whole new level all right! I guess if you never want to see a guy again you should become true colleagues with him! But I know if you ask Anderson he'll say he's just as available, that it's *me*, that *I* don't call. And that's true. I just stay away from him these days and figure that when he needs to tell me something he will. I'd leave our meetings feeling as if we'd talked a lot but I had no clearer idea where I was when I left than when I'd come in. I'd run my sense of what was going on with SafeSleep or what needed to happen by him, and I'd have no idea where he stood on any of it. Half the time I felt he couldn't care less and had lost interest in the whole thing. Then he'd make some kind of comment like 'Nobody smokes anymore,' when I'd bring up Harold's idea about an adult pajama line, and I'd spend a week trying to figure out which way the wind was blowing.

"It was very clear that he didn't want to be asked straight out what he thought we should do. It was very clear that he wanted me to have a plan. But it was also clear that he liked some plans better than others. He'd dump all over a lot of Harold's ideas. I'd leave his office and find myself down on Harold for the next three days. I'd feel that he was trying to warn me away from Harold but wouldn't come right out and say so. What I'd always liked about Anderson was that he was a straight shooter. He'd always tell you exactly what he wanted, and what he said he wanted turned out to be exactly what he really did want. You didn't have to decode him.

"I find him a lot harder to read right now and it makes me uneasy. One meeting he tells me to quit worrying about Ted and the Bahamas and start worrying about two hundred Teds and the BestRest CEO who's going to see *all* his sales numbers down when we get SafeSleep completely out of the BestRest bloodstream. I left his office totally hu-

miliated. I felt that I'd completely missed the boat. I felt the way you feel when you buy your first car and think you've figured out exactly what your monthly costs will be, and then they come at you with six different additional items and the government wants an excise tax and you feel you just didn't know what it was really all about. I figured he thought I was doing a worthless job and was probably the wrong guy for the job anyway. And then the next time I meet him he's all enthusiastic about getting SafeSleep its own sales force and its own customer base, and I'm thinking, 'What about the CEO?' He doesn't tell me he thinks I'm doing well and he doesn't tell me I'm screwing up. The only thing I know for sure is he'd be disappointed in me somehow if I had to ask.

"We had some pretty clear ways to measure how SafeSleep was doing when I was just running it as a division reporting to him. But the bottom line is just one number now, and if we go ahead with the things Harold and I are talking about, it's not going to be the pretty number it was. Pulling the products out of the furniture stores, establishing new customer groupings, testing a market for flame-resistant sleepwear for adults, running our own ad campaign separate from BestRest—all these things are going to put us way down in the red for the short haul. How do you evaluate something like that? I want Anderson to sign on to these plans and he keeps saying, 'If this is where *you* want to put *your* chips.' I feel that he's putting me out on a limb all by myself and saying he's down on the ground cheering for me. A fat lot of help that is! When I tell him it must be nice for him to be out of it he gets annoyed and says, 'Don't think for a minute I'm out of it! You're turning Safe-Sleep from a cute afterthought into a corporate factor, and if it goes down the tubes they'll be asking me what happened.' And then I feel even less reassured because now I'm responsible for *Anderson's* not getting hurt. That's a lot of what's different about being the president. I've got to worry about Ted. I've got to worry about Anderson. The balls keep dropping into my hands and I keep throwing them back up into the air and somehow it's all supposed to keep going and no one is supposed to fall to the ground. My arms are getting awfully tired, and I'm not exactly sure what I did to deserve this wonderful job."

Strategy at Work: Principles and Practice

Tuesday, March 19, 1:30 - 4:30 PM

Mary Louise Hatten

Overview:

During our time together this afternoon, we will:

- Describe key concepts of strategic thinking
- See strategy in action by discussing a one page case (to be handed out)
- Consider the strategy your organization has had in the past, and
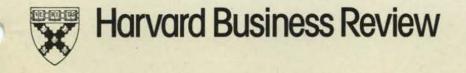- Begin to generate a strategy for your future.

Readings:

The bulk of research in strategy has, of course, been done on the corporate model. The readings selected are wide-ranging and are broadly applicable so that you might gain a sense of the richness of strategy as well as some vocabulary which you may find useful in working with your board and other stakeholders with "for profit" experience.

Begin with Peter Drucker's article, "What Business Can Learn from Nonprofits." Certainly, nonprofits need successful strategies, and Peter Drucker writes that the nonprofit experience offers interesting lessons for those in business.

The Kaplan and Norton article, "Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System" reinforces the importance of multiple measures in defining strategy progress and success-and multiple measures are critical for complexity of educational institutions.

What Business Can Learn from Nonprofits

by Peter F. Drucker

Harvard Business Review

Harvard Business Review

July-August **89** Number **4**

*The best management practice and most innovative
methods now come from the Girl Scouts and the Salvation Army.*

What Business Can Learn from Nonprofits

by Peter F. Drucker

The Girl Scouts, the Red Cross, the pastoral churches – our nonprofit organizations – are becoming America's management leaders. In two areas, strategy and the effectiveness of the board, they are practicing what most American businesses only preach. And in the most crucial area – the motivation and productivity of knowledge workers – they are truly pioneers, working out the policies and practices that business will have to learn tomorrow.

Few people are aware that the nonprofit sector is by far America's largest employer. Every other adult – a total of 80 million plus people – works as a volunteer, giving on average nearly five hours each week to one or several nonprofit organizations. This is equal to 10 million full-time jobs. Were volunteers paid, their wages, even at minimum rate, would amount to some $150 billion, or 5% of GNP. And volunteer work is changing fast. To be sure, what many do requires little skill or judgment: collecting in the neighborhood for the Community Chest one Saturday afternoon a year, chaperoning youngsters selling Girl Scout cookies door to door, driving old people to the doctor. But more and more volunteers are becoming "unpaid staff," taking over the professional and managerial tasks in their organizations.

Not all nonprofits have been doing well, of course. A good many community hospitals are in dire straits. Traditional churches and synagogues of all per-suasions – liberal, conservative, evangelical, fundamentalist – are still steadily losing members. Indeed, the sector overall has not expanded in the last 10 or 15 years, either in terms of the money it raises (when adjusted for inflation) or in the number of volunteers. Yet in its productivity, in the scope of its work and in its contribution to American society, the nonprofit sector has grown tremendously in the last two decades.

The Salvation Army is an example. People convicted to their first prison term in Florida, mostly very poor black or Hispanic youths, are now paroled into the Salvation Army's custody – about 25,000

> **The Salvation Army rehabilitates some 20,000 young criminals each year for a fraction of what it would cost to keep them in jail.**

Peter F. Drucker is the Marie Rankin Clarke Professor of Social Sciences and Management at the Claremont Graduate School, which has named its management center after him. His most recent book is The New Realities *(Harper & Row, 1989). This is Mr. Drucker's twenty-sixth article in HBR.*

each year. Statistics show that if these young men and women go to jail the majority will become habitual criminals. But the Salvation Army has been able to rehabilitate 80% of them through a strict work program run largely by volunteers. And the program costs a fraction of what it would to keep the offenders behind bars.

Underlying this program and many other effective nonprofit endeavors is a commitment to management. Twenty years ago, management was a dirty word for those involved in nonprofit organizations. It meant business, and nonprofits prided themselves on being free of the taint of commercialism and above such sordid considerations as the bottom line. Now most of them have learned that nonprofits need management even more than business does, precisely because they lack the discipline of the bottom line. The nonprofits are, of course, still dedicated to "doing good." But they also realize that good intentions are no substitute for organization and leadership, for accountability, performance, and results. Those require management and that, in turn, begins with the organization's mission.

As a rule, nonprofits are more money-conscious than business enterprises are. They talk and worry about money much of the time because it is so hard to raise and because they always have so much less of it than they need. But nonprofits do not base their strategy on money, nor do they make it the center of their plans, as so many corporate executives do. "The businesses I work with start their planning with financial returns," says one well-known CEO who sits on both business and nonprofit boards. "The nonprofits start with the performance of their mission."

Starting with the mission and its requirements may be the first lesson business can learn from successful nonprofits. It focuses the organization on action. It defines the specific strategies needed to attain the crucial goals. It creates a disciplined organization. It alone can prevent the most common degenerative disease of organizations, especially large ones: splintering their always limited resources on things that are "interesting" or look "profitable" rather than concentrating them on a very small number of productive efforts.

The best nonprofits devote a great deal of thought to defining their organization's mission. They avoid sweeping statements full of good intentions and focus, instead, on objectives that have clear-cut implications for the work their members perform—staff and volunteers both. The Salvation Army's goal, for example, is to turn society's rejects—alcoholics, criminals, derelicts—into citizens. The Girl Scouts

help youngsters become confident, capable young women who respect themselves and other people. The Nature Conservancy preserves the diversity of nature's fauna and flora. Nonprofits also start with the environment, the community, the "customers" to be; they do not, as American businesses tend to do, start with the inside, that is, with the organization or with financial returns.

Willowcreek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, outside Chicago, has become the nation's largest church—some 13,000 parishioners.

Nonprofits need management precisely because they don't have a bottom line.

Yet it is barely 15 years old. Bill Hybels, in his early twenties when he founded the church, chose the community because it had relatively few church-goers, though the population was growing fast and churches were plentiful. He went from door to door asking, "Why don't you go to church?" Then he designed a church to answer the potential customers' needs: for instance, it offers full services on Wednesday evenings because many working parents need Sunday to spend with their children. Moreover, Hybels continues to listen and react. The pastor's sermon is taped while it is being delivered and instantly reproduced so that parishioners can pick up a cassette when they leave the building because he was told again and again, "I need to listen when I drive home or drive to work so that I can build the message into my life." But he was also told: "The sermon always tells me to change my life but never how to do it." So now every one of Hybels's sermons ends with specific action recommendations.

A well-defined mission serves as a constant reminder of the need to look outside the organization not only for "customers" but also for measures of success. The temptation to content oneself with the "goodness of our cause"—and thus to substitute good intentions for results—always exists in nonprofit organizations. It is precisely because of this that the successful and performing nonprofits have learned to define clearly what changes *outside* the organization constitute "results" and to focus on them.

The experience of one large Catholic hospital chain in the Southwest shows how productive a clear sense of mission and a focus on results can be. Despite the sharp cuts in Medicare payments and hospital stays during the past eight years, this chain has increased revenues by 15% (thereby managing to break even) while greatly expanding its services and

raising both patient-care and medical standards. It has done so because the nun who is its CEO understood that she and her staff are in the business of delivering health care (especially to the poor), not running hospitals.

As a result, when health care delivery began moving out of hospitals for medical rather than economic reasons about ten years ago, the chain promoted the trend instead of fighting it. It founded ambulatory surgery centers, rehabilitation centers, X-ray and lab networks, HMOs, and so on. The chain's motto was: "If it's in the patient's interest, we have to promote it; it's then our job to make it pay." Paradoxically, the policy has filled the chain's hospitals; the free-standing facilities are so popular they generate a steady stream of referrals.

This is, of course, not so different from the marketing strategy of successful Japanese companies. But it is very different indeed from the way most Western businesses think and operate. And the difference is that the Catholic nuns – and the Japanese – start with the mission rather than with their own rewards, and with what they have to make happen outside themselves, in the marketplace, to deserve a reward.

Finally, a clearly defined mission will foster innovative ideas and help others understand why they need to be implemented – however much they fly in the face of tradition. To illustrate, consider the Daisy Scouts, a program for five-year-olds which the Girl Scouts initiated a few years back. For 75 years, first grade had been the minimum age for entry into a Brownie troop, and many Girl Scout councils wanted to keep it that way. Others, however, looked at demographics and saw the growing numbers of working women with "latch key" kids. They also looked at the children and realized that they were far more sophisticated than their predecessors a generation ago (largely thanks to TV).

Today the Daisy Scouts are 100,000 strong and growing fast. It is by far the most successful of the many programs for preschoolers that have been started these last 20 years, and far more successful than any of the very expensive government programs. Moreover, it is so far the only program that has seen these critical demographic changes and children's exposure to long hours of TV viewing as an opportunity.

Many nonprofits now have what is still the exception in business – a functioning board. They also have something even rarer: a CEO who is clearly accountable to the board and whose performance is reviewed annually by a board committee. And they have what is rarer still: a board whose performance is reviewed

annually against preset performance objectives. Effective use of the board is thus a second area in which business can learn from the nonprofit sector.

In U.S. law, the board of directors is still considered the "managing" organ of the corporation. Manage-

What do a large Catholic hospital chain and successful Japanese companies have in common?

ment authors and scholars agree that strong boards are essential and have been writing to that effect for more than 20 years, beginning with Myles Mace's pioneering work.[1] Nevertheless, the top managements of our large companies have been whittling away at the directors' role, power, and independence for more than half a century. In every single business failure of a large company in the last few decades, the board was the last to realize that things were going wrong. To find a truly effective board, you are much better advised to look in the nonprofit sector than in our public corporations.

In part, this difference is a product of history. Traditionally, the board has run the shop in nonprofit organizations – or tried to. In fact, it is only because nonprofits have grown too big and complex to be run by part-time outsiders, meeting for three hours a month, that so many have shifted to professional management. The American Red Cross is probably the largest nongovernmental agency in the world and certainly one of the most complex. It is responsible for worldwide disaster relief; it runs thousands of blood banks as well as the bone and skin banks in hospitals; it conducts training in cardiac and respiratory rescue nationwide; and it gives first-aid courses in thousands of schools. Yet it did not have a paid chief executive until 1950, and its first professional CEO came only with the Reagan era.

But however common professional management becomes – and professional CEOs are now found in most nonprofits and all the bigger ones – nonprofit boards cannot, as a rule, be rendered impotent the way so many business boards have been. No matter how much nonprofit CEOs would welcome it – and quite a few surely would – nonprofit boards cannot become their rubber stamp. Money is one reason. Few directors in publicly held corporations are substantial shareholders, whereas directors on nonprofit boards very often contribute large sums themselves, and are expected to bring in donors as

1. A good example is Myles Mace, "The President and the Board of Directors," HBR March-April 1972, p. 37.

well. But also, nonprofit directors tend to have a personal commitment to the organization's cause. Few people sit on a church vestry or on a school board unless they deeply care about religion or education. Moreover, nonprofit board members typically have served as volunteers themselves for a good many years and are deeply knowledgeable about the organization, unlike outside directors in a business.

Precisely because the nonprofit board is so committed and active, its relationship with the CEO tends to be highly contentious and full of potential for friction. Nonprofit CEOs complain that their board "meddles." The directors, in turn, complain that management "usurps" the board's function. This has forced an increasing number of nonprofits to realize that neither board nor CEO is "the boss." They are colleagues, working for the same goal but

The key to making a board effective is to organize its work, not talk about its function.

each having a different task. And they have learned that it is the CEO's responsibility to define the tasks of each, the board's and his or her own.

For example, a large electric co-op in the Pacific Northwest created ten board committees, one for every member. Each has a specific work assignment: community relations, electricity rates, personnel, service standards, and so on. Together with the co-op's volunteer chairman and its paid CEO, each of these one-person committees defines its one-year and three-year objectives and the work needed to attain them, which usually requires five to eight days a year from the board member. The chairman reviews each member's work and performance every year, and a member whose performance is found wanting two years in a row cannot stand for reelection. In addition, the chairman, together with three other board members, annually reviews the performance of the entire board and of the CEO.

The key to making a board effective, as this example suggests, is not to talk about its function but to organize its work. More and more nonprofits are doing just that, among them half a dozen fair-sized liberal arts colleges, a leading theological seminary, and some large research hospitals and museums. Ironically, these approaches reinvent the way the first nonprofit board in America was set up 300 years ago: the Harvard University Board of Overseers. Each member is assigned as a "visitor" to one area in the university—the Medical School, the Astronomy Department, the investment of the endowment—and

acts both as a source of knowledge to that area and as a critic of its performance. It is a common saying in American academia that Harvard has the only board that makes a difference.

The weakening of the large corporation's board would, many of us predicted (beginning with Myles Mace), weaken management rather than strengthen it. It would diffuse management's accountability for performance and results; and indeed, it is the rare big-company board that reviews the CEO's performance against preset business objectives. Weakening the board would also, we predicted, deprive top management of effective and credible support if it were attacked. These predictions have been borne out amply in the recent rash of hostile takeovers.

To restore management's ability to manage we will have to make boards effective again—and that should be considered a responsibility of the CEO. A few first steps have been taken. The audit committee in most companies now has a real rather than a make-believe job responsibility. A few companies—though so far almost no large ones—have a small board committee on succession and executive development, which regularly meets with senior executives to discuss their performance and their plans. But I know of no company so far where there are work plans for the board and any kind of review of the board's performance. And few do what the larger nonprofits now do routinely: put a new board member through systematic training.

Nonprofits used to say, "We don't pay volunteers so we cannot make demands upon them." Now they are more likely to say, "Volunteers must get far greater satisfaction from their accomplishments and make a greater contribution precisely because they do not get a paycheck." The steady transformation of the volunteer from well-meaning amateur to trained, professional, unpaid staff member is the most significant development in the nonprofit sector—as well as the one with the most far-reaching implications for tomorrow's businesses.

A Midwestern Catholic diocese may have come furthest in this process. It now has fewer than half the priests and nuns it had only 15 years ago. Yet it has greatly expanded its activities—in some cases, such as help for the homeless and for drug abusers, more than doubling them. It still has many traditional volunteers like the Altar Guild members who arrange flowers. But now it is also being served by some 2,000 part-time unpaid staff who run the Catholic charities, perform administrative jobs in parochial schools, and organize youth activities, college Newman Clubs, and even some retreats.

A similar change has taken place at the First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, one of the largest and oldest churches in the Southern Baptist Convention. When Dr. Peter James Flamming took over five years ago, the church had been going downhill for many years, as is typical of old, inner-city churches. Today it again has 4,000 communicants and runs a dozen community outreach programs as well as a full complement of in-church ministries. The church has only nine paid full-time employees. But of its 4,000 communicants, 1,000 serve as unpaid staff.

