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Master's thesis, "The concepts of God, Israel and Torah in Midrash Leviticus Rabbah." 1944.

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INTRODUCTION

In a great Midrash like Leviticus Pabbah many facets and many angles of approach make themselves available to the student desirous of penetrating into the spirit and the psychologycof the generations which produced the work. These paths of approach largely depend upon the raison d'etre assigned to the Midrash.

There are many possibilities; 'Midrash may be considered as a source of consolation; as a reservoir of folk-stories retold for the amusement of the listeners; or as a subconscious expression of Jewish theology. Midrash may have arisen out of any one of these several needs, or out of a corbination of all of them. The purposes it served were undoubtedly manifold

Midrash as amusement is probably the simplest explanation and the one which should properly serve as a point of departure in this analysis. Midrash even today makes exciting reading in many passages, and its own day must have been thrilling to those who were exposed to it orally. Some of it is vulgar humor, designed to evoke homely reaction; some is delicious wit which sparkles and enthuses; some is sheer intellectual acrobatics, the kind mental gymnastics which satisfied the cultural cravings of those who listened to it. Actually, Midrash may have been the only culture available in the lives of its listeners—culture, that is, in the sense in which that commodity is offered today upon the lecture platform and the public forum.

The Ba'al Hamidrash, the Master of the Homily travelling from town to town and speaking in many pulpits, weaving his ingenuous sermons, and sharpening the minds of the audience with his puns and parables and perorations, was indeed the purveyor of amusement and entertainment, in this respect, we may truly say that one of the reasons for the development of the Midrash as an art form was the necessity of satisfying the need for diversion and story-telling and mental stimulation. That the Midrash succeeded in fulfilling this deed is evidenced by the fact that even today much of its pungency is valid for the modern mind.

And yet, Midrash would never have developed the ay it did if its function were merely to complement, with epigram and verbal wit, the physical skill of the justler or the musical ability of the folk-singer. The Midrash was not simply a device to amuse and entertain.

This great body of literature arose out of another need, a deeper need than divertissement—and that other was the need for consolation. Widrash is pany —offering comfort and solace to the Jew who travelled the road of life beset by constant suffering. The Widrash attempts to give an answer to the burning question in every Jewish breast: Why this meaningless and useless suffering reserved peculiarly for us? And the answer attempted is in its essence the consolation extended by the Widrash.

We are told that suffering is the result of our being the protagonists in a great historical process—that suffering comes to all men as they march through the centuries down the terrible road toward Messianic goal gleaming so Enticingly at the end of time.—that suffering comes especially to Israel, because Israel stands for all men, in a sense, because Israel is the chosen

protagonist, and hence is in the vanguard of the sufferers. How true this is today--how universally true it has always been!

based on a sense of historical imperative, which somehow made meaningfull the outrages as they were perpetrated in every age and every clime. Whenever trouble occurred, people eagerly sought out this fount of comfort, to be strengthened and reassured. Professor Rapaport tells us: 1 "In prosperity, people's favorite was.

Halacha, but in adversity, they preferred attending Agadichexpositions, containing as they did--among much else--words of confort and consolation, instilling faith in God and hope in Mis help and protection."

But there is a prerequisite to the derivation of consolation from the "idrash. Primarily and basically, the theology of the Midrash must be understood and accepted, before this literature can be a source of comfort. It is on the basis of this third fundamental need that the Midrash flowered into full form. The Midrash is Jewish theology—what there is of it. Many scholars claim that there is no such thing as a Jewish theology, and some go further to say that the Habbis were not capable of developing one. Montefiore and Loewe, in their Anthology, conclude? "...it can hardly be said

Rapaport, S. -- "Tales and Maxims From the Midrash", intro., P. 4.

2 Monteflore, C.G. and Lowe, H. - "A Rabbinic Anthology", pp.5 and 596.

that the Rabbis touch upon the more metaphysical aspects of the divine unity. The Rabbis were no theologians. They had no training in philosophy." And the same, once again: "But the Rabbis did their best with the rescurces available. They were not philosophers, they could not think philosophically, they lacked a philosophical vocabulary, and their audience was composed of simple men....If we think of these Rabbis as Salvationists (evangelists) rather than as trained theologians, we can, perhaps, make allowances for their rough-hewn methods."

admittedly, the term "theology" is not exactly a Jewish category and hence not strictly applicable to the midrash, because in Judaism there is no hard and fast set of beliefs, no dogma, no catechism. There is rather, says Dr. Sloninsky, a core and nucleus of belief, and then a widening circle of optional beliefs. There is a choice, and a sense of humor in regard to the selection of basic principles. "In Judaism there is a great humor - and there are no heresy trials for failure to believe." Thus, in the strictest sense, it is true that there is no well-defined and inviolable Jewish theology - that this is a category of thought imposed from without.

Yet there is a core, and this core is the belief in God,
Israel, and Torah. From this trinitarian nucleus, there is
developed the religion of Judaism, which, as was said before,
and will be said again, is a general scheme of a philosophy of

¹ Slonimsky, H. - Lecture at Jewish Institute of Religion, Nov., 1942.

history leading to a messianic goal. Theology beyond this is not important. Out of this general scheme of history, out of this belief in the progress of mankind toward eventual civilization, comes the element of consolation, comes the relief and the renewed strength to continue the struggle.

We find this concept of Jewish theology summed up in one passage (23:3)1;

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After twenty-six generations the Holy One, blessed be He, looked closely at His world to ascertain what it had yielded, and found it full of water in water. (Wicked people in a wicked environment.) The Coneration of Enosh was water in water. The Generation of the Flood was water in water. The Generation of the Dispersion was water in water. So He brought cutters to cut it down; as it says: 'The Lord sat enthroned at the flood' (Ps. 29:10). He saw a single rose-coloured flower, to wit, Israel. He took it and smelled it when He gave them the Ten Commandments, and his spirits were calmed when they said: 'We will do and we will hear' (Ex. 24:7). Said the Holy One, blessed be He: 'The orchard shall be saved on account of this flower. For the sake of the Torah and of Israel the world shall be saved.'

This reference is to chapter and paragraph of both Rom Brothers (Vilna) edition of the Midrash Habbah in Hebrew; and the Soncino edition in English. All future references in this paper will be similarly given. It is fortunate that the chapter arrangements in both the Hebrew and English editions are identical.

For the sake of the Torah and of Israel, God will save the world. Thus is the Jewish trinity summed up in one crowning passage. This may sound, at first, extremely particularistic; yet if viewed in the light of what is known to be the most generous universalism of the Messianic ideal, there can be found in it nothing objectionable. This is merely an assignment of a role in history to Israel and Torah. These two are God's factors in the completion of the final product, which is a perfect world. These are important tools and it is natural that the artisan should fondle them.

This yearning for social Utopia, expressed as it was in the metaphor of the messiah, has always preoccupied the Jewish consciousness. The statement of 1000 and 10000 and 1000 and 1000 and 1000 and 1000 and 1000 and 1000 and 1000

As Dr. Baron says:1

"The historical basis of Judaism has long been recognized by Jewish and Christian theologians..... Hermann Cohen..clearly conceived..the dominance of time in the Israelitic conception. 'For the prophets' he declared, 'the earth and the universe are almost

¹ Baron, S. - "Social and Religious History of the Jews", III, pp.4-5

wholly concentrated upon time.... It is the end of days, the infinity of time, with which they overcame the anti-

nomies in space

From Protestant theologians one might quote, for example, R. Kittell's enthusiastic comment on the enduring work of Moses: 'History has here become Revelation. And as long as Israel lived, its religion remained linked up with its history and its history with its religion. History is, indeed, the work of God and the supreme religious experience.'"