This development is by no means confined to religious organizations. The American Heart Association has chapters in every city of any size throughout the country. Yet its paid staff is limited to those at national headquarters, with just a few traveling troubleshooters serving the field. Volunteers manage and staff the chapters, with full responsibility for community health education as well as fund raising.

These changes are, in part, a response to need. With close to half the adult population already serving as volunteers, their overall number is unlikely to grow. And with money always in short supply, the nonprofits cannot add paid staff. If they want to add to their activities – and needs are growing – they have to make volunteers more productive, have to give them more work and more responsibility. But the major impetus for the change in the volunteer's role has come from the volunteers themselves.

More and more volunteers are educated people in managerial or professional jobs – some preretirement men and women in their fifties, even more babyboomers who are reaching their mid-thirties or forties. These people are not satisfied with being help-

> Nonprofits used to say, "We don't pay volunteers so we can't demand much." Now they say, "Because we don't pay, we have to demand even more."

ers. They are knowledge workers in the jobs in which they earn their living, and they want to be knowledge workers in the jobs in which they contribute to society – that is, their volunteer work. If nonprofit organizations want to attract and hold them, they have to put their competence and knowledge to work. They have to offer meaningful achievement.

Many nonprofits systematically recruit for such people. Seasoned volunteers are assigned to scan the newcomers – the new member in a church or synagogue, the neighbor who collects for the Red Cross –

to find those with leadership talent and persuade them to try themselves in more demanding assignments. Then senior staff (either a full-timer on the payroll or a seasoned volunteer) interviews the newcomers to assess their strengths and place them accordingly. Volunteers may also be assigned both a mentor and a supervisor with whom they work out their performance goals. These advisers are two different people, as a rule, and both, ordinarily, volunteers themselves.

The Girl Scouts, which employs 730,000 volunteers and only 6,000 paid staff for 3½ million girl members, works this way. A volunteer typically starts by driving youngsters once a week to a meeting. Then a more seasoned volunteer draws her into other work – accompanying Girl Scouts selling cookies door-to-door, assisting a Brownie leader on a camping trip. Out of this step-by-step process evolve the volunteer boards of the local councils and, eventually, the Girl Scouts governing organ, the National Board. Each step, even the very first, has its own compulsory training program, usually conducted by a woman who is herself a volunteer. Each has specific performance standards and performance goals.

What do these unpaid staff people themselves demand? What makes them stay – and, of course, they can leave at any time. Their first and most important demand is that the nonprofit have a clear mission, one that drives everything the organization does. A senior vice president in a large regional bank has two small children. Yet she just took over as chair of the state chapter of Nature Conservancy, which finds, buys, and manages endangered natural ecologies. "I love my job," she said, when I asked her why she took on such heavy additional work, "and of course the bank has a creed. But it doesn't really know what it contributes. At Nature Conservancy, I know what I am here for."

The second thing this new breed requires, indeed demands, is training, training, and more training. And, in turn, the most effective way to motivate and hold veterans is to recognize their expertise and use them to train newcomers. Then these knowledge workers demand responsibility – above all, for thinking through and setting their own performance goals. They expect to be consulted and to participate in making decisions that affect their work and the work of the organization as a whole. And they expect opportunities for advancement, that is, a chance to take on more demanding assignments and more responsibility as their performance warrants. That is why a good many nonprofits have developed career ladders for their volunteers.

Supporting all this activity is accountability. Many of today's knowledge-worker volunteers insist on

having their performance reviewed against preset objectives at least once a year. And increasingly, they expect their organizations to remove nonperformers by moving them to other assignments that better fit their capacities or by counseling them to leave. "It's worse than the Marine Corps boot camp," says the priest in charge of volunteers in the Midwestern diocese, "but we have 400 people on the waiting list." One large and growing Midwestern art museum requires of its volunteers—board members, fundraisers, docents, and the people who edit the museum's newsletter—that they set their goals each year, appraise themselves against these goals each year, and resign when they fail to meet their goals two years in a row. So does a fair-sized Jewish organization working on college campuses.

These volunteer professionals are still a minority, but a significant one—perhaps a tenth of the total volunteer population. And they are growing in numbers and, more important, in their impact on the nonprofit sector. Increasingly, nonprofits say what the minister in a large pastoral church says: "There is no laity in this church; there are only pastors, a few paid, most unpaid."

This move from nonprofit volunteer to unpaid professional may be the most important development in American society today. We hear a great deal about the decay and dissolution of family and community and about the loss of values. And, of course, there is reason for concern. But the

> When I ask executives why they volunteer, too many say, "Because there isn't enough challenge in my job."

nonprofits are generating a powerful countercurrent. They are forging new bonds of community, a new commitment to active citizenship, to social responsibility, to values. And surely what the nonprofit contributes to the volunteer is as important as what the volunteer contributes to the nonprofit. Indeed, it may be fully as important as the service, whether religious, educational, or welfare related, that the nonprofit provides in the community.

This development also carries a clear lesson for business. Managing the knowledge worker for pro-

"You look like you mean business, Hadley."

ductivity is the challenge ahead for American management. The nonprofits are showing us how to do that. It requires a clear mission, careful placement and continuous learning and teaching, management by objectives and self-control, high demands but corresponding responsibility, and accountability for performance and results.

There is also, however, a clear warning to American business in this transformation of volunteer work. The students in the program for senior and middle-level executives in which I teach work in a wide diversity of businesses: banks and insurance companies, large retail chains, aerospace and computer companies, real estate developers, and many others. But most of them also serve as volunteers in nonprofits—in a church, on the board of the college they graduated from, as scout leaders, with the YMCA or the Community Chest or the local symphony orchestra. When I ask them why they do it, far too many give the same answer: Because in my job there isn't much challenge, not enough achievement, not enough responsibility; and there is no mission, there is only expediency.

Reprint 89404

Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System

by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton

Harvard Business Review

Harvard Business Review

*Building a scorecard can help managers link today's
actions with tomorrow's goals.*

Using the Balanced Scorecard as a Strategic Management System

by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton

As companies around the world transform themselves for competition that is based on information, their ability to exploit intangible assets has become far more decisive than their ability to invest in and manage physical assets. Several years ago, in recognition of this change, we introduced a concept we called the *balanced scorecard*. The balanced scorecard supplemented traditional financial measures with criteria that measured performance from three additional perspectives – those of customers, internal business processes, and learning and growth. (See the chart "Translating Vision and Strategy: Four Perspectives.") It therefore enabled companies to track financial results while simultaneously monitoring progress in building the capabilities and acquiring the intangible assets they would need for future growth. The scorecard wasn't a replacement for financial measures; it was their complement.
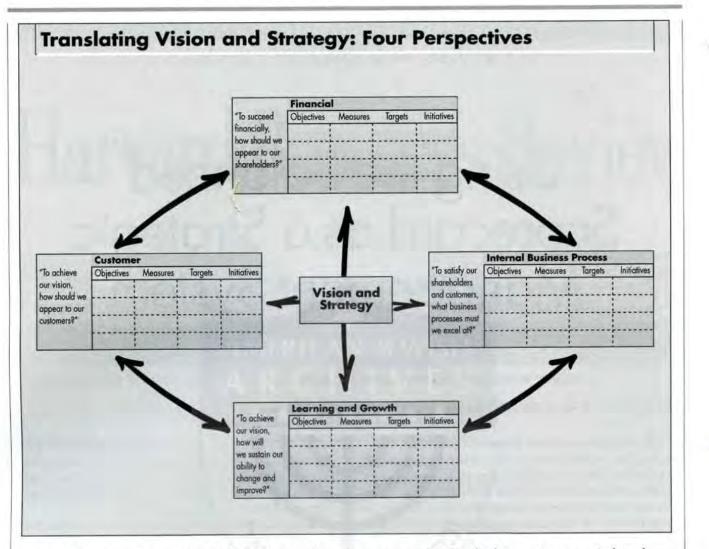
Recently, we have seen some companies move beyond our early vision for the scorecard to discover its value as the cornerstone of a new strategic management system. Used this way, the scorecard addresses a serious deficiency in traditional management systems: their inability to link a company's long-term strategy with its short-term actions.

Most companies' operational and management control systems are built around financial measures and targets, which bear little relation to the company's progress in achieving long-term strategic objectives. Thus the emphasis most companies place on short-term financial measures leaves a gap between the development of a strategy and its implementation.

Managers using the balanced scorecard do not have to rely on short-term financial measures as the sole indicators of the company's performance. The scorecard lets them introduce four new management processes that, separately and in combination, contribute to linking long-term strategic objectives with short-term actions. (See the chart "Managing Strategy: Four Processes.")

The first new process – *translating the vision* – helps managers build a consensus around the organization's vision and strategy. Despite the best intentions of those at the top, lofty statements about becoming "best in class," "the number one supplier,"

Robert S. Kaplan is the Arthur Lowes Dickinson Professor of Accounting at the Harvard Business School in Boston, Massachusetts. David P. Norton is the founder and president of Renaissance Solutions, a consulting firm in Lincoln, Massachusetts. They are the authors of "The Balanced Scorecard – Measures That Drive Performance" (HBR January-February 1992) and "Putting the Balanced Scorecard to Work" (HBR September-October 1993). Kaplan and Norton have also written a book on the balanced scorecard to be published in September 1996 by the Harvard Business School Press.

Translating Vision and Strategy: Four Perspectives

Financial

"To succeed financially, how should we appear to our shareholders?"

Objectives	Measures	Targets	Initiatives

Customer

"To achieve our vision, how should we appear to our customers?"

Objectives	Measures	Targets	Initiatives

Vision and Strategy

Internal Business Process

"To satisfy our shareholders and customers, what business processes must we excel at?"

Objectives	Measures	Targets	Initiatives

Learning and Growth

"To achieve our vision, how will we sustain our ability to change and improve?"

Objectives	Measures	Targets	Initiatives

or an "empowered organization" don't translate easily into operational terms that provide useful guides to action at the local level. For people to act on the words in vision and strategy statements, those statements must be expressed as an integrated set of objectives and measures, agreed upon by all senior executives, that describe the long-term drivers of success.

The second process – *communicating and linking* – lets managers communicate their strategy up and down the organization and link it to departmental and individual objectives. Traditionally, departments are evaluated by their financial performance, and individual incentives are tied to short-term financial goals. The scorecard gives managers a way of ensuring that all levels of the organization understand the long-term strategy and that both departmental and individual objectives are aligned with it.

The third process – *business planning* – enables companies to integrate their business and financial plans. Almost all organizations today are implementing a variety of change programs, each with its own champions, gurus, and consultants, and each competing for senior executives' time, energy, and resources. Managers find it difficult to integrate those diverse initiatives to achieve their strategic goals–a situation that leads to frequent disappointments with the programs' results. But when managers use the ambitious goals set for balanced scorecard measures as the basis for allocating resources and setting priorities, they can undertake and coordinate

Lofty vision and strategy statements don't translate easily into action at the local level.

only those initiatives that move them toward their long-term strategic objectives.

The fourth process – *feedback and learning* – gives companies the capacity for what we call strategic learning. Existing feedback and review processes focus on whether the company, its departments, or its individual employees have met their budgeted financial goals. With the balanced scorecard at the center of its management systems, a company can monitor short-term results from the three additional perspectives – customers, internal business processes, and learning and growth – and evaluate strategy in the light of recent performance. The scorecard thus enables companies to modify strategies to reflect real-time learning.

None of the more than 100 organizations that we have studied or with which we have worked implemented their first balanced scorecard with the intention of developing a new strategic management system. But in each one, the senior executives discovered that the scorecard supplied a framework and thus a focus for many critical management processes: departmental and individual goal setting, business planning, capital allocations, strategic initiatives, and feedback and learning. Previously, those processes were uncoordinated and often directed at short-term operational goals. By building the scorecard, the senior executives started a process of change that has gone well beyond the original idea of simply broadening the company's performance measures.
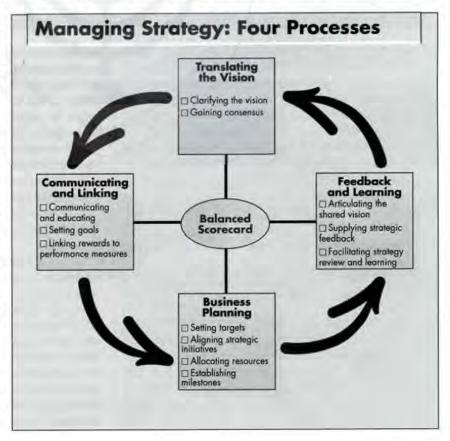
For example, one insurance company – let's call it National Insurance – developed its first balanced scorecard to create a new vision for itself as an underwriting specialist. But once National started to use it, the scorecard allowed the CEO and the senior management team not only to introduce a new strategy for the organization but also to overhaul the company's management system. The CEO subsequently told employees in a letter addressed to the whole organization that National would thenceforth use the balanced scorecard and the philosophy that it represented to manage the business.

National built its new strategic management system step-by-step over 30 months, with each step representing an incremental im-

provement. (See the chart "How One Company Built a Strategic Management System.") The iterative sequence of actions enabled the company to reconsider each of the four new management processes two or three times before the system stabilized and became an established part of National's overall management system. Thus the CEO was able to transform the company so that everyone could focus on achieving long-term strategic objectives – something that no purely financial framework could do.

Translating the Vision

The CEO of an engineering construction company, after working with his senior management team for several months to develop a mission statement, got a phone call from a project manager in the field. "I want you to know," the distraught manager said, "that I believe in the mission statement. I want to act in accordance with the mission statement. I'm here with my customer. What am I supposed to do?"

The mission statement, like those of many other organizations, had declared an intention to "use high-quality employees to provide services that surpass customers' needs." But the project manager in the field with his employees and his customer

Managing Strategy: Four Processes

Translating the Vision
- Clarifying the vision
- Gaining consensus

Communicating and Linking
- Communicating and educating
- Setting goals
- Linking rewards to performance measures

Balanced Scorecard

Feedback and Learning
- Articulating the shared vision
- Supplying strategic feedback
- Facilitating strategy review and learning

Business Planning
- Setting targets
- Aligning strategic initiatives
- Allocating resources
- Establishing milestones

How One Company Built a Strategic Management System...

2A *Communicate to Middle Managers:* The top three layers of management (100 people) are brought together to learn about and discuss the new strategy. The balanced scorecard is the communication vehicle. *(months 4 - 5)*

2B *Develop Business Unit Scorecards:* Using the corporate scorecard as a template, each business unit translates its strategy into its own scorecard. *(months 6 - 9)*

5 *Refine the Vision:* The review of business unit scorecards identifies several cross-business issues not initially included in the corporate strategy. The corporate scorecard is updated. *(month 12)*

Time Frame *(in months)*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Actions:

1 *Clarify the Vision:* Ten members of a newly formed executive team work together for three months. A balanced scorecard is developed to translate a generic vision into a strategy that is understood and can be communicated. The process helps build consensus and commitment to the strategy.

3A *Eliminate Nonstrategic Investments:* The corporate scorecard, by clarifying strategic priorities, identifies many active programs that are not contributing to the strategy. *(month 6)*

3B *Launch Corporate Change Programs:* The corporate scorecard identifies the need for cross-business change programs. They are launched while the business units prepare their scorecards. *(month 6)*

4 *Review Business Unit Scorecards:* The CEO and the executive team review the individual business units' scorecards. The review permits the CEO to participate knowledgeably in shaping business unit strategy. *(months 9 - 11)*

did not know how to translate those words into the appropriate actions. The phone call convinced the CEO that a large gap existed between the mission statement and employees' knowledge of how their day-to-day actions could contribute to realizing the company's vision.

Metro Bank (not its real name), the result of a merger of two competitors, encountered a similar gap while building its balanced scorecard. The senior executive group thought it had reached agreement on the new organization's overall strategy: "to provide superior service to targeted customers." Research had revealed five basic market segments among existing and potential customers, each with different needs. While formulating the measures for the customer-perspective portion of their balanced scorecard, however, it became apparent that although the 25 senior executives agreed on the words of the strategy, each one had a different definition of *superior service* and a different image of the *targeted customers.*

The exercise of developing operational measures for the four perspectives on the bank's scorecard forced the 25 executives to clarify the meaning of the strategy statement. Ultimately, they agreed to stimulate revenue growth through new products and services and also agreed on the three most desirable customer segments. They developed scorecard measures for the specific products and services that should be delivered to customers in the targeted segments as well as for the relationship the bank should build with customers in each segment. The scorecard also highlighted gaps in employees' skills and in information systems that the bank would have to close in order to deliver the selected value propositions to the targeted customers. Thus, creating a

Building a scorecard enables a company to link its financial budgets with its strategic goals.

7 *Update Long-Range Plan and Budget:* Five-year goals are established for each measure. The investments required to meet those goals are identified and funded. The first year of the five-year plan becomes the annual budget. *(months 15 - 17)*

9 *Conduct Annual Strategy Review:* At the start of the third year, the initial strategy has been achieved and the corporate strategy requires updating. The executive committee lists ten strategic issues. Each business unit is asked to develop a position on each issue as a prelude to updating its strategy and scorecard. *(months 25 - 26)*

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

6A *Communicate the Balanced Scorecard to the Entire Company:* At the end of one year, when the management teams are comfortable with the strategic approach, the scorecard is disseminated to the entire organization. *(month 12 - ongoing)*

6B *Establish Individual Performance Objectives:* The top three layers of management link their individual objectives and incentive compensation to their scorecards. *(months 13 - 14)*

8 *Conduct Monthly and Quarterly Reviews:* After corporate approval of the business unit scorecards, a monthly review process, supplemented by quarterly reviews that focus more heavily on strategic issues, begins. *(month 18 - ongoing)*

10 *Link Everyone's Performance to the Balanced Scorecard:* All employees are asked to link their individual objectives to the balanced scorecard. The entire organization's incentive compensation is linked to the scorecard. *(months 25 - 26)*
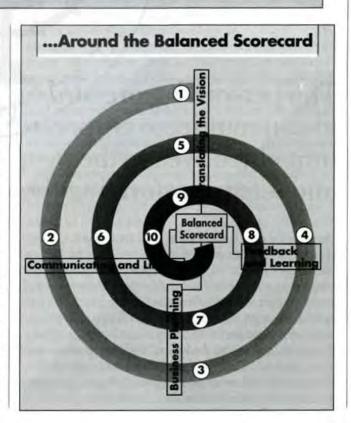
Note: Steps 7, 8, 9, and 10 are performed on a regular schedule. The balanced scorecard is now a routine part of the management process.

balanced scorecard forced the bank's senior managers to arrive at a consensus and then to translate their vision into terms that had meaning to the people who would realize the vision.