And so we shall dip into this midrash, Leviticus Rabbah, with an eye toward sampling and analyzing the Rabbinic concepts of God, Israel, and Torah - how they fit together to form a perfect shining missile aimed straight at the goal of history, the end of time. History alone is the process which will unify God's name, which will make Him One in the time to come. History alone validates and makes, of the great claim of the people Israel, something magnificent and transcendental rather than a false braggadacio. History alone will make clear the meaning of the Torah, which is/the

God, Israel, and Torah - linked together by the closest ties of affection, and manifesting a tender intimacy which kept Rabbinic religion living and warm - are the triad at the core of Judaism. Thus in Exodus Rabbah 33:1 :-

Can there be a sale in which the seller sells himself along with the object he sells? God says, 'I sold you my Torah, and with it I, as it were, sold myself.'

The matter is like a king who had an only daughter, and another king sought her and got her in marriage. The father said, 'My daughter is an only child;

I cannot be parted from her, and yet to say to you, Do not take her away, is also not possible, for she is your wife. Do me, therefore, this kindness; whithersoever you go, prepare for me a chamber, that I may dwell with you, for I cannot forsake my daughter.

Torah; I cannot be separated from her; yet I cannot say to you, Do not take her; therefore, in every place whither you go, make me a house, wherein I may dwell.

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The God of Israel is a lumanized God. He demands nothing of man which he is not repared to perform first himself. In spite of his many awesome and terrifying descriptions - as a god of war and thunder, of mountain crags and lightning bolt - he is nevertheless not quixotic or demanding, despotic or unreasonable, as earthly monarchs often are. 1

In contrast to such a ruler as the Imperial Caesar, for example, who issues orders for those below him, which he himself does or does not observe according to his suprahuman whimsy, God considers himself with man equally subservient to the moral and physical laws of the universe. This is not a demeaning of God, but an elevation of man, which is quite consonant with oft-repeated Jewish doctrine. God makes laws for gods, and in the observance of these laws, man becomes truly god-like.

(35:3)

All through the Midrash, one of the most popular figures of speech is the comparison with a king - who is most usually the Roman Emperor, a personality dominating the scene of Jewish history and consequently influency Jewish literature for several hundred years.

9. Backer - Kongoskichnica in der Midrash.

Rabbi Eleazar observed: It is the way of the world that when a mortal king issues an order, then if he wishes to execute it he does so, but if not then he ultimately has it performed through others. The Holy One, blessed be He, however, is not so, but He issues a decree and Himself performs it first. Thus, for example, it is written "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord." (Lev.19:32). "I am the Lord" means: I am He who was first to carry out the precept of rising before an old man. (God stood before Abraham when the latter was weak through circumcision. Sen. Rabb. 48:7) Hence it says, "IF YE WALK IN MY STATUTES" (Lev. 26:3), (that is, those statutes that I Myself fulfill.)

God is called in the prayer-book pok pok pok for fa

and filled with mercys - and these humanized, positive attributes are also ascribed to him in our Midrash. This God of the
prayer-book and of the Midrash - merciful, good, and strictly
just - is not the God of Maimonides, who rejects all positive
attributes in favor of negative ones. The God of the Rambam
is for intellectuals and mystics, to be apperceived through
Gnosis and negation. For ordinary men, seeking a God to relieve
doubts, to assuage pain, to banish despair, we must turn rather
to the other, to the more anthropofmorphic, if you will, to the
man-projected and not the god-projected God.

The first quality of this God for humans is that of mercy: (29:3)

Judah son of R. Nahman opened his discourse with the text, "God is gone up amid shouting, the Lord amidst the sound of the horn." (Ps.47:6). When the Holy One, blessed be He, ascends and sits upon the Throne of Judgment, he ascends with intent to do (strict) judgment. What is the reason for this statement? "God is gone up amidst shouting." (The word Elohim is Midrashically taken to describe God in His attribute of Justice.)1 But when Israel take their horns and blow them in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, He rises from the throne of Judgment and sits upon the Throne of Mercy - for it is written, "The Lord amidst the sound of the horn." (The Hebrew Tertagrammaton is taken to describe God in his Attribute of Mercy.) He is filled with compassion for them, taking pity. upon them and changing for them the Attribute of Justice to one of Mercy.

In addition to mercy, there is the quality of Justice: (24:1)

Gen.Rabb. 12:15 - THE LORD GOD (MADE EARTH AND HEAVEN). This
may be compared to a king who had some empty glasses. Said the
king: 'If I pour hot water into them, they will burst; if cold,
they will contract (and snap).' What then did the king do? He
mixed hot and cold water and poured it into them, and they remained
unbroken. Even so, said the Holy One, blessed be He: 'If I create
the world on the basis of mercy alone, its sins will be great; on
the basis of justice alone, the world cannot exist. Hence I will
create it on the basis of justice and mercy, and may it then stand!
LORD.- ADONAI - refers to God under His A ttribute of mercy
GOD - ELOHIM - " Justice

"But the Lord of Hosts is exalted through justice" (Isaiah 5:16).

It was taught: R. Simeon b. Yohai said: When is the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, magnified in His world? When He executes justice on the wicked. And he has many texts to support his statement, including the present text.

And in addition to the characteristics of morey and justice, there is the additional quality of goodness, which is assigned to God.

(17:1)

"Surely God is good to Israel, even to such as are pure of heart" (Ds.73:1). You might have thought (God is good) to all; Scripture therefore declares, "to such as are pure of heart", i.e. whose heart is sound (bari) in its attachment to divine precepts. "Do good, O Lord, unto the good". (Ps.125:4) You might have thought to all; Scripture therefore declares, "Yes, to them that are upright in their hearts." (ib.) "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble." (Nahum 1:7) . You might have thought to all; Scripture therefore declares, "Yes, he knoweth them that trust in Him." (ib.) "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him." (Iam.3:25) You might have thought to all; Scripture therefore declares, "To the soul that seeketh him" (ib.) "The Lord is migh unto all that call upon Him." (Ps.145:18) You might have thought to all; Scripture therefore declares, "To all that call upon Him in truth." (ib.)

God is for the lowly and the meek, the humble and the poor. Contrary to earthly judges, who tip the scale of justice in the direction of the rich, and who are thereby guilty of the prophets' denunciation. God is a fair judge, taking under his protection those poor souls otherwise neglected.

(3:2)

production .

It is further written, "For He hath not despised nor abhorred the lowliness of the poor." (Ps.22:25) The usual experience is: Two men go before a judge, one of them poor and the other rich; towards whom does the judge turn his face? Is it not towards the rich man? But here, "He hath not hid His face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard." (ibid)

- Business

In another similar passage, by a typical midrashic device involving a transposition of letters, one of the words in the textual verse under discussion is taken to refer to the poor, and we read that God stands at the right hand of the needy, ready to reward or punish each man a cording to the manner in which each man treats the poverty-stricken.

(34:9)

R. Kohen expounded; "Because, even because (ya'an ubeya'an) they rejected Mine ordinances" (Lev. 26:43) Ya'an is the same as 'ani'(poer)1
R. Abin observed: The poor man stands at your door, and the Holy One, blessed be He, stands at his right, as it is written, "Because he standeth at the right hand of the needy" (Ps. 109:31). If you give him

The homily is that rejection of the poor leads to rejection of the Torah.

something, reflect who stands at his right, that will give you reward, and if you do not give him anything, reflect that He who stands at his right will punish you.

An interesting comment on this fondness for the hapless and the downtrodden is found in a long passage which shows God always taking the side of the unfortunate. In expounding the text "And God seeketh that which is pursued" (Eccl. 3:15), the Agadist gives many examples of people and even animals who were pursued and persecuted, and for that very reason were chosen by God for special protection and distinction. The passage reaches a climax in the designation of Israel as a special ward of the Lord, because she too has been oppressed and pursued. To select but a portion of this passage:

(27:5)

Moses was pursued by Pharoah, and the Holy One, blessed Be He, chose Moses, as is proved by the text, "Had not Moses his chosen stood before Him" (Ps. 106:23)

David was pursued by Saul, and the Holy One, blessed be He, chose David, as is proved by the text, "He chose Tavid also His servant" (Ps.78:70)

Saul was pursued by the Philistines, and the Holy One,

blessed be He, chose Saul, as it says, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen" (1 Sam. 10:24)

"See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen" (1 Sam. 10:24)
Israel are pursued by the nations, and the Lord
chose Israel, as it says, "And the Lord hath chosen
thee to be His own treasure." (Deut.14:2)

The relationshalp between man and God is always a very intricate and complex one, which pioneers in human thought have ever attempted to penetrate and formulate. Our rabbis were no cosmic exception to this our cost, and in many places did hint at what they thought the equation might be, at what the balance probably was which kept man and God in equilibrium. The delicate weight, the exact fulcrum on which the relationship rested was the Torah. It was as simple as that. The Torah outlined man's duties in this world, and in return for obedience to the bilance probably b's/C, to the religious obligations and good deeds, in return

for this obedience, God sustained life for man. Thus there was a mutual service, a cooperation. Life could not sustain itself, without God's assistance; and this assistance would not be forth-coming unless man lived the life allotted him according to the injunctions and prescriptions contained in the Torah.

(28:1)

R. Levi said: In return for the utmost that men can do in this world in the performance of religious duties and good deeds, it is enough for them that the Holy Onc. blessed be He, causes the sun to shine for them, as it says, "The sun also riseth, and the sun goeth down." (Eccl. 1:5)

and again:

Our rabbis said: In return for the utmost that the righteous achieve in this world in the performance of religious duties and good deeds, it is enough for them that the Holy One, bleased be He, renews their countenance like the disk of the sun, as it says; "But they that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength." (Jud.5:31)

Thus the view is given that the Torah sustains life, and of course, the implication is present, that the most fruitful type of human labour, is labour in the Torah, study of Torah, preoccupation with God's word. And yet, in this very same passage, where we are told that performance of the ______//3_w , commandments, guarantees life - in this same passage, some anonymous rabbi reminds us of the verse in Ecclesiastes (1:3), wherein all labour is described as mere vanity. The passage then rings with the voices of many scholars trying to explain how this general judgment is not applicable to labour in the

vineyard of the Torah.

(28:1) - (earlier in passage just previously quoted)

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R. Samuel b. Mahmani stated: The Sages intended to store away the Book of Ecclesiastes because they found in it ideas that leaned toward heresy. They siad: Should Solomon have uttered the following: "What profit hath man of all his labour?" This might imply, might it not, that labour in the study of the Torah was also included? On the other hand, they argued, if he had said "of all labour" and left it at that, we might have thought that he meant to include also labour in the study of the Torah. However, he does not say this, but "of all his labours", implying that it is in his own labour that man finds no profit, but that he does find profit in the lab ur of studying Torah.

Having thus established the fact that the nexus between God and man is Torah, and that application to the precepts of the Torah is not vanity and striving after wind, as are some human pursuits, the Rabbis then went forward to establish another great truth - a dictum which, in a sense, is even more profound than

the one stated immediately above.

that, if Torah sustains life, then the converse is equally true, and life is necessary to sustain the Torah. It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on this most cardinal point, except to mention that there is stated in the passage about to be cited the basis theme of Jewish philosophy and ethics - the motif of life-idealism b"halabhalae" a "CHOOSE LIFE" - be a people with a strong, vigorous, affirmation of joy in living. Yes, life is necessary to sustain Torah, and even God Himself, for without life there is no God, since He exists not, without man to admire and emulate Him. Here we see the inter-play - God sustaining life and life sustaining God. In a lapidary passage it is shown how God remains in the world only through the reproduction of children who will go to the schools to study His Torah.

(11;7)

If there will be no little children, there will be no pupils; if there will be no pupils, there will be no scholars; if there will be no scholars, there will be no Torah-study; if there will be no Torah-study, there will be neither synagogues nor houses of study. If there are no synagogues and houses of study, the Holy Ome, blessed be He, will not permit His Schechinah to abide in the world.

The problem of evil is at the very heart of all discussions about God, and cannot be avoided here. What is the inner nature of God? If He is all good, how does He countenance evil? Job's questioning has never been irrelevant, and the answers or attempted answers to the repeated challenges comprise the whole range of religious philosophy, all the way from complete exoneration of God down to frenzied condemnation of God as Demon.

Some philosophers have answered that evil does not exist, and thus read away the whole dilemma. Others have held that in the god-man good-evil equation, man alone is the evil creature. but these, as well as the evil-deniers, somehow seem, as Job's friends, to be attempting to save God in the paradox, and are doing so at the expense of man. This is neither heroic nor just.

In various parts of the Midrash, as well as all through the prayer-book, there is another possibility offered. This is the solution of the A//20 A2, the two powers of good and evil which are battling for control of the universe. There is something of the ancient Persian dualism in this explanation - yet there is something grand and titanic in it, and something almost to stagger the imagination, when we makine the implications.

God is a growing, not a full-grown force for good, and in the tremendous world-struggle, God is that power for goodness eventuelly destined to triumph, but requiring additional help in order to ensure the victory. The necessary additional strength must come from the partner of God, who is man. There is an inner dialectic in the very nature of the godhead, which leaves Him not all-powerful, and requires Him to battle just as ferociously as His smallest creature against the overwhelming evil in the universe.

At times He seems to be in chains, imprisoned together with His people, whom He is powerless to help on certain occasions.

There is a passage in Lamentations Rabbah (Proem 34):

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord" (Jer.40:1).

What was that word? God said to Jeremiah,
'If thou remainest here, I will go with them into captivity, and if thou goest with them,
I will remain here.' He spake before Him,
'Sovereign of the Universe, if I go with them,
what good can I do for them? So let their
King, their Creator, go with them, for He can do them much good.' Hence it is written,
"After that Mebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go...being bound in chains" (ibid)
R. Aha said: If it is possible to say so, both
He and Jeremiah were bound in chains.

We notice the tacit admission of inability to alter the situation, that the best God can do is accompany His people into exile, and there attempt to alleviate as much of their suffering as possible. Or, in another passage, written at about the same time and concerning the same events, God is depicted as defeated and weeping bitter tears of lamentation over the fate of His

elect. In Lam. Rabb. (Proem 2) we see a weeping and a solitary God:

The Ten Tribes were exiled, and He began to lament over them, "Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel" (Amos 5:1).

But when Judah and Benjamin were exiled, the Holy One, blessed be He - if it is possible to say this - declared, 'No longer have I the strength to lament over them.' Hence it is written, "Call for the mourning women...and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters." (Jer.9:16,17) It is not written here 'for them' but 'for us', i.s. for He and them.

It is not written here 'that their eyes may run down with tears' but 'our eyes', i.e. Mine and theirs. It is not written here 'and their eyelids gush out with water' but 'our eyelids', i.e. Mine and theirs.

So God cries for his exiled tribes, cries together with his people.