Communicating and Linking

"The top ten people in the business now understand the strategy better than ever before. It's too bad," a senior executive of a major oil company complained, "that we can't put this in a bottle so that everyone could share it." With the balanced scorecard, he can.

One company we have worked with deliberately involved three layers of management in the creation of its balanced scorecard. The senior executive group formulated the financial and customer objectives. It then mobilized the talent and information in the next two levels of managers by having them formulate the internal-business-process and learning-and-growth objectives that would drive the achievement of the financial and customer goals. For example, knowing the importance of satisfying customers' expectations of on-time

...Around the Balanced Scorecard

delivery, the broader group identified several internal business processes – such as order processing, scheduling, and fulfillment–in which the company had to excel. To do so, the company would have to retrain frontline employees and improve the information systems available to them. The group developed performance measures for those critical processes and for staff and systems capabilities.

Broad participation in creating a scorecard takes longer, but it offers several advantages: Information from a larger number of managers is incorporated into the internal objectives; the managers gain a better understanding of the company's long-term strategic goals; and such broad participation builds a stronger commitment to achieving those goals. But getting managers to buy into the scorecard is only a first step in linking individual actions to corporate goals.

The balanced scorecard signals to everyone what the organization is trying to achieve for shareholders and customers alike. But to align employees' individual performances with the overall strategy, scorecard users generally engage in three activities: communicating and educating, setting goals, and linking rewards to performance measures.

Communicating and Educating. Implementing a strategy begins with educating those who have to execute it. Whereas some organizations opt to hold their strategy close to the vest, most believe that they should disseminate it from top to bottom. A broad-based communication program shares with all employees the strategy and the critical objectives they have to meet if the strategy is to succeed.

The personal scorecard helps to communicate corporate and unit objectives to the people and teams performing the work.

Onetime events such as the distribution of brochures or newsletters and the holding of "town meetings" might kick off the program. Some organizations post bulletin boards that illustrate and explain the balanced scorecard measures, then update them with monthly results. Others use groupware and electronic bulletin boards to distribute the scorecard to the desktops of all employees and to encourage dialogue about the measures. The same media allow employees to make suggestions for achieving or exceeding the targets.

The balanced scorecard, as the embodiment of business unit strategy, should also be communicated upward in the organization–to corporate headquarters and to the corporate board of directors. With the scorecard, business units can quantify and communicate their long-term strategies to senior executives using a comprehensive set of linked financial and nonfinancial measures. Such communication informs the executives and the board in specific terms that long-term strategies designed for competitive success are in place. The measures also provide the basis for feedback and accountability. Meeting short-term financial targets should not constitute satisfactory performance when other measures indicate that the long-term strategy is either not working or not being implemented well.

Should the balanced scorecard be communicated beyond the boardroom to external shareholders? We believe that as senior executives gain confidence in the ability of the scorecard measures to monitor strategic performance and predict future financial performance, they will find ways to inform outside investors about those measures without disclosing competitively sensitive information.

Skandia, an insurance and financial services company based in Sweden, issues a supplement to its annual report called "The Business Navigator"– "an instrument to help us navigate into the future and thereby stimulate renewal and development." The supplement describes Skandia's strategy and the strategic measures the company uses to communicate and evaluate the strategy. It also provides a report on the company's performance along those measures during the year. The measures are customized for each operating unit and include, for example, market share, customer satisfaction and retention, employee competence, employee empowerment, and technology deployment.

Communicating the balanced scorecard promotes commitment and accountability to the business's long-term strategy. As one executive at Metro Bank declared, "The balanced scorecard is both motivating and obligating."

Setting Goals. Mere awareness of corporate goals, however, is not enough to change many people's behavior. Somehow, the organization's high-level strategic objectives and measures must be translated into objectives and measures for operating units and individuals.

The exploration group of a large oil company developed a technique to enable and encourage individuals to set goals for themselves that were consis-

The Personal Scorecard

Corporate Objectives

- ☐ Double our corporate value in seven years.
- ☐ Increase our earnings by an average of 20% per year.
- ☐ Achieve an internal rate of return 2% above the cost of capital.
- ☐ Increase both production and reserves by 20% in the next decade.

Corporate Targets					Scorecard Measures	Business Unit Targets					Team/Individual Objectives and Initiatives
1995	1996	1997	1998	1999		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1.
					Financial						
100	120	160	180	250	Earnings (in millions of dollars)						
100	450	200	210	225	Net cash flow						
100	85	80	75	70	Overhead and operating expenses						2.
					Operating						
100	75	73	70	64	Production costs per barrel						
100	97	93	90	82	Development costs per barrel						
100	105	108	108	110	Total annual production						3.
Team/Individual Measures						**Targets**					
1.											
2.											
3.											4.
4.											
5.											
Name:											5.
Location:											

tent with the organization's. It created a small, fold-up personal scorecard that people could carry in their shirt pockets or wallets. (See the exhibit "The Personal Scorecard.") The scorecard contains three levels of information. The first describes corporate objectives, measures, and targets. The second leaves room for translating corporate targets into targets for each business unit. For the third level, the company asks both individuals and teams to articulate which of their own objectives would be consistent with the business unit and corporate objectives, as well as what initiatives they would take to achieve their objectives. It also asks them to define up to five performance measures for their objectives and to set targets for each measure. The personal scorecard helps to communicate corporate and business unit objectives to the people and teams performing the work, enabling them to translate the objectives into meaningful tasks and targets for themselves. It also lets them keep that information close at hand–in their pockets.

Linking Rewards to Performance Measures. Should compensation systems be linked to balanced scorecard measures? Some companies, believing that tying financial compensation to performance is a powerful lever, have moved quickly to establish such a linkage. For example, an oil company that we'll call Pioneer Petroleum uses its scorecard as the sole basis for computing incentive compensation. The company ties 60% of its executives' bonuses to their achievement of ambitious targets for a weighted average of four financial indicators: return on capital, profitability, cash flow, and operating cost. It bases the remaining 40% on indicators of customer satisfaction, dealer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and environmental responsibility (such as a percentage change in the level of emissions to water and air). Pioneer's CEO says that linking compensation to the scorecard has helped to align the company with its strategy. "I know of no competitor," he says, "who has this degree of alignment. It is producing results for us."

As attractive and as powerful as such linkage is, it nonetheless carries risks. For instance, does the company have the right measures on the scorecard? Does it have valid and reliable data for the selected measures? Could unintended or unexpected consequences arise from the way the targets for the measures are achieved? Those are questions that companies should ask.

Furthermore, companies traditionally handle multiple objectives in a compensation formula by

assigning weights to each objective and calculating incentive compensation by the extent to which each weighted objective was achieved. This practice permits substantial incentive compensation to be paid if the business unit overachieves on a few objectives even if it falls far short on others. A better approach would be to establish minimum threshold levels for a critical subset of the strategic measures. Individuals would earn no incentive compensation if performance in a given period fell short of any threshold. This requirement should motivate people to achieve a more balanced performance across short- and long-term objectives.

Some organizations, however, have reduced their emphasis on short-term, formula-based incentive systems as a result of introducing the balanced scorecard. They have discovered that dialogue among executives and managers about the scorecard – both the formulation of the measures and objectives and the explanation of actual versus targeted results – provides a better opportunity to observe managers' performance and abilities. Increased knowledge of their managers' abilities makes it easier for executives to set incentive rewards subjectively and to defend those subjective evaluations–a process that is less susceptible to the game playing and distortions associated with explicit, formula-based rules.

One company we have studied takes an intermediate position. It bases bonuses for business unit managers on two equally weighted criteria: their achievement of a financial objective – economic value added – over a three-year period and a subjective assessment of their performance on measures drawn from the customer, internal-business-process, and learning-and-growth perspectives of the balanced scorecard.

That the balanced scorecard has a role to play in the determination of incentive compensation is not in doubt. Precisely what that role should be will become clearer as more companies experiment with linking rewards to scorecard measures.

Business Planning

"Where the rubber meets the sky": That's how one senior executive describes his company's long-range-planning process. He might have said the same of many other companies because their financially based management systems fail to link change programs and resource allocation to long-term strategic priorities.

The problem is that most organizations have separate procedures and organizational units for strategic planning and for resource allocation and budgeting. To formulate their strategic plans, senior executives go off-site annually and engage for several days in active discussions facilitated by senior planning and development managers or external consultants. The outcome of this exercise is a strategic plan articulating where the company expects (or hopes or prays) to be in three, five, and ten years. Typically, such plans then sit on executives' bookshelves for the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, a separate resource-allocation and budgeting process run by the finance staff sets financial targets for revenues, expenses, profits, and investments for the next fiscal year. The budget it produces consists almost entirely of financial numbers that generally bear little relation to the targets in the strategic plan.

Which document do corporate managers discuss in their monthly and quarterly meetings during the following year? Usually only the budget, because the periodic reviews focus on a comparison of actual and budgeted results for every line item. When is the strategic plan next discussed? Probably during the next annual off-site meeting, when the senior managers draw up a new set of three-, five-, and ten-year plans.

The very exercise of creating a balanced scorecard forces companies to integrate their strategic planning and budgeting processes and therefore helps to ensure that their budgets support their strategies. Scorecard users select measures of progress from all four scorecard perspectives and set targets for each of them. Then they determine which actions will drive them toward their targets, identify the measures they will apply to those drivers from the four perspectives, and establish the short-term milestones that will mark their progress along the strategic paths they have selected. Building a scorecard thus enables a company to link its financial budgets with its strategic goals.

For example, one division of the Style Company (not its real name) committed to achieving a seemingly impossible goal articulated by the CEO: to double revenues in five years. The forecasts built into the organization's existing strategic plan fell $1 billion short of this objective. The division's managers, after considering various scenarios, agreed to specific increases in five different performance drivers: the number of new stores opened, the number of new customers attracted into new and existing stores, the percentage of shoppers in each store converted into actual purchasers, the portion of existing customers retained, and average sales per customer.

By helping to define the key drivers of revenue growth and by committing to targets for each of

them, the division's managers eventually grew comfortable with the CEO's ambitious goal.
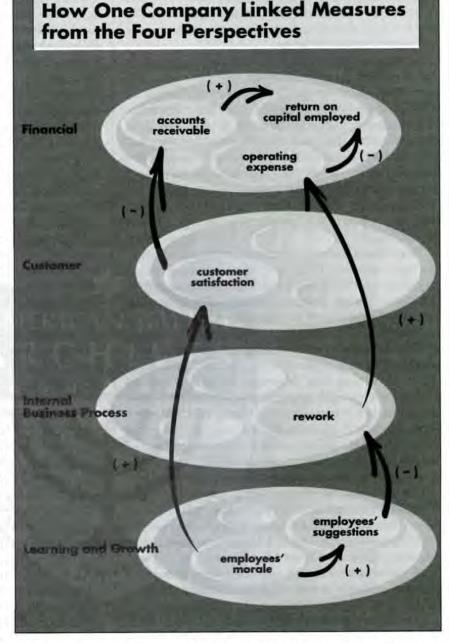
The process of building a balanced scorecard – clarifying the strategic objectives and then identifying the few critical drivers – also creates a framework for managing an organization's various change programs. These initiatives – reengineering, employee empowerment, time-based management, and total quality management, among others – promise to deliver results but also compete with one another for scarce resources, including the scarcest resource of all: senior managers' time and attention.

Shortly after the merger that created it, Metro Bank, for example, launched more than 70 different initiatives. The initiatives were intended to produce a more competitive and successful institution, but they were inadequately integrated into the overall strategy. After building their balanced scorecard, Metro Bank's managers dropped many of those programs – such as a marketing effort directed at individuals with very high net worth – and consolidated others into initiatives that were better aligned with the company's strategic objectives. For example, the managers replaced a program aimed at enhancing existing low-level selling skills with a major initiative aimed at retraining salespersons to become trusted financial advisers, capable of selling a broad range of newly introduced products to the three selected customer segments. The bank made both changes because the scorecard enabled it to gain a better understanding of the programs required to achieve its strategic objectives.

Once the strategy is defined and the drivers are identified, the scorecard influences managers to concentrate on improving or reengineering those processes most critical to the organization's strategic success. That is how the scorecard most clearly links and aligns action with strategy.

The final step in linking strategy to actions is to establish specific short-term targets, or milestones, for the balanced scorecard measures. Milestones are tangible expressions of managers' beliefs about when and to what degree their current programs will affect those measures.

In establishing milestones, managers are expanding the traditional budgeting process to incorporate strategic as well as financial goals. Detailed financial planning remains important, but financial goals taken by themselves ignore the three other balanced scorecard perspectives. In an integrated planning and budgeting process, executives continue to budget for short-term financial performance, but they also introduce short-term targets for measures in the customer, internal-business-process,

How One Company Linked Measures from the Four Perspectives

Financial

(+)

accounts receivable

return on capital employed

operating expense

(-)

(-)

Customer

customer satisfaction

(+)

Internal Business Process

rework

(+)

(-)

Learning and Growth

employees' suggestions

employees' morale

(+)

and learning-and-growth perspectives. With those milestones established, managers can continually test both the theory underlying the strategy and the strategy's implementation.

At the end of the business planning process, managers should have set targets for the long-term objectives they would like to achieve in all four scorecard perspectives; they should have identified the strategic initiatives required and allocated the necessary resources to those initiatives; and they should have established milestones for the measures that mark progress toward achieving their strategic goals.

Feedback and Learning

"With the balanced scorecard," a CEO of an engineering company told us, "I can continually test my strategy. It's like performing real-time research." That is exactly the capability that the scorecard should give senior managers: the ability to know at any point in its implementation whether the strategy they have formulated is, in fact, working, and if not, why.

The first three management processes – translating the vision, communicating and linking, and business planning – are vital for implementing strategy, but they are not sufficient in an unpredictable world. Together they form an important single-loop-learning process – single-loop in the sense that the objective remains constant, and any departure from the planned trajectory is seen as a defect to be remedied. This single-loop process does not require or even facilitate reexamination of either the strategy or the techniques used to implement it in light of current conditions.

Most companies today operate in a turbulent environment with complex strategies that, though valid when they were launched, may lose their validity as business conditions change. In this kind of environment, where new threats and opportunities arise constantly, companies must become capable of what Chris Argyris calls *double-loop learning* – learning that produces a change in people's assumptions and theories about cause-and-effect relationships. (See "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," HBR May-June 1991.)

Budget reviews and other financially based management tools cannot engage senior executives in double-loop learning – first, because these tools address performance from only one perspective, and second, because they don't involve strategic learning. Strategic learning consists of gathering feedback, testing the hypotheses on which strategy was based, and making the necessary adjustments.

The balanced scorecard supplies three elements that are essential to strategic learning. First, it articulates the company's shared vision, defining in clear and operational terms the results that the company, as a team, is trying to achieve. The scorecard communicates a holistic model that links individual efforts and accomplishments to business unit objectives.

Second, the scorecard supplies the essential strategic feedback system. A business strategy can be viewed as a set of hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships. A strategic feedback system should be able to test, validate, and modify the hypotheses embedded in a business unit's strategy. By establishing short-term goals, or milestones, within the business planning process, executives are forecasting the relationship between changes in performance drivers and the associated changes in one or more specified goals. For example, executives at Metro Bank estimated the amount of time it would take for improvements in training and in the availability of information systems before employees could sell multiple financial products effectively to existing and new customers. They also estimated how great the effect of that selling capability would be.

Another organization attempted to validate its hypothesized cause-and-effect relationships in the balanced scorecard by measuring the strength of the linkages among measures in the different perspectives. (See the chart "How One Company Linked Measures from the Four Perspectives.") The company found significant correlations between employees' morale, a measure in the learning-and-growth perspective, and customer satisfaction, an important customer perspective measure. Customer satisfaction, in turn, was correlated with faster payment of invoices – a relationship that led to a substantial reduction in accounts receivable and hence a higher return on capital employed. The company also found correlations between employees' morale and the number of suggestions made by employees (two learning-and-growth measures) as well as between an increased number of suggestions and lower rework (an internal-business-process measure). Evidence of such strong correlations help to confirm the organization's business strategy. If, however, the expected correlations are not found over time, it should be an indication to executives that the theory underlying the unit's strategy may not be working as they had anticipated.

Especially in large organizations, accumulating sufficient data to document significant correlations and causation among balanced scorecard measures can take a long time – months or years. Over the

short term, managers' assessment of strategic impact may have to rest on subjective and qualitative judgments. Eventually, however, as more evidence accumulates, organizations may be able to provide more objectively grounded estimates of cause-and-effect relationships. But just getting managers to think systematically about the assumptions underlying their strategy is an improvement over the current practice of making decisions based on short-term operational results.

Third, the scorecard facilitates the strategy review that is essential to strategic learning. Traditionally, companies use the monthly or quarterly meetings between corporate and division executives to analyze the most recent period's financial results. Discussions focus on past performance and on explanations of why financial objectives were not achieved. The balanced scorecard, with its specification of the causal relationships between performance drivers and objectives, allows corporate and business unit executives to use their periodic review sessions to evaluate the validity of the unit's strategy and the quality of its execution. If the unit's employees and managers have delivered on the performance drivers (retraining of employees, availability of information systems, and new financial products and services, for instance), then their failure to achieve the expected outcomes (higher sales to targeted customers, for example) signals that the theory underlying the strategy may not be valid. The disappointing sales figures are an early warning.