The Rabbis say: God may be likened to a king who had twelve sons, of whom two died. He began to console himself with the ten. Two more died and he began to console himself with the eight. Two more died and he began to console himself with the six. Two more died and he began to console himself with the four. Two more died and he began to console himself with the two. But when they had all died, he began to lament over them, "How sitteth solitary" (lam.1:1)

This is indeed an unusual picture of God's progressive incapacitation in the face of continuing and staggering evil.

Thus, at times God is put in chains as a symbol of His finitude, sits lamenting with the professional mourners as a symbol of His helplessness, or is otherwise presented in

various metaphors indicative of His lack of Omnipotence. That he will emerge triumphant, however, is the ringing assertion of the Messianic phrase 36/2 /NR/ 30/2 1/2 - "On that day God will be One and His name will be One." This is the real meaning of the unification of God's name - it is a process in time and space, in history, of a God growing, struggling, surging forward with the help of heroic man to make Himself One in the universe, to integrate man with God. This is the goal of history, referred to above. This is the midrashic interpretation of the conquest of evil.

God has no happiness in this world, just as the righteous ones, His people Israel, have no happiness. Only in the Time to Come, when the struggle will be over and the victory complete, when evil will have been conquered, assimilated, integrated into the good, will there be time for rejoicing, both for God and for Israel.

(20:2)

Israel did not enjoy happiness in this world of Hine, as may be inferred from the fact that it does not say: "Israel rejoiced in his maker", but shall rejoice (Ps.149:2), as much as to say: They are destined to rejoice in the works of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the Time to Come.

The Holy One, blessed be He, if the expression be permitted, did not enjoy happiness in this world of His, as may be inferred from the fact that it does not say, "The Lord rejoiced in His works", but "The Lord will rejoice" (Ps.104:31), as much as to say; the Holy One, blessed be He, will rejoice in the Time to Come in the works of the righteous.

The process of fighting evil, the process showing God resisting evil in a life and death struggle, is strikingly illustrated in a passage which tells of the designs of successive enemies of Israel in their attempts to destroy her - each enemy studying why the preceding one failed and then employing yet another measure to overcome her. Pharoah killed all the sons. but Haman later sneered, knowing that it was necessary to exterminate the daughters as well, for they could continue to restock the fold. Gog and langog, the archetypal enemies, called these tyrants fools, since attacking the people itself was merely superficial. In order to destroy Israel, it was necessary to join issue with God Himself, who was the protector of His people and God accepts this challenge, and as He steps forth to do battle with the Evil, He does so with high certainty of success. This is indeed a new kind of God, a God who must first conquer evil Himself before his people will be safe.

(27:11)

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Pharoah said: I will not do so, but while the Israelites are still tiny things under the birthstool of their mothers I shall strangle them. Hence it is written, "Ye shall look upon the birthstool: if it be a son, then ye shall kill him...Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river." (Ex.1:16)

Haman said: Pharoah was a fool, for he said, "every son that is born ye shall cast into the river", and did not realize that the daughters would be taken in marriage by men and would be fruitful and multiply by them. I will not do so, but (will give orders) "to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish all Jews" (Est.3:13).

H. Levi remarked: Gog and Magog¹, too, in the Time to Come, will say the same, namely: the ancients were fools, for they tried hard to form designs against Israel and did not realise that they had a Protector in Heaven. I will not do so, but will first join issue with their Protector and then with them.

Hence it is written, "The kings of the earth stand up...against the Lord" (Ps.2:2).

Says the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'Villain!

Do you come to join issue with Me? By your life!

I will wage war with thee! Hence it is written,

"The Lord will go forth as a mighty man, He will stir up jealousy like a man of war" (Is.42:13) and it is written,

"Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations" (Zech. 14:3), and what is further written?

"And the Lord shall be King over all the earth" (ib. 9).

Thus, in the Messianic era, God will have won, and truly shall be King over all the earth, which includes the evil as well as everything else.

In this fight to make the world One, God employs whatever assistance is available - the heroic men of all generations, or the most insignificant of instrumentalities. There is a long series of passages in our Midrash (22:3 and 4) which show that even the most minute figure is designated for some purpose, has some part in the divine scheme, which is the conquest of evil. One delightful portion sets up the wicked Emperor Titus as the symbol of Evil, and aligns against him as the bearer of God's purpose, a tiny mosquite. The tale bears repetition in toto.

(22:3)

Symbolic of Israel's enemies. In the Messianic era they are to be involved in a world war in which they will be destroyed. The background of this story is to be found in Nzek. 38:1 ff.



R.Aha said: The holy One, blessed be He, carries out his errands with the help of all, even through the instrumentality of a serpent, even through that of a frog, and even through that of a scorpion, aye, even through that of a mosquito. The wicked Titus entered the interior of the Holy of Holies, his sword drawn in his hand, slashed the curtain, brought two harlots, and, spreading out a Scroll of the Law beneath them, cobabited with them on the top of the altar, and his sword came out full of bloods according to some authorities it was from the blood of the sacrifices, and according to others it was from the blood of the bullock and he-goat of the Day of Atonement. He began to utter revilings and blasphemings against heaven. and said: 'The case of one the makes war against a king in the desert and vanquishes him cannot be compared with that of one who makes war against a king in his own palace and vanquishes him. * What did he do then? He collected all the vessels of the Temple and placed them in a net, then he embarked on a ship. As soon as he had embarked, a violent gale smote the ship. Said he: 'It appears that the power of this God is only on the water. He punished the Generation of Enosh by water. He did the same to the Generation of the Flood, and the same to Pharoah and his army, and in my case also, when I was in His own house and within His own domain He could not hald out against me, but now in this place He has confronted me. ' The Hely One, blessed be He, said to him: 'Villain! By thy life, I shall inflict punishment upon thee by means of a trifling creature which I created during the first six days of creation!* Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, beckened to the sea and it ceased from its fury. When Titus reached Rome all the citizens of Rome came out and lauded him with the words: 'O conqueror of the Barbarians!' Immediately afterwards a hot bath was prepared for him and he entered and bathed. When he came out they mixed him a cup of wine. The Holy One, blessed be He, brought in his way a mosquito which entered in his nose and gnawed its way up until it reached his brain. It began to bore in his brain, so he ordered: 'Call the doctors and let them split open the brain of that man (himself) and ascertain what it is whereby the God of that nation inflicts punishment upon that man. Forthwith the doctors were summoned. They split open his brain and found in it something resembling a young pigeon which possessed a weight of two pounds. R. Eleazar b. R. Jose observed: I was present when the pigeon was placed on one side (of the scales) and two pounds on the other side, and the one weighed exactly the same as the other. They took the pigeon and placed it in a bowl. As the bird changed (to its original shape of a mosquito) so did he change, and when the mosquito fled the soul of the wicked Titus fled.

This, then, in briefest abstract, is the concept of God as expounded and developed in the pages of Leviticus Rabbah - human, merciful, just, good; fighting the fight of the poer and lowly; sustaining life in return for being honored and emulated through Torah, religious commandments, and good deeds; in turn being sustained by the presence of life in the world; fighting evil and slowly, painfully climbing and being helped upward toward the shining peak of all effort - the Messianic age to come.

Here is God: at once strong and yet dependent merciful yet just - far-seling yet finitely limited.

This is the God of the people of Israel, which, in itself, is all these very same things.

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ISRAEL

ISRAEL

Just as God is an entity to be viewed from many vantage points - God the transcendent or the immanent, God the infinite or the finite - so too does the second element in the trium-virate of Jewish theology offer at least two facets to our scrutiny. The people Israel may be considered from either a physical or a metaphysical point of view, and in order properly to be understood, should be considered from both.

Decision of the last

Physically, the Jewish people has existed for several thousand years. Of the origin of the people, we have many theories:

- 1) They represent an all lgamation of Semitic desert tribes;
- 2) They are a union of two groups of people, both of whom invaded the land of Canaan in the second millenium, one group from the East (Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees), and one from the South (the Joseph tribes from Egypt);
- 3) They evolved out of the merger of Hittite tribes, forced southward from Anatolia by the pressure of Indo-European peoples moving westward, with Semitic tribes inhabiting the fringes of the Fertile Crescent.

These and many more theories are urged to explain the emergence on the scene of history of this dynamic people with its insurgent ideas. But for our purposes the importance of

the Jewish people begins with its crystallization into some sort of coherent form at the time of its Revelation, whether we interpret that event literally or not. At Sinai the Idea of the people, in a Platonic sense, assumed physical form, has been present in the world ever since, and will be present until the final act of Redemption.

The persistence of its physical presence in the face of the most outrageous and perennial difficulties evokes the questioning comment - why has it been consistently attacked; why has it never been defeated? The only answer to this is a metaphysical one. The people of Israel, in its corporate life, represents what its Rabbis have termed a chosenness, what some modern proponents have called a mission. The answer is that the Jewish people exists for some purpose - otherwise its suffering is meaningless.

The metaphysics of Jewish existence were first rendered by that magnificent prophet, the anonymous Deutero-Isaiah, in the brilliant "Servant Songs" of chapters 42, 49, 51 and 53. Therein Israel is designated as God's choice to bring His message to the nations. This people is to be the vehicle whereby a sense of justice will be brought to the nations of the world. The prophet, living in the tumultuous times of the 6th century BCE, was overawed by the figure of Cyrus the Great, who dominated the horizons of the entire known world, and who, with his

conquest of the Babylonian Empire, was thought to be the forerunner of Messianic times. So he wrote of Cyrus as the man waked up from the east (Is. 41:2), the man whom righteousness met at every step. But when he realized that the intentions of this conqueror were not tow rd universalistic goals, he revoked the tribute from Cyrus - "my glory will I not give to any other" (Is.42:8) - and gave the crown to the true servant of the Lord, the people of Israel.

In passages of superlative beauty, the prophet outlines the election of Israel to the role of God's instrument. (Is.41:8-9)

But thou Israel, My servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen,
The seed of Abraham My friend;
Thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth,
And called thee from the uttermost parts thereof,
And said unto thee: 'Thou art My servant,
I have chosen thee and not cast thee away.'

For what has Israel been chosen as a special servant? To be a light unto the nations, as we read in several passages - (Is.42:1,46; 49:6; 51:4)

Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon him, He shall make the right to go forth to the nations.

He shall not fail nor be crushed, Till he have set the right in the earth; And the isles shall wait for his teaching.

And, of course, there is the culminating poem, 52:15 - 53:12, which is the very masterpiece of prophetic inspiration, in which

the historic destiny of Israel as the sufferer who shall expiate the sins of mankind, is set forth in words that burn like fire. Thus does the prophet improvise the metaphysics of Jewish existence, and thus is depicted the people of Israel. It is the people of God, whose suffering is the badge of its success, whose life is eternally threatened, yet whose eternal life is assured by its very inner nature.

What does our Midrash have to say of this bearer of God's word? Leviticus Rabbah echoes all these great themes - God's love for and election of Israel; Israel's acceptance of the burden of God's word and the eternal life attendant upon this acceptance; Israel's final Redemption at the end of days - all these are to be found in our Midrash, and we shall seek them out.

The whole community of Israel (K'lal Yisroel) forms a sort of real, if mystical, personality. This entire community, including, but also aside from, its individual members, is especially beloved by God. Israel is one among the ten things designated as particularly precious, each one of the ten being substantiated by a Biblical verse. The whole-passage is a comment on the text-verse, "Speak unto the children of Israel. and say unto them: Then any man of you bringeth an offering unto the Lord, " etc. (Lev. 1:2). The Midrash interprets the apparently unnecessary repetition of "Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them" as a sign of God's love for Israel, since when one speaks of one's beloved, one does so expansively. (2:1)

Ten things are designated as precious, and these are they: The Torah, prophecy, understanding, knowledge, folly, riches, the righteous, the death of the pious, lovingkindness, and I srael........ Israel, whence (do we learn that it is called precious)?
"Is Ephraim a precious son unto Me? Is he a child that is dandled? For as often as I speak of him, I do repeatedly mention him still." (Jer. 31:20) Which means, I set a great price upon Israel. It usually happens that out of a thousand who enter upon the study of Scripture, a hundred are successful. Out of this hundred who proceed to study of Mishnah, ten are successful. Out of these ten, who proceed to study of Talmud, one emerges. This is indicated by what is written, "One man among a thousand have I found" (Eccl. 7:28)

As a mark of this special favor and love bestowed on Israel, we find many extravagant and superlative comparisons being made by the Habbis, between Israel and certain precious articles, in order to underscore the supreme qualities of God's beloved. There are two passages of note, one of which draws the analogy between Israel and the lily.

(23:6)

The idea appears to be that just as among men (Israelites) in general, only one in a thousand reaches to the highest plane, so too, among nations, the one attaining a high plane is rare and correspondingly valuable in the sight of God.

R. Abin said: As in the case of the lily, when the dry heat comes, she wilts, but when the dew comes, she blossoms; so also as long as the shadow of Esau endures, so long do Israel, as it were, appear as if they were wilting in this world. In the World to Come, however, Esau's shadow will pass away, and Israel will thrive more and more. Hence it is written, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily" (Hossa 14:6). As the lily, solely on account of her fragrance, does not pass out of existence (because people preserve her seed), so Israel, solely on account of the commandments and good deeds, do not cease to exist. As the lily exists purely for smelling, so the righteous were created solely for effecting Israel's redemption. As the lily is placed upon the table of kings at the beginning and the end (of meals), so Israel are to be found in this world and they are to be found in the World to Come. As the lily is recognizable among the herbs, so are Israel recognizable among the nations; as it says, "All that seek them shall recognize them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." (Isa. 61:9) As the lily is designated for Sabbaths and festivals, (to add by its fragrance to the festive joy), so are Israel designated for the forthcoming redemption.

The other passage compares Israel with the vine, which was a very important item in Palestine, both as a staple in the economy of the land and as a staple in food and drink.

(36:2)

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As the vine is lower than all other trees, yet is predominant among all the trees, so are Israel; they appear as though they are inferior in this world, but in the Time to Come they are destined to take possession of the entire world from one end to the other.

As from the vine a single bough comes out and eclipses many trees, so are Israel; one righteous man comes out of them, and rules over the whole world from one end to the other; as is borne out by the texts...

Gen. 42:6 - referring to Joseph Josh. 6:27 - referring to Joshua 1 Chron. 14:17 - referring to David 1 Kings 5:1 - referring to Solomon Est. 9:4 - referring to Mordecai As the vine is propped up by a cane (kaneh), so is Israel supported by the merit of the Torah which is written by a reed (kaneh). As the keeper of the wine stands above it, so in the case of Israel - their Keeper is above; as may be inferred from the fact that it says, "Behold, He the keepeth Israel, doth neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). As the vine is propped up by dry stakes and is itself fresh, so Israel rely upon the merit of their forefathers, though these are alseep.

It is interesting, although merely incidental, to note that in both these passages, recognition is taken of the fact that the grandiose comparisons suffer greatly at the hands of mundame reality. Actually, at the time of the writing of this Midrash, although it is one of the class, the Jews were already in the Diaspora, a subject people everywhere, and nowhere as great or as gorgeous as the Rabbis claimed they were.