Managers should take such disconfirming evidence seriously and reconsider their shared conclusions about market conditions, customer value propositions, competitors' behavior, and internal capabilities. The result of such a review may be a decision to reaffirm their belief in the current strategy but to adjust the quantitative relationship among the strategic measures on the balanced scorecard. But they also might conclude that the unit needs a different strategy (an example of double-loop learning) in light of new knowledge about market conditions and internal capabilities. In any case, the scorecard will have stimulated key executives to learn about the viability of their strategy. This capacity for enabling organizational learning at the executive level – strategic learning – is what distinguishes the balanced scorecard, making it invaluable for those who wish to create a strategic management system.

Toward a New Strategic Management System

Many companies adopted early balanced-scorecard concepts to improve their performance measurement systems. They achieved tangible but narrow results. Adopting those concepts provided clarification, consensus, and focus on the desired improvements in performance. More recently, we have seen companies expand their use of the balanced scorecard, employing it as the foundation of an integrated and iterative strategic management system. Companies are using the scorecard to
☐ clarify and update strategy,
☐ communicate strategy throughout the company,
☐ align unit and individual goals with the strategy,
☐ link strategic objectives to long-term targets and annual budgets,
☐ identify and align strategic initiatives, and
☐ conduct periodic performance reviews to learn about and improve strategy.

The balanced scorecard enables a company to align its management processes and focuses the entire organization on implementing long-term strategy. At National Insurance, the scorecard provided the CEO and his managers with a central framework around which they could redesign each piece of the company's management system. And because of the cause-and-effect linkages inherent in the scorecard framework, changes in one component of the system reinforced earlier changes made elsewhere. Therefore, every change made over the 30-month period added to the momentum that kept the organization moving forward in the agreed-upon direction.

Without a balanced scorecard, most organizations are unable to achieve a similar consistency of vision and action as they attempt to change direction and introduce new strategies and processes. The balanced scorecard provides a framework for managing the implementation of strategy while also allowing the strategy itself to evolve in response to changes in the company's competitive, market, and technological environments. ⊟

Reprint 96107   To place an order, call 1-800-545-7685.

Religion in American Public Life

Tuesday, March 19, 6:30 - 9:00 PM

Paul Hanson

Overview:

The field of Biblical Studies can contribute to the topic of Jewish Religious Education within the setting of American society on two levels. 1) On the level of method, the Hebrew Bible offers valuable insight into the question of how religion can interact with the public sector. To be sure, such insight does not offer itself in the manner of a teacher's handbook. Rather it arises as we study scripture from the vantage point of our modern experience. Through such study we can recognize five models that in turn can aid us as we struggle to find adequate ways to include religious education in the curricula of young Americans and thus enable them to contribute to the life of our Republic enriched by an adequate understanding of their religious traditions. 2) Judaism carries a particular responsibility among the diverse religious communities in our country due to the fact that the Hebrew Bible is not only an indispensable source of Jewish self-identity but an important component in the historical ontology of the country as a whole.

The first point above sets the stage for discussing the problem of how religious communities most effectively can be involved in public life, simultaneously being respectful of the integrity of each other and mindful of the contributions each has made to public discourse. Obviously, the First Amendment and the related long history of Supreme Court decisions occupy a conspicuous place on this stage; less apparent to most is that Hebrew Scripture is both an important source lying behind our constitutional heritage and potentially a valuable contributor to the contemporary discussion.

In the second point mentioned above we move from a general discussion concerning the role of all religious communities in public discourse to the case of Judaism in particular. This serves both as a test case and a case interesting in its own right because of the unique historical position occupied by the Bible in the early history of our country and the central role played by Judaism in recent moral issues like civil rights.

Taken together, points one and two should contribute to the questions that will run through the entire institute on Leadership and Vision in Jewish Education, the inseparably connected questions of *how*, *why*, and *what*?

Readings:

- Hanawalt, E. and Lindberg, C. "Through the Eye of the Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare."

- Hanson, Paul D. "The Origin and Nature of Prophetic Political Engagement in Ancient Israel."

Through the Eye of a Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare

edited by
Emily Albu Hanawalt
Carter Lindberg

CONTENTS

THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ROOTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE

PAUL HANSON

> The interdependence of a culture's worldview and its value system is a significant motif in each of the chapters in this volume. Consciously or unconsciously, attitudes toward the poor are rooted in a culture's prevailing worldview, which in turn either deters or facilitates specific forms of social welfare. In contrast to the civic and sacral myths of the cultures of the ancient Near East, Israel's self-understanding was rooted in its epic of a historical encounter with God that provided the model for the community's treatment of others. Throughout the Hebrew Bible personal and legal responsibility for the vulnerable was rooted not in timeless myths legitimating the ruler but rather in the oft-recurring clause: "I am Yahweh, who delivered you from the House of Bondage."

A culture's prevailing worldview strongly influences the attitudes adopted by individuals on matters such as social welfare. By worldview[1] we mean the symbolic construction by which a people expresses its shared perspectives and assumptions. A worldview assumes specific form in the laws and institutions that order the society. The actual practice of the population in a viable society will conform reasonably to its laws and institutions and thus be in basic harmony with the overarching worldview.

THE INFLUENCE OF WORLDVIEW ON A CULTURE'S VALUE SYSTEM

In most ancient cultures worldview assumed the form of myth, that is, an account of how the specific culture and its natural habitat originated in the activities of the gods. During biblical times, Israel preferred the genre of epic as carrier of its view of reality and its origins. The more pluralistic and complex a society, the more diffuse is the form in which it describes its worldview.

---

[1]The nature and function of a society's worldview or, equivalently, symbolic universe is portrayed clearly in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).

tain questions: What is the guiding mythology of our country? How does it influence our attitudes, laws, and treatment of those who do not share fully in the rights and benefits of our society? How is our self-understanding as a people influenced by the particular readings of history that inform our national epic, for example, the displacement and decimation of native American tribes, the forging of a work force out of slaves violently torn from their homelands, the maintenance of a particular theocratic ideal by exclusion of those holding different religious beliefs? Does even that epic of escape from bondage to the new land that we uphold so proudly as our national autobiography contain seeds of the discrimination that divides our nation today between the privileged and the disadvantaged? Is there not a great deal of hypocrisy in our boasting about our honoring of individual rights when our society denies whole classes of individuals the most basic rights of food, shelter, and equal protection under the law?

The critical study of history cannot produce answers on demand to the crucial social crises facing our nation. What it can do, however, is break the myopia that leads us to accept uncritically interpretations of our history which are largely disguised propaganda for one ideology or another. It can also increase our resolve to resist the efforts of those who would co-opt our traditions of justice and social reform for partisan ends —whether from the right or the left—and to hold up paradigms of universal equality as ferment for self-criticism and change. Finally, it can heighten our awareness of the determinative force of the subconscious level of shared views and assumptions that in bygone societies was occupied by a public myth or epic but may now be filled increasingly with self-serving presuppositions and prejudices. If it is true that every viable society needs some sort of shared worldview, we need to begin paying attention to this rather arcane level lest it fall under the control of fanatics and demagogues.

In the history of the United States, writers and other would-be myth-makers have experienced great difficulty in giving a unified symbolic form to the nation's fundamental views and values. To conclude from this, however, that our society operates free from the constraints of a shared universe of meaning is misleading. In critical situations certain groups have found and continue to find themselves encountering an undercurrent of prevailing attitudes that carry daunting force. For example, underprivileged segments of our population find upward mobility encumbered by the widely shared view that they are a service class not entitled to equal opportunity. The chronically unemployed encounter the attitude that their plight is the product of laziness and incompetence. Efforts on behalf of penal reform are frustrated by the bias that inmates constitute a class predisposed to crime by innate moral defects. Such views are no longer explicitly embedded, as they would have been in ancient Babylon, in a myth describing the origins of different classes of gods and humans. Subconsciously, however, these views carry considerable determinative power in limiting the options available to certain impoverished and disenfranchised groups.

Though our society gives lip service to an ideal of equality, attitudes of discrimination are reinforced by the benefits they offer to those privileged by birth and circumstance. Popular notions like the level of unemployment required for inflation control, the economic imperative against socialized medicine, and mandatory caps on taxation, while not lacking certain analytic warrants, derive their most powerful support from unexamined attitudes rooted in the prevailing worldview.

Only the considerable influence of worldview on people's thinking can explain the irony implicit in our nation's emphasis on individual rights coexisting free of noticeable tension with the systemic victimization of certain groups denied full access to the laws and social structures of the land. Though some will argue that this miscarriage of justice is merely a result of the imperfections inevitably present in the institutions of any state, I believe that something more basic is involved, namely, a widely assumed distinction in the ontological status of different groups within the society rooted in its dominant worldview.

The ascription of divergent degrees of ontological status to people most satisfactorily explains phenomena in our society such as the following: the de facto existence of a two-tiered school system in many parts of our country, with suburban children enjoying many educational benefits denied their urban counterparts; a categorically higher rate of unemployment among black males than among white males; a youthful subculture growing up in urban areas so devastated by crime and drug infestation that they resemble war zones. Each of these phenomena involves complex problems that are not aided by naive proposals. Aside from the question

of specific programs, however, it seems that another level of question must be raised: To what degree are the persistence of such decay and the inability of the society to marshal its resources in incisive response to it the outgrowth of normative assumptions, that is, worldview?

While officers of the law are charged with narrowing the gap between laws and public practice, even as legislators are obliged to translate the prevailing values of society into binding structures, historians have an opportunity to penetrate to the deeper level of the society's symbol system in the effort to detect elements hospitable to prejudice and partiality in matters of justice and sharing of the commonweal. Such detective work is most effectively conducted within a broadly comparative context capable of providing some critical distance between structures and the observer. Insight gained from this kind of historical study does not translate directly into social change. It can cultivate, however, a more critically informed attitude toward unquestioned assumptions, and can perhaps break the impression that present structures are natural, inevitable, and morally justified.

SOCIAL WELFARE IN MESOPOTAMIA, EGYPT, AND CANAAN

Contrary to popular opinion, the ancient Israelites did not invent social concern for the welfare of the vulnerable persons like the widow and the orphan. Sumerian hymns to Utu, the sun-god,[2] and to Nanshe, goddess of Lagash,[3] extol their just governance and their concern for the widow and the orphan, the poor and the weak.

Shamash, Akkadian counterpart to Utu, is celebrated as the heavenly judge who oversees the execution of justice among humans:

> The unrighteous judge thou dost make to see imprisonment.
> The receiver of the bribe who perverts [justice] thou dost make
>   to bear punishment.
> He who does not accept a bribe [but] intercedes for the weak,
> Is well-pleasing to Shamash [and] enriches [his] life.[4]

The kings of Mesopotamia describe themselves as pious servants of the gods, who accept as one of their solemn responsibilities the administration of justice in imitation of the gods. The connection between the

---

[2]S. N. Kramer, in G. Ernest Wright, ed., *The Bible in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 255.

[3]S. N. Kramer, "'Vox populi' and the Sumerian Literary Documents," *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* (henceforth cited as RA) 58, 1964, 148–56.

[4]F. J. Stephens, tr., in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 388; henceforth cited as ANET.

hymnic celebration of divine justice, illustrated above, and the promulgation of royal justice is depicted graphically in the most famous of all law codes from the Land of the Two Rivers: the Hammurabi Code. At its apex Shamash is pictured handing circle and scepter, symbols of order and justice, to the dutiful king.[5]

In setting down laws dealing with domestic, social, and economic matters within his land, Hammurabi was following a well-established tradition with antecedents reaching back at least several centuries into Sumerian times. In this tradition the ancient codes are not systematic codifications of the legal systems of their respective states; rather they represent explication of aspects of common law where the particular king felt he had made important contributions. Urukagina, ruler of Lagash circa 2300 BCE, responded to the exploitation of the poor by palace and temple officials with strict new laws. By these means he

> cleansed the homes of the inhabitants of Lagash of usury, of hoarding, of famine, of theft and of attacks, and instituted their liberty.... [H]e had this declaration sealed by Ningirsu that he would not deliver the widow and the orphan to the rich.[6]

Some two hundred years later Ur-Nammu, founder of the Third Dynasty of Ur, strove to establish justice in his land by normalizing monetary standards and setting up safeguards against the exploitation of the weak:

> The orphan was not delivered up to the rich man; the widow was not delivered up to the mighty man; the man of one shekel was not delivered up to the man of one mina.[7]

The Code of Lipit-Ishtar of Isin, two centuries prior to Hammurabi, and the collection of laws from Eshnunna, only a few decades prior to Hammurabi, addressed similar concerns. None of these collections, however, come close to rivaling the Code of Hammurabi. Not only does the latter contain the most complete collection of law, but its prologue and epilogue give a vivid description of Hammurabi's understanding of his responsibilities vis-à-vis his subjects and his place within the cosmic economy of the gods. That is, Hammurabi's Code depicts both the value system of Babylon and its underlying myth or worldview.

Hammurabi, in the Prologue, declared that he had been appointed by the gods,

[5] J. B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 77.

[6] M. Lambert, "Les 'Réformes' d'Urukagina," RA 50, 1956, 169–84.

[7] J. J. Finkelstein, tr., in ANET, 524, lines 162–68.

to promote the welfare of the people, ...
to cause justice to prevail in the land,
to destroy the wicked and the evil,
that the strong might not oppress the weak....[8]

Hammurabi's reign is described as more than a human enterprise; it is part of the basic order of being. The gods have conferred upon him the "Enlil [chief executive functions of the Sumerian pantheon] functions over mankind," even as they have established the foundations of his city "as firm as heaven and earth." *Enuma elish*, the official myth of Babylon, describes in great detail how the reign of the earthly king stems from the activity of the gods, i.e., how the structures of human society fit into the ordering of reality in its totality. Cosmic order arose out of the theomachy, that is, out of the conflict between two groups of gods that resolved the basic metaphysical polarities through the imposition of structure. Having defeated the main antagonist Tiamat (chaos, salt waters, etc.), Marduk (stormgod, fertile waters, etc.) fashions the universe out of her carcass and creates a society of humans to assume the menial tasks of the gods. At the center of their society is the temple, "a likeness on earth of what he has wrought in heaven"; and it is into the temple storehouses that the products of human effort are to be brought as gifts to the gods. Thereby is established the production and redistribution system of the land, over which the gods establish the earthly king as their regent. Within the overall structure of the universe, therefore, it is the duty of the king to maintain order through the administration of just laws, even as it is the duty of the subjects obediently to uphold what is required of them. Failure on either side threatened to cause not only social chaos but the disfunctionality of the universe, for humans were a humble but essential part of the whole.

In the Epilogue of his Code, Hammurabi summarizes his role as "the beneficent shepherd whose scepter is righteous," who "always governed them in peace," and who wrote his laws "in order that the strong might not oppress the weak, that justice might be dealt the orphan [and] the widow."[9]

The laws themselves indicate that Hammurabi did in fact address issues of justice and fairness such as the dishonest dealings of merchants (e.g., law 94), corruption among judges (e.g., law 5), and the abuses of other officials. Other laws seek to secure the ownership of farmland against the threat of foreclosure arising from misfortunes beyond the control of the farmer (e.g., law 48). In spite of the emphasis placed by the Prologue and Epilogue on protection of vulnerable classes, however, the vast

[8]T. J. Meek, tr., in ANET, 164, lines 27–28, 32–37.
[9]Idem, 178, lines 43, 57–61.

majority of the laws regulate domestic, economic, and social structures on the basis of strict standards of rewards and punishments, and distribute justice not equally across the entire population but according to a descending order of class entitlement, i.e., aristocracy, freeman, commoner, slave.

The social edifice that Hammurabi constructed upon the foundation of earlier models was impressive. Yet a fundamental question arises relative to social welfare. Though laws assuring stability and order are essential to any civilized society, the humaneness of a society also depends on the *quality* of life experienced by the populace as a whole, with the most humble elements providing a key index. It is questionable whether Hammurabi's Code reveals any particular concern for the welfare of vulnerable individuals and groups except to the extent that their impoverishment had a negative impact on the general strength and productivity of the land. Several considerations contribute to this skepticism: (1) the formulations of the Prologue and Epilogue regarding the beneficence of the king vis-à-vis the poor conform to the grandiose, stereotyped rhetoric belonging to the genre of royal pronouncements in the ancient Near East; (2) totally absent from the laws themselves are any elements of parenesis that might give evidence of the ruler's concern for specific aspects of justice in relation to weaker members of his society; (3) even in the narrative framework of the Code, far more space is devoted to cursing successors who choose to ignore the royal commands than to addressing concerns of justice. Though such evidence does not offer a basis for conclusive judgments, we might suggest as the most likely motivation behind Hammurabi's Code the concern for popular support as a prerequisite for the stability of his reign. In a chaotic world such as that occupied by Hammurabi, absolute authority over the populace was deemed necessary. The propagandistic tone of the Prologue and Epilogue fits this interpretation, especially if those scholars are correct who suggest that such inscriptions are addressed as much to the gods whose favor the king curries as to the populace whose support he needs. All of which is not to deny two important facts: (1) a rational ordering of a society that attends to consistency and fairness is not unrelated to concern for justice;[10] (2) the integration of

---

[10]The importance of predictability in the administration of justice comes to expression in the Epilogue:

"Let any oppressed man who has a cause
come into the presence of the statue of me, the king of justice,
and then read carefully my inscribed stela,
and give heed to my precious words,
and may my stela make the case clear to him;
may he understand his cause;
may he set his mind at ease!"

social institutions and common law into the myth of the culture that the Code of Hammurabi seems to foster exemplifies the unified symbolic universe that modern sociologists identify with community stability and that modern American artists and poets search for in vain. As a result, Babylonian society enjoyed the benefit of a clear conceptual foundation or worldview.