The authors of these two passages realized this discrepancy between their lyrical words and the actuality of hard fact, and so in both passages, pains are taken to remark that for the present, or while Esau ruled the world, the Jewish people might seem to be humiliated and to be suffering. But this was merely temporary, and there was to be an end to this subjection; namely, in the Time to Come, when Esau would be eclipsed, together with all he stood for, and then would the beliefs and practices of Jacob really hold sway. This was the promise held out by the Sages, and a promise still valid, incidentally, in return for

steadfast loyalty on the part of individual Jews. This was a bolstering of the folk-ego.

To return to the main line of thought - it has been said that Israel enjoyed God's love; but this bestowal was not altogether arbitrary. There must have been some reasons why she was the beloved of the Lord, and our Midrash offers several. There is first of all the unconditional acceptance by Israel of God's yoke, expressed at Sinai in the memorable phrase TNLJ > LTJ - we will obey and we will hearken.

(1:1)

"Ye...that fulfull His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (Ps. 103:20) R. Huna in the name of H. Aha said: Scripture here speaks of Israel, who, when they stood before Mt. Sinai, undertook fulfilling before hearkening, having said, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we fulfill and hearken." (Ex.24:7)

It is thus almost self-evident that a people so willing and eager to assume the moral and ceremonial duties outlined in the Torah would have been accorded special recognition, especially since seventy other nations had previously rejected this same Torah as being too burdensome and restrictive.

The Rabbis interpreted the verse as indicating that they promised to fulfill God's precepts, even before they heard what they were. This manifests blindly obedient faith.

In line with this thought, a second reason for the selection of Israel becomes apparent. She alone clove to God; she was the first to declare the kingship of God.

Israel was chosen because she chose - and in this reciprocity we see the basis for the mutual trust and confidence between God and His people which the Rabbis always emphasized.

(2:4)



"Speak to the children of Israel" (Lev. 1:2)
Said R. Judan in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman:
This may be compared to the case of a king who had
a garment, concerning which he instructed his
servant, saying to him: 'Fold it, and shake it,
and look well after it.' Said the servant to him:
'My lord king, of all the garments you have, you
give me instructions concerning none but this one?'
Said the king to him:'(Quite so) because (this
garment) I wear close to my body.'
Even so did Moses say to the Holy One, blessed
be He: 'Out of the seventy original nations which
Thou hast in Thy world, dost Thou command me concerning none but Israel, saying,

"Speak to the children of Israel" (Ex. 28:2)
"Speak to the children of Israel" (Ex. 33:5)
"Say to the Children of Israel" (Ex. 33:5)
Said He to Moses: '(Quite so) because they cleave

to Me.

(Same parable repeated - same question asked by Moses - same answer given by God-)

Said He to Moses: '(Quite so) because they were the first to declare Me king, at the Red Sea, saying of Me, "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Ex.15:18)'

Thus, Israel recognized God and the Torah, cleaved to
Him and declared His kingship over them, while the other peoples
rejected Him; hence Israel became the elected.

which deals with an artisan setting precious stones into a crown which was intended for the king. The jewels were to be many and brilliant, for they would ever testify to the glory of the wearer. Similarly was Moses, the artisan, instructed to praise Israel, since Israel was the jewel set in the crown

of God, and the more she were preised and glorified, the more would this redound to the glory of her king, the Lord.
(2:5)

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R. Judah b. Simon said: This may be compared to the case of one engaged in making a crown for a king. Someone passed him and said: "What are you doing?" Said he to him: 'I am making a crown for the king." Said he to him: 'As many precious stones and pearls as you can set therein, set - (as many) emeralds (as you can set therein) set." Why? - Because it is to be placed on the head of the king. Even so did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to Moses: 'As much as you can praise Israel, praise them; as much as you can magnify and glorify them, magnify and glorify them. Why? - Because I am to be glorified through them. 'As it is said, "And He said unto me: Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." (Isa. 49:3)

A final passage throwing light on our question why was Israel selected? - is one in which we are told that
the acceptance of the Torah is what caused God's glory to
shine on this people.

(6:6)

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The Rabbis said: Of the heathen nations who did not accept the Torah which was given out of the midst of darkness, Scripture says, "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples." (Isa. 60:2); but as for Israel who did accept the Torah which was given out of the midst of the darkness - as it is written - "When ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness" (Deut. 5:20) - of them Scripture says, "But upon thee the Lord shall shine forth, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." (Isa. 60:2)

And so the pattern is completed, so far as this particular problem is concerned. Willingness on their part to obey the Lord, surrender of their sovereignty before that of the Higher Ruler, and agreement to shoulder the burden of His Law, were some of the factors responsible for the

ites. These may not actually have been causes: they may have been effects of the divine stamp on this people - but, at any rate, they represent something of the inter-play, some aspects of Israel's election - and that is the main theme of the preceding four passages.

Since the message of the Lord is universal and deathless, so too must its bearer be freed from the perils of ordinary mortal existence, and thus a secondary theme to the main theme of the election of Israel begins to manifest itself. In order to obtain for God's messenger the necessary indestructibility, the corpus Israel was removed from the jurisdiction of Death, at precisely that moment when it accepted the yoke of the Torah. This does not apply to individual Israelites, who are as vulnerable as anyone else, but the People must be given the promise of eternality, if it is to have the proper scope with which to operate in history.

(18:3)

When Israel stood at Mount Sinal and said,
"All that the Lord had spoken will we do, and
obey" (Ex. 24:7), the Holy One, blessed be He,
called the Angel of Death and said to him:
"Even though I made you a universal ruler over
earthly creatures, you have nothing to do with
this nation. Why? - Because they are My children'as it is written, "Ye are the children of the Lord,
your God." (Deut. 14:1)

In order to further this same thought, a beautiful passage was written which established the idea that Israel could not be destroyed because her roots were in God. Thus, so long as she remained God-centered and Torah-centered, Israel, the third force in this Judaic trinity, was invincible. This passage has been quoted above on pp. 26,27.

Freedom from Death! Such a thought is like strong wine, and so the sages were careful to utter many warnings that this eternality and indestructibility were not unconditionally given, but were dependent upon Israel's faithful conduct. Should they stray, or backslide, or wander, they immediately became like all other common nations and surrendered their uniqueness.

of the Lord and to stray in the direction of the idolatry and immorality which comprised their surrounding environment, that temptation had been present in Egypt - and we read in our Midrash that God was reluctant to save Israel from Egypt, because she had almost lost her identity there.

(23:2)



"After the doings of the land of Egypt ... ye shall not do" (Lev. 18:3). This bears on the text, "As a lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters (S.S. 2:2) R. Eliezer interpreted the verse as applying to the redemption from Egypt. As the lily, when placed among the thorns, is difficult for the owner to gather, so was the redemption of Israel difficult for the Holy One, blessed be He, to effect. Hence it is written, "Or God hath assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of a nation, by trials, by signs and by wonders (Deut. 4:34). Both these and those (Egyptians and Hebrews) were uncircumcised; the Egyptians grew locks and the israelites grew locks; those wore garments of mingled stuff's and these were garments of mingled stuffs. That being the case, the Attribute of Justice would not allow Israel to be redeemed from Egypt. R. Samuel b. Habmani remarked: Had it not been for the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, had bound Himself by an oath, Israel would indeed never have been redeemed. Hence it is written, "Wherefore (or, therefore, 'laken') say unto the children of Israel: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:6), and the expression 'laken' denotes nought but an oath.

so far as final redemption was concerned, there was never any question but that this would be granted. Even in the eventuality of breaches of faith and conduct as described above, nevertheless, final and lasting redemption was always held out as a gleaming goal for all mankind, the Israelites of course, included. We are told how this redemption will come about - namely; through true repentance, the acceptance of which, by God, will be announced by the blowing of the

Shofar. This final blast on the ram's horn, or on Gabriel's trumpet, as some contemporary folk-legends would have it, will bring to a close the temporal existence of the people Israel and of all mankind, and will usher in the blessed phase of Messianic Utopia.

(29:10)

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"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by its horns." (Gen. 22:13) This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed our father Abraham the ram tearing itself free from one thicket and getting entangled in another. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: 'In a similar manner are your children destined to be caught by iniquities and entangled in troubles, but they will ultimately be redeemed through the horns of the ram.' Hence it is written, "The Lord God will blow the horn" (Zech. 9:14). R. Huna son of R. Isaac said: It teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Abraham the ram tearing itself free from one thicket and getting entangled in another. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: 'In a similar manner are your children destined to be caught by the nations and entangled in troubles, being dragged from empire to empire, from Babylon to Media, from Media to Greece, and from Greece to Edom (Rome), but they will ultimately be redeemed by the horns of the ram.

Thus does the Midrash portray Israel, in a composite portrait, drawn from many passages:

especially belowed by God because she promised to obey divine law;

elected to carry the knowledge of this law to the nations of the world and to endure suffering while mankind struggled to learn this law;

removed from the jurisdiction of death in order to fulfill her election;

promised redemption along with all humanity when the job is done, and the goal of history, which is a more or less perfect world, is attained.

This is Israel, in her relation to God and Torah.

ARCHIVES

CHAPIER III

TORAH

The third great block in the structure under analysis, is the corner-stone of Torah, which, according to some opinions is the very mortar which holds together the other two sections, God and Israel. Mr. C.G.Montefiore seems to be of that disposition. He says:

"The relation of the Law, or I had better say, of the Torah, to God (for the Torah is not limited to the Pentateuch) is very curious. To some extent it purifies the relation of Israel to God. For the love of God for Israel is not merely the chance relation of one particular nation to the One God. God loves Israel because Israel possesses and accepted the Torah. This idea is often repeated. God loves the Law even more than He loves Israel. Israel was offered the Law and accepted it, and God is grateful.

It is not entirely clear why God created the Law. It was regarded, I suppose, as the necessary link between heaven and earth and between man and God. Man required it for his moral and religious well-being.

¹ Montefiore, C.G. and Loewe, H. - "Rabbinic Anthology", intro. p.xxxiii

Nevertheless, it seems to have some sort of independent and cosmic existence, even as its creation took place long before the creation of man. Whether this Torah, pre-existent ages before Moses, is to be regarded as the Pentsteuch, or as the whole Hebrew Bible, or as something which is not quite one or the other, is not made clear......

But the fact remains that the relation of God to
Israel was, on the whole, kept clean and sweet because of
the Torah. Israel is loved by God in a way different from
that in which was loved by Chemosh. Israel is loved
as the possessor and the champion of this inexpressible
good: the divine Torah."

What exactly is Torah? As Mr. Monteflore has suggested,

Torah is more than just the Pentateuch, or even the whole bible.

It is Law, in the broadest sense, and yet is more than Law.

Mr. Loewel feels that "the word stands for the highest conception of fundamental goodness, for that basic morality which is a prerequisite of civilisation. It certainly does not mean detailed legislation, such as rules of Sablath or linsey-woolsey. These were not intended for Gentiles, whereas the Torah (in its broadest sense) is of universal application. It may be odd to speak of the world as dependent on a book or as preceded by a book. It is not odd to say that goodness is the foundation of the world and its essential prerequisite."

¹ Ibid. Note 70, p.683.

Etymologically, there are several theories as to the meaning of the root of the word Torah, if that root can be definitely ascertained. One suggestion is that it derives from yarah, to shoot. The shooting of arrows was sometimes a magical means of obtaining a decision on a particular question (Cf. Ezek. 21:21), such as consulting the entrails of a bird, or visiting an oracle. Thus, a 'shooting' or a Torah was probably, first a decision on a given matter, which decision hardened into precedent, and finally became rigidified as law.

Another suggestion places the word as a Hilphil of the same root, meaning to show or indicate, as in Prov.6:13.

Thus a Torah would be an indication or a designation of the proper procedure in any given circumstance.

thile a third theory, and the one most commonly held, derives the noun Torah from another translation of the same Hiphil mood of <u>yarah</u>, meaning to teach, to instruct. And in this case, a Torah would be a teaching or an instruction of a divine truth.

It is in this sense which Professor G.F.Moore accepts the term. His description of the meaning of Torah is very interesting:

Moore, G.F. - "Judaism", Vol. I, p. 263

The comprehensive name for the divine revelation, written and oral, in which the Jews possessed the sole standard and norm of their religion is Torah. It is a source of manifold misconceptions that the word is customarily translated 'Law', though it is not easy to suggest any one English word by which it would be better rendered. 'Law' must, however, not be understood in the restricted sense of legislation, but must be taken to include the whole of revelation - all that God has made known of his nature, character, and purpose, and of which we would have man be and do.

The prophets call their own utterances 'Torah'; and the Psalms deserved the name as well. To the unwritten law the religious and moral teachings of the Haggadah belong no less than the juristically formulated rules of the Halakah. In a word, Torah in one aspect is the vehicle, in another and deeper view, it is the whole content of revelation.

Professor Moore goes further, to say that Torah became identified with Chochmah, Wisdom.

For the Jewish conception of law in this broad sense it is fundamentally significant that it was early identified with wisdom....Since this law, the distinctive wisdom of Israel, was revealed by God, it, like all true human wisdom, was God's wisdom, of which so much is said in the Proverbs and other works of the Jewish sages. Prov. 8:22ff is the most fruitful of the passages in which this identification of divine revelation (Torah) with the divine wisdom (Chochmah) is made, but many others contributed to the doctrine.

In our very Midrash, the same point is made. Bar Kappara so interprets Prov. 9:1-3 as to make 'Wisdom' equivalent to 'Law'; and by reckoning Numbers 10:35 as a book in itself

(thereby splitting Numbers into three books, instead of one)
he finds seven books of the Torah instead of five, corresponding to the seven pillars with which Wisdom built her house. (11:3)

The most important consequence of this identification of Wisdom (personified) with Law, is the fact that the Law then becomes the source of all creation. In Prov. 8:22, Wisdom (Torah) says of itself:

The Lord made me as the beginning of His way, the first of His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before ever the earth was.

This antenundane existence of the law is further stated in Genesis Rabbah 1:1:

The Law says, I was an architect's apparatus for God. As a rule an earthly king who is building a palace does not build it according to his own ideas, but to those of an architect; and the architect does not build it out of his head, but has parchments or tablets to know how he shall make the rooms and openings; so God looked into the Law and created the world.

And so, we have some idea of the nature of Torah, of its several concepts and their ramifications: Torah as legal doctrine; Torah as broad civilizing influence; Torah as creative power. Let us now look into our Midrash, to see there the development of the idea Torah, and its relation to God and Israel.

Torah, first of all, is called the tree of life for Israel, serving as a supporting staff, reliance upon which will make Israel unafraid of any nation. And yet, not everyone is free to study Torah, or is cpabale of learning Torah - so the same opportunity for salvation is given all persons, by decreeing that the financial support of students and colleges where Torah was studied, is as valuable and important as the studying itself.