Alongside the promulgation of law codes, another practice used by the kings of Mesopotamia from the Old Babylonian Period down to the Neo-Assyrian was the "royal decree" (*simdat sarrim*) issued to "establish emancipation" (*andurarum sakanum*).[11] Occurring at the beginning of a king's reign, such emancipation entailed the release of debt-slaves and the annulment of specific types of debts. Since the enthronement of every new king was understood in terms of divine appointment, the "royal decree" accompanying the king to power should be understood in terms of the reestablishment of the orders of creation for which the king, as regent of the gods, was responsible. In effect, the onset of the reign symbolized a renewal of creation such as was dramatized in the annual ritual celebration of the central myth. It is thus plausible to view the practice of "emancipation" as a means of winning the popular support necessary for a peaceful reign, and of maintaining social and economic stability in the land.

In contrast to the important comparative material from the Mesopotamian realm, the contribution of ancient Egyptian sources to the question of social welfare in ancient Israel is less significant. That is because the cultural connections between Egypt and Israel in antiquity were more tenuous than those between Israel and the Mesopotamian countries. More important is the fact that the Mesopotamian documents dealing with our subject are far more abundant than those that have come to light in the Egyptian realm. It may be true that in ancient Egypt the Pharaoh was identified so closely with divine truth that there was no need to give written form to common law.[12]

---

[11] See N. P. Lemche, "The Manumission of Slaves—The Fallow Year—The Sabbatical Year—The Jobel Year," *Vetus Testamentum* 26 (1976): 38–59; idem, "*Andurarum* and *misarum*: Comments on the Problem of Social Edicts and their Application in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 38 (1979): 11–22; S. A. Kaufman, "A Reconstruction of the Social Welfare Systems of Ancient Israel," in W. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer, eds., *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlstrom*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 31 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1984), 277–86.

[12] Leon Epzstein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM, 1986), 18.

There was, however, a distinct notion of law and custom tracing all the way back to the Old Kingdom. Central to that notion was the concept of *maat*. *Maat* was embodied in the goddess of that name, symbolized in the funerary cult by the balance, characterized by the cosmic order and universal harmony established by the gods from the beginning, and represented by the Pharaoh. Only by conforming to *maat* could individuals and the community hope to prosper. It is therefore not surprising that the most extensive descriptions of *maat* are found in the form of instructions to future leaders such as prince, vizier, and scribe.

What strikes one in the moral system of these instructions is their conservatism and utilitarianism. The good is what brings success, and what brings success is deference to one's superiors, hard work, and dependability. This pragmatic orientation does not prevent the development of a refined definition of professional ethics. In the late third millennium BCE *Instructions of Marikare* we read:

> Do justice and you will endure on earth. Quiet the weeper; do not oppress the widow; do not supplant a man in the property of his father; and impugn no officials in their posts. Be on guard against punishing wrongfully.[13]

A literary genre that ancient Egyptians found fitting to express their conception of *maat* was the tomb inscription. That authors composed such inscriptions to make their case for blessings in the afterlife raises questions about their accuracy, but they do at least describe ideals that individual Egyptians associated with *maat*. Nefer-Seshem Ra, for example, gave this report:

> I have spoken the truth, I have done the truth, I have spoken the good, ... I have saved the wretched from the hand of the violent, ... I have given bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked.... I have buried him who had no son.[14]

This illustrates that the land of the Pharaohs could give noble expression to its sense of goodness and justice. Unfortunately, Egypt's literary legacy has rarely left indication of the concrete social situations being addressed. An exception is Haremheb's decree that arose out of his incisive efforts to restore order and justice after the debacle of Aktenaten's reign. But even this exception corroborates our observations. Haremheb's various reforms are aimed towards the reestablishment of central control over the economy and of royal authority over all subjects within an elabo-

---

[13]John A. Wilson, tr., in ANET, 415.
[14]Epzstein, *Social Justice in Ancient Near East*, 23.

rate bureaucracy reaching from the Pharaoh down to the lowest official. While attention to the elimination of exploitation and corruption, and to the practice of equitable judgment is not absent, it can be seen as an aspect of the overweening concern with stability and centralized control.

This predominant outlook may be accounted for by noting that matters of justice and morality in this Egyptian material are always viewed from the perspective of those in positions of wealth and power. The viewpoint of the lowly and the oppressed is rarely expressed.[15] Equally absent are expressions of inner motivation, feelings of mercy for the weak, or appeals to a sense of solidarity with the poor. The harsh treatment of vulnerable members of the society was countermanded primarily because it abets the breakdown of good order and thus constitutes a threat to the stability and productivity of the land.

The emphasis on stability as well as the pragmatism and elitism of Egyptian moral thought lent themselves to the rigidity and cynicism of the New Kingdom. As increasing amounts of property and wealth were amassed by priesthood and crown, and as an ever larger percentage of the population fell into servitude, expressions of concern for the average person were contradicted by the megalomania of Pharaohs like Ramses II. The myths of Egypt and the social system they informed were incapable of keeping a dynamism alive that could contribute to a deepening of ethical principles. The contribution Egypt had to make to the question of social welfare had been made by the end of the third millennium. What followed was imitation and rigidification abetting exploitation of the masses and a hardening of class discrimination.

When we come to Canaan of the second millennium, we find that evidence of concern for social welfare is even more scanty than was the case in Egypt. This may simply be the result of the accidents of archaeological discovery. The numerous other points of contact between Canaanite culture and the civilizations of Mesopotamia would suggest that also in the realm of social norms were laws and customs similar to those found in the lands of the Tigris and the Euphrates. In the Ugaritic texts from the fourteenth century BCE one finds instead only brief descriptions of the traits of certain legendary figures. Danel, for example,

> sat at the entrance to the gate,
> next to the granary on the threshing floor.
> He judged the cases of widows,
> presided over orphans' hearings.[16]

---

[15]For an example of life viewed from the perspective of the average citizen, see John A. Wilson, tr., "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant,"in ANET, 407–10.

[16]Michael David Coogan, ed. and tr., *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 35.

The rebellious son of king Keret, on the other hand, hurls this accusation against his father:

> Listen, Kirta the Noble,
>> listen closely and pay attention:
> as though raiders had raided, you will be driven out,
>> and forced to live in the mountains.
> Weakness has stayed your hand:
>> you do not judge the cases of widows,
>> you do not preside over the hearings of the oppressed;
> you do not drive out those who plunder the poor,
>> you do not feed the orphan before you,
>> the widow behind your back.[17]

These allusions indicate a tradition of the entitlement of the weak and vulnerable to the protection of the king that is akin to that found in Mesopotamia. But there is scant basis to say more.

SOCIAL WELFARE IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

Our brief survey of the lands of Israel's neighbors indicates that the people of Israel did not develop their attitudes towards social welfare in a vacuum. They lived in a world in which ideologies did not respect borders but moved with cultural currents over wide areas. Customs and laws of semi-nomadic peoples in the Middle Bronze Age accordingly were in many respects similar, whether found in the Upper Euphrates or in Canaan. The duty of providing for the welfare of the widow and orphan was ascribed to the king whether he ruled over Babylon or Thebes.

A heightened sensitivity to the bearing of political change on the development of Israel's beliefs and values has come with growth in awareness of the intimate interrelationship between a society's legal conventions and its political organization. The attitudes towards social justice and welfare expressed in the laws, narratives, and confessions of the Bible developed within a complex set of situations and under a diverse array of influences. While efforts at reconstruction of those situations and influences are beset with difficulties relating to both literary and historical problems, questions of social setting are overlooked only at the cost of a hopelessly distorted picture.

The first major factor that must be considered in studying biblical views towards social welfare is the tribal origin of Israel's ancestors. While it is impossible to extract specific historical information from the ancestral stories of Genesis, they fit broadly into the kinship patterns present among the Amorite tribal groups (*amurru*) that migrated from the northwest into

---

[17]Ibid., 73–74.

both Mesopotamia and Canaan in the first half of the second millennium BCE. In contrast to the temple-centered, timeless myth of the great city-states, these groups structured their world in terms of tribal organization and genealogical record-keeping; that is, the ancestral stories of Genesis unfold in the direction of a historical worldview. The stress of the great ancient Near Eastern law codes on order and central royal authority yields to emphasis on divine guidance of the clans in their seasonal peregrinations. The symbolization of reality does not follow the pattern of cosmogonic myths of origin locating temple and palace at the *omphalos mundi*[18] but elaborates on the relationship of the deity to a people, utilizing themes of promise of land, progeny, safety, and oaths of fidelity. The ancestral stories are thus the building blocks of epic and covenant rather than the ingredients of myth and royal authority.

This social-anthropological reconstruction of the tribal prehistory of some of the elements that later comprised early Israel, though vague and speculative in itself, is corroborated in its general features and refined by biblical materials either stemming from or accurately preserving memory of the period of the tribal confederacy, that is, the pre-monarchical period. We shall turn to the laws and customs that fit this category below, but first we shall consider a specific event that seems to have had a decisive influence on the emerging worldview of early Israel.

Israel emerged from the undifferentiated masses of peasants and slaves scattered among the empires of the ancient Near East into the distinctiveness of peoplehood in the escape of a band of slaves from Egypt. The ubiquity of this theme in the oldest biblical sources suggests strongly that Israel's specific consciousness as a people began with the exodus. It does not imply, however, that those entering into the new confederacy of tribes were innocent of all notions of social structure and its relation to ultimate reality. The specific laws and customs that emerged among the tribes, the pervasive hostility towards central authority fueled by fierce loyalty to the clan, and the restless, dynamic view of reality in terms of historical movement under divine guidance were surely present among the *'epiru, SA-GAZ*, and *shasu*, that is, the various unsettled groups that existed along the margins of the great empires. The appellation attached to one of those socially defined groups of outcasts, the *'apiru (habiru)*, they even adopted for themselves. Henceforth Hebrew was not to be a derogatory term but one borne with pride. The experience of escape proved to be a powerful catalyst in forging what departed from Egypt as a "mixed com-

---

[18]Editors' note: On the significance of this symbol of the "navel" or center of the earth for the construction of a symbolic universe see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961) 38, 40, 44–45, 47.

pany" ('*ereb rab,* Ex. 12:38) into an emergent community in search of its particular nature and destiny. Inspired by their encounter with a divine power who demonstrated through their escape solidarity with the weak, the poor, and the enslaved against the tyrant kings of this world, they declared their allegiance: "There is no king but Yahweh."

An epic thus was born that superceded the royal myth as the life-interpreting center of this people. Laws governing social behavior no longer originated in royal decree. They were drawn inferentially from the historical experience of deliverance, as the oft-recurring motive clause within the biblical law collections indicates: "I am Yahweh, who delivered you from the House of Bondage." Not the metaphysics of a static cosmos, but the example of a God present with ordinary people came to serve as a norm for human justice. That norm functioned in the daily life of the people through recitation of the epic, through the function of memory. The Hebrew was obliged to relate to the homeless, the weak, the poor, the widow, and the orphan not in a manner deduced from a timeless myth taught by temple priests but rather drawn from the Hebrews' historical identity: "You shall not oppress the alien, for you know the soul of the alien." Ontologically, then, the Israelite was grounded in the experience of divine grace in deliverance from oppression. Morally, the Israelite was inwardly motivated to act towards other human beings in a manner consistent with the experience of undeserved grace in the consciousness of living in the presence of a just and compassionate God.

Though the moral consciousness conceived in Israel's tribal prehistory and born of the exodus took shape in the individual (as indicated by the personal form of address in the laws and admonitions of the Pentateuch), that consciousness comes to fullest expression as a communal ideal. Israel came to believe that the exodus accomplished a restoration of life within community as God intended it, life in which the wholeness of each individual was safeguarded within the context of shalom. Shalom, the quality of harmony and peace among all members, was believed by Israel to arise where the people called into being by God's deliverance responded in gratitude expressed in worship and in imitation of divine mercy and justice in all of life's activities. Shalom thus differs from the order imposed by the ancient Near Eastern kings for purposes of maximizing royal authority and the productivity of the land. Not a pragmatic means to an end, but the fruits of a community striving to be true to its historical roots by embodying mercy and justice; such was the shalom to which early Israel was committed.

Our observations relating to earliest Israel identify two principles upon which its notion of social welfare was based: (1) a theological principle that located the source of community in divine grace and the norm for human behavior in the nature of the God encountered in the deliver-

ance and empowerment of slaves, and (2) a sociological principle that generated laws and structures from the perspective of a community of equals rather than from the vantage point of the privileged few. Theological monotheism and social egalitarianism set in motion a major revision in social welfare. Injustice and oppression were not treated as threats to the smooth functioning of a hierarchically ordered state, but as an attack on the essence of who this people was, on their *nephesh*, that is, their intrinsic being. The irreducible good was no longer the sacred myth of the temple and the hierarchical ordering of the nation; the irreducible good was the community of shalom, living in covenant relationship with the God of justice and honoring the integrity of each human being. No longer could the king take the alien's wife with impunity. No longer could the bearer of the crown demand the vineyard of the peasant without serious repercussions. Henceforth a radical symbol of justice was set at the heart of the community, the symbol of the God who took up the cause of the poor, the weak, and the oppressed, and judged all humans with impartiality.

While response to the questions of social welfare was thus a matter of the heart rooted in memory, early Israel was not so naive as to believe that all members of the community would be faithful to this lofty ideal. Hence, there is evidence of early efforts to formulate laws as guidelines to life in covenant. This moves us from the level of worldview or symbolic universe, or in Israel's case the epic, to the level of laws and social institutions.

The Book of the Covenant in Exodus 20-24 is a product of the early pre-monarchic period. It is an uneven collection, giving the appearance of a young nation struggling to constitute itself and reaching both into the depths of its unique identity and into the customs prevailing among its neighbors. Some laws merely echo the case laws of the customary royal codes, preserving even the marks of social stratification (e.g., Ex. 21:28–32). Others draw on more humanitarian aspects of those codes (e.g., Ex. 21:1–11).[19] The full force of Israel's unique experience becomes visible, however, in a class of laws enjoining just treatment of vulnerable groups within the society such as widows and orphans, debtors, and aliens, by appeal to the example of the righteous compassion of God.

> If you lend to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; for that is his only covering; it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. (Ex. 22:25–27)

[19]It is of interest that the Hammurabi Code is more progressive in granting release of the debt-slave after three years.

This grounding of law in the nature of the deity encountered in its own history is the unique element in Jewish jurisprudence and the consistent expression of its historical ontology on the level of social structure.

This unique element of rooting ethical behavior in memory recurs in biblical laws, both early and late. A later example is the Levitical law regulating weights and measure:

> You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. (Lev. 19:35–36)

This tenacious connection with the source of Israel's moral resolve in memory lends the dynamic quality to Hebrew law that is lacking in the cognate cultures.

It would be a mistake to allow the revolutionary breakthrough in social theory that was introduced by early Israelite society to prompt one to adopt an idealized or romantic view of that society. We must again call to mind three levels: worldview, laws and institutions, and practice. Israel's breakthrough occurred on the level of worldview; it had some impact on laws and structures. As the narratives of the Book of Judges indicate, replete as they are with stories of apostasy and intertribal conflict, practice often remained unaffected by the story of gracious deliverance. But we are not searching for Utopia. We are interested in observing and comparing the interplay of worldview, social structures, and behavior in different cultures. In the case of ancient Israel, we have begun to take notice of the impact of worldview on law and practice, and can now add another example.

The Israelites inherited from their neighbors the custom of allowing fields periodically to lie fallow. In their formulation of a law indigenizing this custom, we observe an interesting extension of its application to an important area of social welfare.

> For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild beasts may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard. (Ex. 23:10–11)

When evidence of Israelite society in the pre-monarchical period is studied critically, what emerges is not a picture of a utopia but of a struggle between commitment to a transcendent basis for ethics and distractions that are not unfamiliar to moderns. That transcendent basis, moreover, is not an eternal myth revealing immutable verities established by the gods from the beginning, but an epic in which a people experiences

the deity drawing it into a historical journey from slavery to shalom. In that journey its beacon is the God revealed in saving acts as the Agent of justice and mercy, even as its norm is the treatment it has received from God now transformed into a model of how it is to treat others. The social model found in early Israel is thus dynamic and open-ended. Within the covenant relationship Israel continues to encounter God in its historical existence and through these encounters it continues to infer lessons about the divine nature and will which must then be applied to changing situations.

THE RECRUDESCENCE OF ELITISM IN THE MONARCHY

We have already noted that Israel's perception of the true and the right is a historical perception. That it is not immune to the ambiguities of history struck Israel powerfully in the last years of the tribal league when the newly emerging people was nearly exterminated by the advance of an intrusive culture, the Philistines. The tribes in the confederacy of Israel had honored their individual autonomy by rejecting centralization under kingship and insisting on reliance on a voluntary militia for defense. But during the time of Samuel that began to crumble under the blows of the professional armies of Philistia. "Appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations," was the demand put forth by the elders of Israel to Samuel.

Kingship of course was not a neutral category, neither socially, politically, nor ideologically. In the ancient Near East, as we have seen, kingship involved acceptance of the king as mediator (and, from a political perspective, source) of the laws binding on the citizenry. That in turn implied the loss of the very freedom that the Hebrews had won in escaping Egyptian slavery, the freedom to develop a way of life congruent with their historically based identity. Samuel warned them of the price of kingship: the king would take the best of their land, lay claim to their produce, and conscript their sons and daughters. In sum, he warned, "You shall be his slaves." Whereas the earlier generation could repudiate the suggestion of kingship with the categorical assertion, "There is no king in Israel but Yahweh" (paraphrase of Judg. 8:23), the court poet could now extol the divine nature of the king that set him apart from mere mortals (Ps. 45:6–7):

Thy throne, O God, endures for ever and ever....
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness above your fellows.

While there is no gainsaying the fact that monarchy created a centralized force capable of stemming the crushing tide of Philistia, the ideology of monarchy contradicted much that Israel had struggled to develop

within the League period. Monarchy introduced an elitist, hierarchical structure of governance in place of a more egalitarian one. Monarchy also brought a major shift on the level of underlying worldview. The events of Israel's epic gave way to allusions of cosmogony and theomachy. A partial description of the sweeping changes thereby introduced include: (1) the land, formerly apportioned to the clans in perpetuity as an inviolable economic trust, became a commodity that could be bought, sold, or even confiscated by the royal house; (2) the populace became a pool for labor corvees and armies; (3) the economy was controlled by an elaborate bureaucracy dependent on whatever taxation was required for court luxuries, building projects, and military operations; (4) the internationalization of trade and the monopolization of farming and industry by an emerging nobility forced commoners into a feudal system as serfs who often amassed huge loans to finance seed and equipment and through foreclosure ended up in bonded slavery. Social stratification and a new set of laws to order the economy threatened to obliterate the revolutionary new concept of human community that had begun to develop in the tribal league. Within this new system, social welfare—for which there was clearly a growing need—was removed from the notion of mutual support within a community of shalom and placed back under the patronage of the king in the role of shepherd of the weak and the poor. Like the hymns of Mesopotamia, the royal psalms could celebrate the beneficence of the king: "In your majesty ride forth victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right; let your right hand teach you dread deeds!" (Ps. 45:4). But the jeremiads of the prophets against the corrupt and unjust practices of the new elite classes and the resulting oppression of common people support the skepticism already planted in our minds by the Mesopotamian and Egyptian royal propaganda: the kings were often driven by desires other than the welfare of their subjects!

The sweeping changes introduced by the kingship did not go unchallenged, however. Arising with kingship was a new office in Israel, one refusing cooption or control by the monarch: the office of prophet. Scholarship has provided conclusive proof that the prophets functioned as courageous defenders of the early Yahwistic ideals of community. While accepting monarchy as a historical fact, they deprived it of its mystique by repudiating its mythology and by defending the values associated with the epic and the customs and legal traditions of the League. The ideology of special privilege that entitled some classes to more than others and excused their injustice and callousness was condemned by appeal to the laws of the Book of the Covenant (Amos 2:6-8). The economic system that encouraged the extortion of the commoners' land by the wealthy was denounced by invocation of the divine word (Isa. 5:8-9). The hypocrisy that used religion to defend injustice was

repudiated in the name of the God who takes scant notice of kings in demanding justice and compassion (Amos 5:21–24).

The common source of the prophetic social critique in the epic tradition did not give rise to a monolithic response to the relation between religious and civil realms. Elijah seems to have taken a harshly adversarial position towards the monarchy and was remembered as the underlying catalyst of Jehu's bloody coup de grâce. Hosea, though critical of the excesses of the Jehu purge, shared Amos's cynicism in regard to the ways of the kings. Isaiah, on the other hand, sought to draw kingship as an institution into the value system of early Yahwism by advancing a model of the king as a vessel of divine justice and mercy (Isa. 11:3–4):

> His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
> He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
> or decide by what his ears hear;
> but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
> and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.

The integrity of Isaiah's strategy is demonstrated by his actions: he was resolute in his opposition to Ahaz's international policy because he believed it compromised Israel's ultimate reliance on God (Isa. 7-8); he was relentless in striking out at the injustice of the wealthy and the apostasy of many worshippers (Isa. 5:8–23; 1:10–17); and he was supportive of Hezekiah in the period of Assyrian assault because he believed that God had not forsaken the land (Isa. 36–39).

The diversity of approaches taken to issues of justice and social welfare by the prophets indicates that the early Yahwistic tradition was neither subservient to one ideology nor tied to any particular political system. What it contributed was a perspective based on an epic and an accompanying tradition of law and custom. The perspective was theocentric, covenantal, and egalitarian. The tradition of law struggled to translate historical memory into structures of justice and equality. The customs were communal in orientation and fostered the qualities of shalom. In effect, the vision of shalom, of life restored to its God-intended wholeness, was the essence of the message the prophets believed they had received from God. It was the norm against which they were to evaluate, admonish, and judge the civil and sacral realities of their time. This made their messages relevant, dynamic, controversial, and sometimes contradictory. But they were always a humanizing ferment that acted to maintain moral conscience in the land and to restrain political and economic programs of national aggrandizement and economic exploitation with the standards of divine righteousness and compassion. The prophets, more than any other group, sought to maintain the vital interplay between epic, laws and social structures, and practice.

Judged by conventional standards of success, the results of the prophets' efforts were mixed. Jehosophat, Hezekiah, and Josiah all instituted social reforms sensitive to the prophetic message. In the case of Josiah, it is possible to identify the specific literary source of his reform with the core of the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy thus offers a window through which we can glimpse a prophetically inspired view of social welfare acting as a reforming catalyst within the nation at a given point in history. The old Yahwistic starting point in memory of the past is invoked once again. Remembrance that its life as a people was a gift of divine grace both demanded obedience and bore the promise of life; on the other hand, forgetfulness, ingratitude, and disobedience threatened loss of nationhood and death (Deut. 30:15–20). The motivational power implicit in the appeal to Israel's epic is displayed clearly in the parenesis sections of the Book of Deuteronomy as summarized in the phrase: "Take heed lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Deut. 6:12). Applied to the issues of social welfare, the definition of justice inferred from the exodus paradigm is clear and specific. Instances of oppression, impoverishment, and slavery contradict Israel's identity as a redeemed people and threaten its very existence. Because God's justice cannot be compromised, there is no equivocation in the Deuteronomic judgment on poverty: "There will be no poor among you." At the same time, the fact of poverty is not denied, but addressed:

> [T]he poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land. (Deut. 15:11)

The Deuteronomic reform goes beyond this general command to specific laws regulating social welfare. They address two sectors, the private and the public. The specific approach taken in the private sector involves the practice of gleaning. We see its effects both from the side of the benefactor and the recipient:

> When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this. (Deut. 24:19–22)

When you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your vessel. When you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain. (Deut. 23:24–25) ·

The issue of social welfare is addressed to the public sphere in the form of the tithe, the equivalent of today's taxation. The Deuteronomic law regulating the triennial tithe reflects a movement beyond the assumption that voluntary charity meets the needs of the poor. The realism that humans require structures that coerce their charitableness strikes a modern chord:

At the end of every three years you shall bring forth all the tithe of your produce in the same year, and lay it up within your towns; and the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled; that the Lord your God may bless you. (Deut. 14:28–29)

The perennial danger of vulnerable groups being denied full access to the protection of the judicial system is also addressed, once again with the exodus motive clause:

You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge; but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. (Deut. 24:17–18)

These examples indicate that the goal of a humane society in which the welfare of all members is assured serves as the guiding force behind the entire Deuteronomic program. The foundation of that program is constituted by the traditional Yahwistic theological and moral principles. The recurrent motive clauses point to the source of the entire moral structure of Israel in the God who delivered slaves from their bondage. The righteous and compassionate nature of God revealed in the exodus served as the norm for Israelite society. Even as God was impartial and incorruptible, so too were Israelites to be impartial and incorruptible in the administration of justice; even as God heard the cry of the lowly, and purely out of love gave them freedom and prosperity, so too were Israelites to restore the weak and the impoverished.[20] By locating the source of social justice

---

[20]Moshe Weinfield has correctly observed, "[The Deuteronomic law] is primarily interested in human beings, and above all those whose possibilities of defending themselves are limited." *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 243.

and welfare in the heart of a loving God rather than in any specific civic or sacral program, Deuteronomy delivered law from its subservience to the utilitarian aims of leaders and priests, and reestablished the dignity of every human as an irreducible good: "Justice and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live" (Deut. 16:20). At the same time Deuteronomy does not overlook the necessity of introducing laws to take up the cause of the disadvantaged where unaided human generosity fails.

The centering of the Deuteronomic social ethics in a God experienced in the ongoing life of the people combined with a realistic assessment of human limitations accounts both for the progressive nature of the laws themselves and for the eloquence and power of the accompanying parenesis.

Jeremiah similarly takes up the themes of memory of the epic and the egalitarian justice arising therefrom, and envisions the day when Israel's persistence in idolatry and injustice would give way to obedience from the heart (Jer. 31:31–34). Jeremiah stands at the end of the period of Israelite nationhood. During his lifetime the Babylonians conquered the land, destroyed the temple, and exiled the upper tiers of the nation. This tragic conclusion to Israelite history raises the question whether there was any abiding significance in a tradition of justice and a vision of social welfare that failed to secure its own nation from extinction. Was the early Yahwistic tradition and the tradition of prophecy that grew out of it during the period of the monarchy unrealistically utopian after all?

The literature of the exilic and post-exilic periods sheds light on this important question. Briefly stated, it indicates that the tradition and vision not only survived, but survived in a new, more mature form. The destruction of the Davidic state and the national cult tied to it corroborated one of the most emphatic themes of the prophets, namely, that God's justice could neither be contained nor co-opted by human institutions. God's torah of righteous compassion was not destroyed by the demise of its host nation therefore, but in fact was enabled to spread beyond the borders of Israel to other peoples.

The exilic and post-exilic periods thus proved to be times of deepening understanding of the biblical notions of justice and social welfare. Notions that failed to be adopted as official policy by the state like the Jubilee and the transformation of weapons into instruments of peace became objects of intense reflection. Chapters 40–55 of Isaiah, written in exile, present a broadly universal portrait of the envisioned healing of both the realms of nature and of human society. After the Jewish community was reconstituted by the return of considerable numbers from exile, Ezra and Nehemiah set out to reform the economic and religious structures of the community, and their source was once again the torah tradition of God's righteous compassion traced all the way back to the exodus

(e.g., Neh. 5:1–13). The loss of nationhood, far from destroying that tradition, thus freed it for application to new settings. Under scribes, rabbis, and apostles, the epic tradition of God's enlisting a people for the cause of impartial justice and creation's healing, and the vision of social welfare that evenhandedly embraced all people lived beyond the demise of one nation and became an important influence in the development of many future nations.

CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

Drawing contemporary implications from an ancient world is a precarious business that requires ongoing discussion. I shall merely conclude by drawing together the cardinal points that can be extrapolated from this survey of the issue of social welfare in the ancient Near East.

First there is the inextricable connection between the world-structuring myth of a culture and its value system. The symbolic form used by a culture to present itself exercises a powerful influence on its laws and customs. In Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan the myth was cosmogonic, and the king played a role parallel to the creator god by constituting and securing his people through his authoritative decrees. The right and the good was determined from the top down. The result was a stratified social system giving privileged treatment to the powerful and wealthy, and ordering the lives of the poor and disadvantaged as a function of maintaining stability and productivity in the land.

In Israel's pre-monarchical period, an epic of divine deliverance of slaves replaced the myth as the narrative depiction of the world, and the good and the right was patterned after the example of the righteous, compassionate God who treated all humans with impartiality and sought to restore the rights and fortunes of the weak, the impoverished, and the dispossessed. Though early Israelite law addressed many of the same specific areas as had the laws of Mesopotamia and Egypt, the thrust of the law was transformed by the interpretive framework of the epic. Righteous compassion replaced authoritative ordering as the intention of the law. As the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 illustrates, this center of interpretation strongly influenced the function of law in Israel.

The monarchy reintroduced the myth of ordering by the authoritative divine command. Laws and social welfare were drawn back into the concerns of the royal and priestly hierarchy. The prophets arose in defense of the older, egalitarian laws. The result was a history of intense struggle between two different understandings of society's role in social welfare.

Many intermediate links would have to be forged before the implications of Israel's struggle with issues of social welfare could be drawn for our own society. But already the history that we have covered poses cer-

1

The Origin and Nature of Prophetic
Political Engagement in Ancient Israel

Paul D. Hanson

The Bible and Politics

Neal Riemer, in *The Future of the Democratic Revolution: Toward a More Prophetic Politics*, sees in the prophetic mode a reliable basis for exposing the weaknesses of Machiavellian, utopian, and liberal democratic politics, and a promising means for moving "to a higher level of politics that can more effectively ensure vital civilized life, healthy growth and creative [human] fulfillment."[1] And he describes very clearly the contribution of biblical tradition to this mode of political reflection and action. Michael Walzer, in chapter 2 of this book, portrays the paradigmatic task of prophets within a society as that of judging "the people's relations with one another (and with 'their' God)" and "the internal character of their society"—in other words, the task of social criticism.

I am greatly encouraged by the efforts of these two political philosophers to recover the prophetic dimension of Hebrew Scripture. For too long now we have been satisfied with a very unprophetic, popular interpretation of the Bible that has comforted the comfortable and left the oppressed to their oppressors. Many people in our religious communities have private interests to protect that particular elitist reading of the Bible. The Bible, however, is a document that stands solidly on the side of evenhanded justice and equality. It does not adopt, however, a utopian mode for advancing universal justice. Rather, it is characterized by an unflinching realism that commends itself for reflection to people seeking to make lasting contributions to social reform. Given the sterility of the popular domesticated reading of Scripture and the particular role that reading has played in reinforcing inadequate and often recklessly dangerous social and political positions, it is heartening to see philosophers and thinkers of the stature of Walzer and Riemer dedicating themselves to a new look.

As a student of the Bible and a concerned citizen, I am intrigued by the

1

possibility of reviving the prophetic mode as a credible and perhaps even critically important perspective within today's political arena. We must proceed in the exploration of this possibility, to be sure, with full awareness that our presuppositions, our institutional and societal structures, and the realities of the world around us differ considerably from those of the ancient world within which Israelite prophecy once flourished. We know all too well with what enthusiasm and frequent harm the Bible is being translated into programs for political action throughout our world today. Leaders who exercise caution in drawing quantum physics or economic theory into their arguments often reach into the world of the Bible in perfect confidence that its meaning is simple and transparent. What are we to say to those cynics who will now ask, and with justification, How is your application of biblical prophecy any more legitimate than that of Ralph Reed, Jerry Falwell, or Hal Lindsay?

I operate with the hermeneutical assumption that application of any ancient source to a modern setting is legitimate only if based, first, on a critically informed understanding of the ancient documents in question and the phenomena described therein, and second, on a careful consideration of possible intrinsic connections between the ancient phenomena and their modern counterparts. In the case of the prophetic mode, applicability depends on the commensurability of essential ingredients within the two loci, the ancient and the modern.

Prophecy in Ancient Israel

It is my desire first to describe the essential characteristics of prophecy in ancient Israel and to sketch the stages through which prophecy passed in its roughly 500-year history. For illustration I shall cite specific texts. With this characterization in hand I shall return to the question of the applicability of the biblical model of prophetic critique to our own world, although I will keep that section brief, since other chapters will focus specifically on prophecy in the contemporary world.

We begin with the phenomenological observation that prophecy can be divided in the ancient Near East in general into two types, as Robert Wilson has shown in his book *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel.*[2] One type of prophecy he calls central prophecy; it is supportive of the interests of institutions and authorities of a given society. The other type, which he calls peripheral prophecy, stands outside the mainstream and exercises criticism over against it. The ancient Near Eastern texts that we possess, especially those from Mesopotamia, are generous in supplying examples of central prophets. Every king had his troop of prophets to support his decisions in battle or in

domestic disputes, and as the story, in 1 Kings 22, of Ahab consulting his 400 prophets illustrates, Israel's kings were no exception.

But what the court prophets proclaimed is of little interest to us. And in this we are already anticipated by the students of the tradition of antiquity. Biblical tradition preserved not the words of the political supporters of the powers that were, but the words of the reformers, the harsh critics of kings and nobles and priests, those less interested in supporting official policy than in exposing it to a very distinct and unflinching critique from an independent perspective. The term peripheral, however, is unfortunate, I think, and should be replaced, for it is open to the interpretation and misunderstanding that the majority of Israel's recorded prophets acted from a position outside of an effective sphere of power. No one in Israel looked upon the prophets as peripheral or powerless, not even their most cultivated despisers. When Elijah confronted Ahab as the latter entered the vineyard he had recently confiscated, the king responded to the prophet with the question "Have you found me, O my enemy?"and with those words exposed his dread before this "troubler of Israel."[3] The prophets were not peripheral. They were located centrally within a very distinct sphere of power, and their impact on their society can be understood only if that sphere is understood, for it assured them not only a hearing before kings and nobles, not only a circle of dedicated disciples, not only a fifth column in times of duress, but also the potential of a popular following capable of sweeping societal change. The prophets were thus spokespersons of a recognizable order. They were neither utopian dreamers nor self-indulgent individualists. They were spokespersons, empowered citizens, representing a distinct order of reality. This needs further clarification.

Too often in scholarship, and certainly in popular understanding of prophecy, attention is focused on the psychology of the prophets, with the result that ecstatic experiences and esoteric actions have been described in terms of highly individualistic propensities. They are characterized as extraordinarily sensitive persons open to dimensions of reality of which normal people are scarcely aware. I do not want to discount the insights given to us in a classic psychological study such as that of Johannes Lindblom.[4] Nevertheless, we must recognize another dimension, and I think a far more important one, to ancient prophecy in Israel. The prophets—at least those whose words are preserved in the Bible—spoke out of a distinct tradition, drew upon a carefully developed worldview, and defended a social system characterized by well-defined values and warrants. This can be seen in the high degree of consistency that characterizes their description of the moral and covenantal mandate placed before Israel by its God. Not uncommonly, one can recognize a reference in the prophets to the Decalogue, as in Hos. 4:1–3, or to the Book of the Covenant, as in Amos 2:6–8. This indicates the degree of specificity with

which these prophets drew upon a received tradition.

Especially if the prophetic mode is to be considered seriously as viable within the modern realm of politics, it is important to recognize the ancient prophet's location within a clearly defined tradition and to understand the importance of that connection for the prophet's effectiveness as an agent of social reform. It is a widely held view in our society that prophets are, and always have been, solitary individualists acting out of a private and inscrutable impulse. What, then, is the significance of the fact that Israelite prophets addressed reality from the perspective of a distinct and definable tradition?

First of all, it meant that the prophet assessed the world from a unified view of reality, a view that had undergone years and years of testing by previous generations. And because that worldview was distinct from the prevailing one—remember that the prophets lived during the period of the monarchy—it supplied an independent vantage point from which existing social and political realities could be scrutinized and judged. The simple fact that the prophetic tradition was different from the prevailing one, however, is in itself of limited significance. The value of the perspective and standards of judgment the prophetic worldview provided depended rather on the essential nature of the difference between itself and that which it sought to evaluate and change. Before we can proceed further, therefore, it is necessary that we describe the relationship between prophecy, on the one hand, and its host system, the monarchy, on the other.

In considering that relationship, bring to mind any one of Israel's major prophets, for example, Elijah, Amos, Isaiah, or Jeremiah. In each case we find an individual, though holding no official office in the government, exercising a great deal of influence in the land, especially through pronouncements highly critical of the reigning king and other persons of wealth and power. It is patently clear that these prophets do not view their world from the same perspective as those in power, and thus frequent clashes over values and priorities are inevitable. Whereas kings generally think in terms of securing the land against foreign invaders by military alliances and increased chariotry, and often justify the forfeiture of their subjects' rights on the basis of the ostensibly loftier concerns of the crown, the prophets persistently begin with the intrinsic value of the individual regardless of social status.

What is the deeper significance of this disparity? Using contemporary terms we can recognize on one level a clash between offices, and if one sees a sort of check-and-balance system in ancient Israel, we can say that each of these—the king as well as the prophet—was exercising the prerogatives of his office. But on a deeper level, a genuine clash between ideologies can be detected. The order of reality embraced by the prophets is different from that held by most of Israel's kings. We need to examine these divergent orders of

reality, defining them and seeking to identify their sources.

The Ideology of Kingship

Fortunately, we know a great deal about kingship and its ideology in the ancient Near Eastern world of which Israel was a part. No Israelite king was slavishly dependent on foreign models. Nevertheless, there are substantive lines of continuity, for example, between the ideology of the Davidides in Jerusalem and some of Babylon's kings. The source of our knowledge of ancient royal ideology is the extensive mythological and historical literature unearthed by archaeologists in the last century and a half together with information provided by the Bible.[5]

According to the ideology of kingship, the governance of this world was intimately tied to the governance of the entire cosmos. The link between the two was as intimate as the relationship between the king and his god. Therefore we can understand kingship only if we first understand the divine realm from which it derived its authority.

Foremost among the tasks of the gods was the maintenance of the harmony of the cosmos. This was a most difficult task, for a host of divine beings preferred chaos. One of the most significant of all myth types is therefore the conflict myth, seen for example in a Babylonian version in the *Enuma elis*.[6] The myth describes a deadly threat to the pantheon posed by Tiamat, or Monster Sea, and her creatures. Marduk is commissioned by the pantheon, meeting in divine assembly, to defeat Tiamat and reestablish order. It was the ensuing conflict that established the universe. Marduk cut Tiamat in half, fixing the upper half of her carcass as the sky, the bottom half as the firmament of the earth. The sky in turn he supported with mountain peaks. Beyond the sphere of order thus established there churned the murky waters of primordial chaos. Portals in the two half shells controlled the influx of the appropriate amount of rain and subterranean water to fructify the earth. To regulate days and nights, months and years, Marduk set the heavenly bodies in their courses. In acknowledgment of his accomplishments, the gods appointed Marduk to be king over them.

Earthly kingship was thought to derive from this heavenly kingship. The king's realm was a mirror image, greatly reduced to be sure, of the divine realm. Each earthly king had a patron deity, for the gods had divided the nations among themselves. Even as one can find the cosmology sketched above reflected in Gen. 1, so too one can recognize a reflex of myth in the division of the nations among the gods in Deut. 32:8–9. To each god a nation is assigned, with Israel falling to Yahweh. The fortunes of his god in the divine assembly determined the fortunes of a given king. As the authority of

the successful king of heaven depended upon his establishing and maintaining cosmic order, so too the authority of an earthly king depended on his establishing and maintaining mundane order. In this, two endeavors were paramount: (1) securing the land from enemy attack through military strength and skill, and (2) maintaining harmony within the kingdom through economic stability and enforcement of the laws of the land. The royal court functioned in intimate connection with the temple and priests, inasmuch as support of the military and the distribution of food supplies were both regulated by the sacrificial system of the temple cult. A sacral rationale was given to this whole system through the claim that the disruption of the flow of offerings into the temple would deprive the cosmic rulers of vital needs, with the woeful result that they would be distracted from their lofty responsibilities of maintaining cosmic order, thereby leading everything, including human habitation, to collapse into chaos. The social and political implications of the mythopoeic ideology were clear: Subjects, from priests to slaves, were to be faithful above all in fulfilling their assigned duties in the cosmos by being obedient. They were to support and defend monarchy and temple in all things, for upon the strength of these institutions depended the viability of the entire universe.

Israelite Prophecy and Its Ideology

In describing Israelite prophecy and its ideology, ancient Near Eastern texts outside the Bible are less helpful. In spite of numerous efforts to connect the prophetic movement with phenomena in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the only light that has been shed is on central or cult prophecy. The office of critical prophecy seems to be unique to Israel, a fact intimately related to its roots in the traditions of the tribal Yahwism of the pre-monarchical period.

This refers us back, therefore, to the question of the nature of the tradition from which prophecy drew its unified view of reality and hence its critical perspective. Though it is true that in a historical sense prophecy originated with the monarchy, on a deeper, more critical level, its origin must be located in the founding experiences of the Hebrew people, what we can call metonomically "the Exodus." This tradition furnished a critical perspective from which monarchy could be evaluated, inasmuch as it was born of a set of circumstances vastly different from those described in the etiological myths of kingship. Whereas kingship was described in terms of a primordial drama within which the gods established one (quasi-deified) human as privileged head of the society, the early Yahwistic tradition recalled a historical drama in which Yahweh, in defiance of earthly potentates, embraced the cause of the most lowly of the earth and of them made a nation chosen to be a blessing for, and a teacher of, all people.

Now, if prophecy originated historically, not during the period of the Exodus, but in the early years of the monarchy, why did it base itself on the earlier Exodus tradition? The answer to this question brings us back to the contrast between the ideology of kingship and the ideology of prophecy. In the introduction of kingship, the prophets recognized facets of a sociopolitical order resembling that which had earlier secured the bondage of their ancestors in Egypt. We can conceptualize this contrast by picturing Egyptian society as a pyramid. Basically, the system from which the Hebrews had been liberated and which their descendants saw reimplanting itself in Israel was a social pyramid with the deity at the top, followed by the divine king, and then in a progressive descent moving through the social classes to the slaves at the bottom. Metaphysically, this was imagined as an emanation of divinity, from its purest embodiment in the Horus-king down to its weakest concentration in the rocks and clay of the ground. Everything to some degree embodied divinity, but in a harshly stratified sense. The pyramid, then, symbolized the past history of the Israelites, the period of their being held in bondage by a strictly stratified social system.

The prophetic appeal to the early Exodus tradition was an urgent appeal back to the model that, according to Yahwistic belief, had supplanted the model of the stratified Egyptian pyramid. That alternative model arose when the Hebrews, as members of the slave class located at the oppressive base of the pyramid, encountered a God who, rather than holding them in their allotted position as a requisite for social and cosmic stability, actually defied the divine and royal powers of Egypt and delivered them from their bondage. The prophets, in harking back to Exodus tradition, were thus appealing to the essential nature of early Yahwistic community and a unique quality of life that was being endangered by the reintroduction of the socioeconomic order of monarchy, an order appealing to mythic warrants, predicated on an ideology of special privilege, and dedicated to the preservation of the "law of the king" against all change and challenge (cf. 1 Sam. 8:9–18).

Let us pause for a moment here to delineate this Exodus tradition from which the prophets drew their critique and their reforming vision. Consider its essential characteristics. First of all, it confessed that the ultimate Reality that unifies all reality was Yahweh, a unique deity known as champion of the weak, the lowly, and the oppressed of the earth. This Reality in turn relativized all other powers, thus establishing equality among human beings. Of course this ideal remained largely inchoate in the early period. There were still slaves in early Israel, and the vision of egalitarian community remained thwarted. Nevertheless, the monotheistic thrust in that early confession that the God who gave birth to Israel was one God, a God who showed special concern for the weak and the oppressed, was in essence powerfully egalitarian. This principle

was acknowledged by the faithful within Israel through worship.

Second, the fitting social response to this gracious deliverance by God was defined as the communal embodiment in family relations, in social structures, and in economic institutions of the qualities manifested in Yahweh's delivering act. Chief among the qualities that the community sought to embody were righteousness and compassion. Righteousness was understood to be a just moral standard applying impartially to all people, rich and poor, strong and weak, resident and alien. Compassion was defined as the outreach of this people, privileged by God's deliverance, towards those excluded by the very definition of belonging provided by its just standard of righteousness, whether that exclusion was caused by sickness, indebtedness, or accident of birth.

We find then a triadic concept of community predicated on the sole worship of Yahweh and embodying the qualities of righteousness and compassion. This triad in turn became that which defined and safeguarded the community's habitation, what we might call the orbit of *shalom*. Within the biblical context we can understand shalom to be the God-given blessing that nurtured the wholeness of all members of the society and fostered harmony among them. It gave rise to institutions as concrete as the *nahala*, or family inheritance, which was the plot of land given to each family as a basis for its economic viability, as well as to notions like the jubilee, the year occurring every half-century when all debts were to be forgiven, all forfeited property restored, all broken relationships healed.[7]

This concept of community, with its triad safeguarding shalom, was not regarded as a trifling matter. It was seen as the sine qua non not only for the viability of this one community, but for the family of the nations (as already suggested by the Abrahamic Blessing in Gen. 12), and even for the entire universe (cf. Hos. 4:1-3 and Isa. 24). There thus developed out of the humble beginnings of the escape of a band of slaves from Egypt a remarkably encompassing vision of the redeemed community as a nucleus essential for the health of the entire cosmos.

Originating in a revolutionary historical experience, this concept of community fostered in Israel a dynamic ontology of renewal. The God who broke the bonds of the first Hebrew slaves would continue to break bonds wherever they were found until all humans were free. On the basis of this ontology sociopolitical structures emerged within the triad of shalom that, if we for a moment use modern terminology, can be seen to resemble features of modern democracies. First, I believe one can recognize a rudimentary form of constitution, formulating the cardinal principles of the community and tracing their origin to Yahweh's deliverance of a slave people from Egypt (Exod. 20:2-7). This relation between principles and their origin in antecedent divine activity (Exod. 20:2) suggests that the values of this society were understood to be

traceable to events of its past (i.e., its epic). Obedience was thus something other than mindless adherence to impersonal authority. Obedience was grateful response on the part of those living within the freedom and well-being that flows from grace within a covenant relationship.

We can perhaps go on to suggest that the principles of the constitution were translated very concretely into something resembling a Document of Human Rights, found in Exod. 20:22–23:19, the so-called Book of the Covenant. The Book of the Covenant is a hodgepodge of different laws and even types of laws, but all of them unite around the theme of safeguarding the dignity of the human within the society.

Finally, the constitution and the document of human rights were undergirded by an epic, commonly referred to by biblical scholars as a historical credo. This was the narrative core around which the first five books of the Bible grew. Originally in poetic form, it was likely recited by the early tribes of Yahweh at cult centers like Gilgal, Shechem, and Shiloh. In the ancient Hebrew community the epic was not just some sort of narrative embellishment added to the hard legal and institutional apparatus of the society. Rather, it gave expression to the soul of the community. It described that community's essential nature and offered the possibility of constant renewal of that nature through memory, through recitation, through re-creation of an open, dynamic, and radically egalitarian/inclusive ontology. The early Yahwistic community ideal simply cannot be understood apart from this epic. It explains why early Yahwistic tradition was important for the prophets not merely because it offered a contrast to kingship, and not merely because it was old. No, that early tradition explained the meaning of this people's existence by referring back to its birth in a miraculous passage from bondage to freedom, a miracle that established Israel's life upon pure, undeserved divine grace.

In the Book of the Covenant, we see this vital function of the epic, this function of calling Israel back through memory to its essential nature and motivational center. Remember that we are dealing here with a document written before kings had arisen in Israel, and preserved in a form unaltered by the later kings. Consider first Exod. 23:9: "You shall not oppress a stranger. You know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." That is a marvelously radical pronouncement within a world economy predicated on the exploitation of captured slaves, captured often as they went wandering through your land. Protection of the sojourner? Why? Because of a memory: "You were a sojourner." Or consider Exod. 22:21–24: "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless." Perhaps the formulation here is a bit strong for our modern taste, but we must not let that

obscure the message. The God Yahweh, in a manner perfectly consistent with the earlier act of deliverance, would punish those liberated slaves who forgot their past by enslaving others. Finally, consider Exod. 22:25–27: "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate." The order of the universe boils down to a mantle—that is, to the concrete and the particular—because that is, after all, the level upon which the vital center of the universe is maintained.

These examples illustrate how the triadic notion of community presupposed by the prophets is intimately tied to the central theme of the early epic, the theme of deliverance. They show how intimately related within the Yahwistic notion of community were the two sides of the whole-hearted response to the gracious God: on the one side, worship acknowledging the Sovereignty of the One true God; on the other, obedience to the Torah. The full life is thus epitomized in joyful worship and loving obedience. Together they secure the foundations of a genuinely humane community.

Having located the source of the ideology of the prophets in early Yahwism, we are in a better position to explain their attitude toward kingship. Important in this context is Samuel's speech in 1 Sam. 8. It is predicated, as Kyle McCarter has demonstrated, on an early prophetic tradition.[8] In it Samuel warns the people concerning their request for a king: This king will take your sons and make them charioteers, your daughters and make them bakers and perfumers, a tenth of your land and the best of your fields, and then—and here is the bottom line—you shall become slaves. The basic problem that the prophets had with kingship was that it threatened to undo the intricate order of shalom to which God had given birth in the Exodus. And it raised that threat by placing a penultimate authority in the place where only the ultimate authority, Yahweh, could rightfully stand. In other words, in relation to the triad of worship, righteousness, and compassion, the king began to encroach upon *Yahweh*'s position at the top of the triad by defining righteousness on the basis of the *king*'s rule of the land, and by limiting the showing of compassion to those enjoying a privileged status within the nation-state. Therefore we find the warnings in 1 Sam. 8 ending with the blunt assertion "and you shall become slaves." In other words, you will reverse your whole epic and end up where you came from. Kingship threatened to return Israel to point zero, with the added bitter irony that the king under whom they would suffer would no longer be a foreigner, but one of their own blood. But the people ignored Samuel's warning, and replied: "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may

be like all the nations, and that our king may govern over us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:19).

Israel found herself on the horns of a dilemma. Historically, the introduction of kingship was inevitable. If Israel had not adopted the centralized structures of kingship, she would have been defeated by the Philistines. Yet those same monarchical structures that promised political salvation threatened the very soul of this nation. To this very ambiguous situation, prophecy gave reply in 1 Sam. 12. This chapter is an important one to consider, given a common tendency among students of the Bible to adopt a simplistically negative attitude towards kingship. The prophet Hosea offers a similar corrective, for in Hos. 1:4–5 we encounter a prophet who has determined that prophetically inspired reforming zeal has been carried to excess, threatening the order, imperfect though it was, that kings maintained in the land. We must be prepared to recognize the carefully nuanced position of Israel's prophets toward their kings, and in this connection 1 Sam. 12 is helpful. Here Samuel grants that kingship was introduced because of the sinfulness of the people, and that it posed a serious threat. But he proved himself unwilling to concede the future to self-aggrandizing kings either by escaping into a utopian vision or by thrusting himself into a suicidal form of resistance. No, Samuel proceeded to challenge the people to reclaim the new system, fallen though it was, for their cherished Yahwistic ideals born of the Exodus: "Fear Yahweh. Serve Yahweh faithfully, with all your heart; for consider what great things Yahweh has done. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king." This is a clear formulation of prophetic realism. It acknowledges that structures of society, forms of government, and economic institutions are flawed, even evil. But this is precisely the nature of the context within which the people of vision are called to be faithful. In this context the prophet is the one dedicated to keeping alive the vision of the godly, moral life amidst the ambiguities of a sinful—that is, human—political and social order. "Moreover, as for me," adds Samuel, "far be it from me that I should sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way."

These words of Samuel refute those who assert that biblical prophecy, by offering simple answers to unambiguous situations, has little to contribute to the complex problems of a pluralistic and largely secular world. 1 Sam. 12 moves prophecy into honest confrontation with the kind of social and religious ambiguity that marks our world. The prophets were not dealing with simple sociopolitical problems!

What was "the good and the right way" to which Yahwistic prophecy was dedicated? It was rooted in the notion of the covenant community born of the Exodus from Egypt. It amplified the vision of a former slave people called from nothing by Yahweh's saving grace to be a community of peace dedicated

to God and extending to all people (regardless of race or class) the compassion and righteousness first received from God.

Kings and Prophets Contrasted

Against this background we can now venture to contrast the ideologies of kingship and prophecy, in order to grasp better how prophecy functioned in ancient Israel. Kings in that ancient world were primarily dedicated to establishing and maintaining order, security, and prosperity. Their methods included military force, foreign alliances, taxation, control of power through dynastic succession, and manipulation of religious institutions to bring them into conformity with their imperial objectives. That is what one expects of kings. To defend their privileged status they appealed to the myth of primordial conflict. The reality they projected was thus one precariously balanced on the abyss of chaos and requiring superhuman leaders to maintain order. What was required of the average citizen in turn was absolute, unquestioning obedience. The royal model was what later thinkers would designate a Machiavellian political mode. The chief beneficiaries of this system were the royal court, the military generals, the temple priests, and the mercantile class. Those most often victimized by the system were found among the small landowners, women, the working poor, and nonresident aliens. Within the earlier tribal confederacy the freedom and rights of such persons had been protected by the laws of the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 21–23). Under the monarchy, owing to the insatiable appetite of kings and land barons for new acquisitions, these vulnerable classes were commonly forced into indebtedness and slavery. Yet those officiating over the system would have contended that these were the inevitable costs of social stability and economic prosperity.

Prophets, on the other hand, were dedicated to the rights of individuals, especially of those exploited by the imperial system of might and order, a system that rationalized poverty, exploitation of labor, high taxation, and indebtedness as aspects of political order and national security. The prophets remained less convinced than their political leaders by the royal notion of order and prosperity based on the myth of conflict. For them the world was ultimately ordered not because of the superior power of a king, but because Yahweh reigned, thereby securing humans from the threat of chaos. The cosmos was not threatened in the first instance by cosmic forces, but by acts of human disobedience and cruelty. Yahweh could be trusted to maintain order in the universe even as humans were commanded by God to respect the moral ordering of life within their human habitation through acts of justice and mercy. Within the relationship thus established, harmony could arise that

would embrace the entire world.

With this understanding of reality, the prophets were actually able to accept kingship, but in a qualified sense that set them apart from the central prophets in Israel and other nations. Kingship represented not an unchangeable, inevitable, or eternal order, but a human institution. They were able to give an account of its origins in historical decisions and mistakes. It was thus an institution, like all human contrivances, that was capable of good and ill, requiring constant surveillance, conscientious critique, and caring guidance. Under no circumstances could it be exempted from criticism by an appeal to divine decree or metaphysical uniqueness. Whether it contributed good or evil depended strictly on the principles by which it was guided, which led the prophets outside of the structure of kingship itself for that guidance. As for the person of the king, the prophets refused to concede that he was closer than any other mortal to the deity. Like every other citizen, the king was to respond to the true king Yahweh by a life of obedience to the Torah, and like every Israelite he stood under God's judgment.

The Characteristics of the Prophetic Mode in the Bible

Against this historical background, we can begin to define the salient characteristics of the prophetic mode.

First, we can recognize a visionary modality. The prophets' messages and their activities were predicated on a vision of a harmonious sociopolitical order that ultimately was derived from a gracious God. This vision was born historically of a liberation experience and thus was radically egalitarian in thrust and dedicated to a deep sense of justice. This is the transcendent side of prophecy.

Second, there is a pragmatic or practical or realistic dimension. The prophets' lives were dedicated to translating that vision into the concrete realities of their society. This worldly side of prophecy is an important corrective to those who would use biblical prophecy to justify renunciation of involvement in social and political institutions in favor of a world-disdaining spirituality. It took radical dedication to hear God, in the heavenly council, saying, "Go and say to my people," and to obey that command, given the sacrifice and struggle obedience was sure to entail.

Third, we recognize a revisionist dimension or facet. Dedication to translating the vision into everyday realities disallowed the prophets from formulating a final version of the vision and the sociopolitical program it implied. For example, we can discern a development within prophecy from the limited vision of a legendary figure like Elisha, who, irritated by some youngsters

calling him baldhead, cursed them and delivered them to be torn by bears, to Amos and Second Isaiah, proponents of a broadly embracing vision of justice and world peace. Such a revisionist tendency can be seen as the inevitable effect of constant application of the vision to the changing conditions of this world. The need to reformulate the vision pressed itself upon those who took this world seriously. This tendency can be seen also in connection with the concept of the messiah, the anointed one, as it developed beyond the courts of an oriental despot to the domain of the Creator and Redeemer of the entire creation.

This revisionist impulse was closely related to the prophetic view of God's arena of action. A historicist perspective is at the root of this revisionist tendency. Since the setting of God's activity was history, historical events had to be taken seriously, had to be factored into the formulation of the vision; hence the need for revision. For example, what could royal Jerusalem tradition, a tradition celebrating a Davidic messiah, do with Cyrus, a foreign conqueror who seemed to be accomplishing God's purposes? It named Cyrus the new messiah, a rather shocking revision of an earlier nationalistic concept of divine rule. Appreciation of the revisionist impulse should not make us overlook the precariousness of such an open-ended, dynamic ontology of events. Even the prophets of Israel made some memorable mistakes. Perhaps we should not be so quick to condemn a prophet like Hananiah, deemed a false prophet by Jeremiah for prophesying the imminent breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon (Jer. 28). Though history vindicates Jeremiah, Hananiah's message of restoration would also have its time, as indicated by the salvatory themes of Second Isaiah. Prophetic engagement with the real issues of politics and society is a precarious business. I am reminded of something I learned from Professor Klaus Scholder in Tuebingen, Germany, about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Right after Hitler's invasion of France, the Confessing Church met in conference in Berlin to decide what response should be made. Bonhoeffer is reported in the minutes of this meeting to have suggested that the Confessing Church was obliged to look more closely at Hitler in light of such a resounding victory. Such are the ambiguities of history, here confusing even a modern saint, if but for a moment.

Therefore, a word of caution is called for. We have tended to describe prophecy as a unified phenomenon. And such oversimplification is often necessary for heuristic reasons. But in one sense prophecy could not be a unified phenomenon precisely because its ontology was historically grounded. Its dynamic, historical orientation forced it to be particular, to take sides, to make pronouncements within concrete and often ambiguous situations, resulting in broad diversity both synchronically and diachronically. The prophetic mode is no haven for those seeking spiritual repose. The mode offering eternal repose

is myth, and it continues to attract many people as it did in antiquity. It is not surprising, for example, to see fundamentalism forsaking the historical particularity in the ontological open-endedness of prophetism with its honest confrontation with ambiguity, and opting for the timeless myth of an infallible doctrine that yields clear answers to all social, political, and religious problems.

The inevitable result of this dynamic ontology, courageously applied to changing conditions by the prophets, was diversity. Contrast Amos and Isaiah, who reflect two very different theologoumena. Amos condemns kings and royal structures while Isaiah upholds a Davidic-Zion theology. Or contrast Isa. 56–66 with Haggai and Zachariah. Picture Haggai trying to reconstitute the nation by motivating the people to build the temple so that Yahweh would again bless Israel. In effect, he was reviving the old orthodoxy: Renew the economic structures of the land by building the temple and restoring the sacrifices, which after all were the means of gathering the basic commodities for redistribution by the king. To this, "Third Isaiah" had the audacity to reply: "Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool; what is this house [i.e., temple] which you would build for me?" (Isa 66:1). Here we see prophets daring to disagree with one another as they struggle to apply their vision of God's order of justice and mercy to the realities of their world.

A diachronic move through prophecy also reveals a great deal of diversity, from prophets against kings in the early stage, to prophets against the nation when we come to Amos and Isaiah, to prophets for the nation in Second Isaiah, to prophets for an open society in Ruth and Jonah, to prophets envisioning cosmic collapse and a new creation in apocalypticism.

From Theocracy to Prophetic Engagement with an Alien Order

In basing their relationship to the dominant regime of their time on a tradition from an earlier era, the prophets were not blindly replicating a pattern of the past. The concept of community that they embraced, the concept predicated on the triad of worship, righteousness, and compassion, arose within a world in which the religious community and the nation were one entity. That was the world of tribal theocracy. The law of the land, of the judicial court, and of the marketplace was the law of God. Community and society, gemeinschaft and gesellschaft, were coextensive.

The prophets sought to preserve the concept of community predicated on worship, righteousness, and compassion within a world ordered on the basis of other concepts, especially the ideology of kingship appealing to mythic warrants for the special status of the monarch over against subjects. As spokesper-

sons for a perspective that respected the dignity and equality of every human without distinction, they inevitably came into conflict with the authorities of the state. The community of compassion and justice became a remnant within a larger society that in large part derived its identity from other values. The circles of the prophets, as citizens of a nation that by virtue of its secular values could never be their essential home, thus foreshadow the communities of resistance and protest that exist within our secular world. Like the prophets, those who today view reality through the prophetic mode find that their call to citizenship implies not ultimate, but penultimate, allegiance. They give their best to their nations not by unquestioning acceptance of authority, but by vigilant critique based on a vision of impartial justice and universal peace that transcends every human institution and national regime. It is this "dual citizenship" of the prophet that creates the commensurability between biblical prophecy and prophetic activity today that is essential for the viability of the prophetic mode in contemporary political process.

Examples of Prophets Engaged in Politics

Let us consider a few illustrations of how specific prophets applied their vision and translated their concept of community into the social, economic, and political realities of their time.

The Israelite army is in the battlefield. King David remains at home in the safety and comfort of his fortified city. His eyes fall upon Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, one of his foot soldiers. He takes her to himself and must get rid of Uriah as a consequence of the resulting pregnancy. After the death of Uriah, the prophet Nathan comes to David. He tells the story of a rich man who, though possessing large flocks, took the sole possession of a poor man, his little beloved ewe lamb, and roasted it for a houseguest. David is indignant: "As Yahweh lives, the man who has done this deserves to die!" To this Nathan replies, "You are that man." We witness here a clash between the monarchical notion of special privilege, supposedly a necessary part of a strong kingdom, and the strict sense of egalitarian justice defended by prophecy.

Rehoboam is about to succeed his father, Solomon. The elders come to him representing the *eda* (the congregation of the earlier tribal confederacy). They plead with him to lessen the forced service and heavy taxation Solomon had placed upon them, promising to serve him faithfully if he did. The reply which the crown prince gives them is heartless: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (1 Kings 12:14). Then a prophet comes along, tears away from Solomon's son ten of the tribes, anointing a rival king to

assume rule over these ten tribes instead. Here we witness the opposition between the ideology of might preserving order and the communal concept of evenhanded righteousness.

In 1 Kings 21 a vintner named Naboth is visited by King Ahab, who seeks to force him into selling his family *nahala* (inheritance), a vineyard, because it is needed for palace expansion. Naboth pleads that he cannot, for according to early Yahwistic custom his land had been placed in the sacred trust of his family by Yahweh forever. Yahweh owned the land. Each family had a nahala, and was not permitted to sell it; it was held in sacred trust. Ahab, coached by his Canaanite wife, Jezebel, hires false witnesses to testify against the stubborn subject. Naboth is killed. Ahab takes possession of the vineyard. The prophet Elijah appears and brings a stinging word of judgment from Yahweh against the king. Here too we find a biting attack against special privilege and prerogative from the perspective of an egalitarian sense of justice.

In Amos we see the conflict between the prophet and the priestly defender of the crown, Amaziah. The prophet has dared to speak out against the king, for which he is severely attacked by Amaziah, who seeks to silence him. "Never again prophesy at Bethel," he is warned, "for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom" (Amos 7:13). Here is a classic conflict between those who would identify religion with patriotism and those who insist on a religious commitment that acknowledges as ultimate no loyalty save loyalty to God.

In Hos. 4:1–3, we find a prophet giving expression to the Yahwistic triad of shalom and identifying the confessing community as a nucleus essential for the viability of the whole. First Hosea, in brief words, characterizes the keystone of community as acknowledgment and worship of Yahweh alone (4:1). Then he refers to representative commandments from the Decalogue (4:2). Finally, he describes the nucleus community within its natural habitation, ordered by God, but now threatened by human disobedience (4:3):

Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel,
for the Lord has a controversy
with inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or kindness,
and no knowledge of God in the land;
there is swearing, lying, stealing, committing adultery;
they break all bonds and murder follows murder.
Therefore the land mourns,
and all who dwell in it languish,
and also the beasts in the field,
and the birds of the air;
and even the fish of the sea are taken away. (Hos. 4:1–3)

To this indictment one might add Isa. 24, which extends the vision of judgment to embrace the entire cosmos. For what reason? Not because of some whimsical act of the deity, but because "the land lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isa. 24:5). We see in microcosm both the notion of society that the prophets draw from early Yahwistic tradition and their vision of the consequences of human repudiation of God's gracious sovereignty.

After the catastrophe in fact occurred, we find a new stage of prophecy, represented by Second Isaiah: "Comfort, comfort my people" (Isa. 40:1). Here the heavenly heralds are sent out to tell the nation that her warfare is ended, that a harsh stage of Yahweh's dealing with the people is over. Beyond tragedy, grace again prevails. But the people are restored not only for their own blessing, but in order that God's Torah and God's salvation might reach all peoples (cf. Isa. 42:1–17 and 49:1–6).

The Applicability of the Prophetic Mode

Our examples of the political engagement of prophets of course could be expanded, but they suffice as background for further reflection. Perhaps we can promote such reflection with several suggestions regarding the applicability of the prophetic mode that arise from our survey of biblical prophecy.

As suggested at the outset, the question of applicability is tied to the question of whether intrinsic connections exist between the history of ancient Israel and our own nation's history, for only upon the basis of such connections can we argue for the continued validity of the model of prophetic critique and reformation. I believe that such connections can be demonstrated.

Robert Bellah in *The Broken Covenant* has suggested that we as a country have strayed from our mandate, our Constitution.[9] In effect, we have broken our covenant as a people, violated our constitutional foundation. Neal Riemer has argued that we need to look back to the creative breakthrough of James Madison and his associates if we are to rediscover the model of transformation through ongoing revolution.[10] A connection immediately suggests itself. Above we drew attention to early Israel's "constitution," the Sinai covenant with its Decalogue. It would be interesting to compare this covenant document to our founding document, the U.S. Constitution. We can go on to draw connections between the Book of the Covenant, with its protections of human rights, and the Bill of Rights, for both elaborate on the cardinal principles of the founding documents. More than this, Israel's historical credo bears similarities in function to our own national epic (incomplete as it is). Both relate stories of the passage from bondage to freedom under God's providence and

thereby strengthen the resolve of the nation's citizens to live as a free people, not only in the sense of withstanding the efforts of others to enslave them, but also in the sense of withstanding the temptation to enslave others.

Moreover, the epic, when functioning properly, provides a creative dynamic for the renewal of the revolution. The revolution in Israel was not completed in its foundational stages. Here one must be on guard against the kind of romanticizing of Israel's early history that flaws Norman Gottwald's *The Tribes of Yahweh*.[11] The revolution was not completed by early Israel. One can detect in the Book of Judges the confusion of that early period, marked by rampant idolatry and violence. The patriarchal bias of the Yahwistic cult illustrates another aspect of the persisting captivity of God's covenant people. The history of Yahwistic slave laws offers a third example of the unfinished revolution. Though the Book of the Covenant gives noticeable examples of social breakthrough, its provision for the release of slaves is limited to males. But the revolution against slave structures continued, as evidenced by the reformulation of the law of release in Deuteronomy to cover male and female slaves, and the total prohibition against the enslavement of Hebrews in the Book of Leviticus. The Yahwistic social revolution, supported by the dynamic and open-ended Yahwistic ontology, was ongoing.

Is it possible to regard as an extension of that revolution and its underlying ontology our struggle today over human rights and international justice? To be sure, when one considers how many years intervened between the Exodus and the Emancipation Proclamation, one is not permitted to indulge in facile optimism. We face the distinct danger that our legal system will fall under the power of those holding to an ideology of privilege, and that our foreign policy will be transformed into an ideal of reenslavement of major parts of the world. There is also the attendant danger that by romanticizing the past, we will freeze our epic into a static myth. We have already seen that this is an inappropriate use of a national epic, which should never become a primordial myth. Rather, the epic must remain an open invitation to a people to keep moving forward on the basis of the vision arising from its story and with a clear awareness of its imperfections and the unfinished nature of its task. We need only consider the history of Native Americans to be shocked out of a facile reading of our history. Our epic, like Israel's, functions properly only if it reminds us of our revolutionary beginnings and remains a source for the renewal of our own critical ontology in the face of ever present reactionary forces.

We therefore venture to suggest that this function of the epic in renewing our sense of a dynamic ontology provides a meaningful connection between ancient Israel and our country and is thus an important aspect of the prophetic mode. If this is so, it is important to note that one of the vital applications of our epic and the ontology it implies is found in prophetic critique and renewal.

It is therefore not a casual option, but an urgent mandate that we redirect our attention to the prophets lest the ideal of a free democracy be lost. And like the prophets, we will do well to consider the story of the Exodus a paradigm that sheds light on our own history as a free people struggling to preserve its precious freedom against disturbing odds.

In considering such proposals, however, it is important to emphasize that the traditions of the Bible do not imply any special status for the United States among the family of nations. A similar comparison could be made with the epic and founding documents of any nation. We are dealing with analogies that can be useful in clarifying the continued validity of the prophetic mode in the political process, and not with arguments for the superior status or destiny of any modern nation.[12]

Prophets are necessary today, as they were in ancient Israel, to keep us in touch with our foundational stage of life. For in remembering our epic and the values, morals, and sociopolitical ideals drawn from it, we clarify the vision that enables us to be agents of reconciliation and healing in our society and world. In forgetting, we abet social decline and moral decay, for more than a cognitive exercise is involved in remembering and forgetting. History is not just a tale to be retold, but the source of our being, the fashioner of our character, and the determiner of our destiny. For this reason it is a matter of great urgency that we relearn the significance of words such as these: "You shall not oppress a stranger. You know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9).

Notes

1. Neal Riemer, *The Future of the Democratic Revolution: Toward a More Prophetic Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 253.

2. Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

3. 1 Kings 21:20 (Revised Standard Version). All biblical citations are from the RSV.

4. Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

5. This material is most conveniently collected in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

6. Ibid., 60–72.

7. For a full treatment of the origin and development of his triadic notion of community in Israel, see Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

8. Peter Kyle McCarter Jr., *I Samuel,* vol. 8 of the Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1980), 18–23.

9. Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

10. Riemer, *Future of the Democratic Revolution,* 149–55.

11. Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1979).

12. Cf. Paul D. Hanson, "The Role of Scripture in Times of Crisis," *Word and World* 1(1981):116–27.