(25:1) A R CHIVES

AND THE STATE OF T

R. Huna in the name of H. Benjamin b. Levi said:
The matter may be compared to the case of a king
who said to his son: 'Go out and do business.'
Said the son to him: 'Father, I am afraid of
robbers on the road and of pirates on the sea.'
What did his father do? He took a staff, hollowed
it out, and placed an amulet inside it. He gave
it to his son and said to him: 'Let this staff
be in your hand and you need not be afraid of
any creature.'
So also did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to

So also did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to Moses: 'Tell Israel: "My children! Occupy yourselves with the Torah and you need not be afraid of any nation."

R. Aha expounded in the name of R. Tanhum son of R. Hiyya: Though a man has learned Torah and has taught, observed, and performed it, yet if he was able to protest against wrongdoing and did not protest, or was able to maintain scholars and did not maintain them, he is included in the term "cursed"; hence it is written, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not." (The Hebrew implies the maintenance of students and colleges.)
R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Hiyya: If a man has not learned Torah, and has neither performed, observed, nor taught it to others, but, even though he had not the means to maintain scholars, yet did maintain them, and though not strong enough to protest, yet protested, he is on this account included in the term "blessed."

This theme, of the dependence of Israel on Torah as a staff of life, is elaborated in a passage from the Pesikta de-Rav Kahana, where the metaphor of marriage is used. In this metaphor, the marriage between God and Israel is held together only by the strength of the marriage covenant, which is the Torah. This passage, even though occurring in a text outside of our own, is still worthy of citation:

(found in Montefiore-Loewe Anthology, #315, p. 119)

R. Abba bar Mahana said in the name of R. Jochanan: The matter is like a king who betrothed himself to a lady, and wrote for her a large marriage covenant. 'Thus and thus I give to thee; so much jewellery I give thee, so many treasures I give thee. ' Thenhe left her, and went to a far country by the sea, and stayed there many years; her companions taunted her and said to her: 'How long will you sit here? Take to you a husband while you are yet young and are strong. . But she returned to her house, and took the covenant and read it, and was comforted. After a long time the king came back and said to her: 'My daughter, I wonder that you waited for me after all these years. ' She said: 'Ly Lord, if it had not been for the large marriage covenant you wrote for me, my companions would long ago have made me give you up. 1 So in this world, the nations taunt the Israelites and say to them: 'How long will you die for your God, and give your lives for Him, and be slaughtered for Him? How much pain does He not bring upon you, how much contempt and suffering? Come with us, and we will make you generals and prefects and governors.' Then the Israelites go into their synagogues and houses of study, and they take up the book of the Law, and they read in it, "And I will turn unto you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, and will establish my covenant with you" (Lev. 26:9), and they are comforted. When the end shall have come, God will say to the Israelites, 'My sons, I marvel that you have waited for me all these years,' and Israel will say, 'Lord, if it had not been for the book of the law which Thou didst write for us, the nations would long ago have caused us to abandon Thee.'

(Pes.K. 19 : 139b)

Faithfulness and loyalty to the Divine Law not only ensure the collective life of Israel, but also afford an opportunity to individuals to approach God and become identified with him. We are told that Torah observance

creates p'p'3J, righteous ones, and p'p'3J are equated with God, since God associated Himself with all the early p'p'3J who fulfilled the Torah even before it was given. The equation assumes the Midrashic form of analogous usage of an adjective. The $J^2p'3J$ are called J'NN - perfect, and God is called J'NN, perfect.

(2:10)

AMERICAN JEWISH

Blessed be the Omnipresent for that He identified Himself with the early righteous men. Adam offered an ox on an altar, as it is said, "It shall please the Lord better than a bullock" (Ps.69:32).

Noah fulfilled that which is written in the Torah, as it is said, "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." (Gen. 8:20)

Abraham fulfilled (in anticipation) the whole of the Torah, as it is said, "Because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws." (Gen.26:10) Isaac fulfilled that which is written in the Torah, in that he cast himself before his father as a lamb that is to be sacrificed.

Even though unto them the Torah had not yet been given, they fulfilled it of their own accord. For this reason, the Holy One, blessed be He, loved them with a complete love, and made their name like unto His own name. Of them He said: "Happy are they who are perfect in the way", (Ps.119:1), and of Himself, it is said, "The Rock, His work is perfect." (Deut.32:4)

Adam thus anticipated the injunctions that a burnteoffering should be "of the herd" and of the "clean" animals, as defined in Lev. 11:1-8.

Showing that Noah too anticipated the distinction between clean and unclean animals for sacrificial purposes.

Taken to indicate the two laws - the written and the oral.

Seeing that he went so far in his love for God, he certainly anticipated all God's other wishes as expressed in His precepts in the whole of the Torah.

As a corollary, it might be noted here that, just as
Torah observance results in life and continued existence
for Israel, so too does Torah neglect result in death by
the sword. The sword and the book were given together from
heaven. Failure to observe what is written in the latter
will result in death by the former. This passage might well
be called the spiritual father of our adage of today "The pen is mightier than the sword."

(35:6)

It was taught in the name of R. Elazar: The sword and the Book were given from heaven wrapped together. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'If you keep what is written in this Book, you will be delivered from the sword, and if not, the latter will untimately kill you.' Whence can this be infersed? From the fact that it says, "So He drove out the man... and He placed...the flaming sword....to keep the way to the tree of life" (Gen.3:24). The tree of life refers to the Torah.

Enowledge of Torah, in addition to being a literal and figurative mainstay of the people Israel, also brings with it its own reward - the reward of happiness which flows from the study of it, from sheer intellectual accomplishment.

(19:2)

And in this same passage we are told that the reward for laboring in the vineyard of Torah is not easily won. Torah study requires diligence and application - and the value of such study is not apparent to the fool, but only to the one already wise. The eternal and unchanging aspect of the Law is one of its most attractive features, and this commends it to the student seeking eternal values.

(19:2)

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

R. Ammi quoted "Wisdom is too high for a fool
(to attain) " (Prov.24:7)
R. Jochanan said: This may be compared to a loaf
hanging high up in a house. A fool says: "Who
can possibly bring this down?' A sensible person
says: 'Has not some person hung it up?' He fetches
two rods, ties them one to another, and brings it
down. So, too, the fool says: 'Who can learn the
whole of the Torah that is in the heart of a scholar?'
Whereas the sensible person says: 'Has not he
(i.e. the scholar) learnt it from another? I shall
learn two halakoth today, and two tomorrow, until
I have learnt the whole Torah.'

R. Levi said: This may be compared to the case of a basket with a hole in it, to fill which its owner hired laborers. One, who was a fool, said: 'What good am I doing? What it (the basket) takes in at one end, it lets out at the other.' The sensible man said: 'Surely I am to receive remuneration for every barrel!' So, too, does the fool say: 'What good will I do by learning Torah and forgetting it?' Whereas the sensible man says: 'Does not the Holy One, blessed be He, give reward for the very labor (of Torah study)!'

The necessity of careful and repeated study is poetically described in one passage which states that even though the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, it had to be repeated in the Ohel Moed, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, before any man could be punished for transgressing it. True, transgression of the commandments of the Torah involves punishment, and yet it is recognized that the Torah is difficult to comprehend, and does require study; hence punishment is not meted out until the words of the Tord are repeated (i.e. studied), so that all may know their intent.

(1:10)

"From the tent of Meeting" (Lev. 1:1) Said R. Elazar: Even though the Torah was given as a fence at Sinai (to separate Israel as a unique people), they were not punishable in respect thereof (i.e. for transgressions) until it was repeated in the Tent of Meeting. This may be compared to an edict which has been written and sealed and brought into the province, but in respect whereof the inhabitants of the province are not punishable, until it has been clearly explained to them in the public meeting-place of the province. So, too, with the Torah: even though it was given to Israel at Sinai, they were not punishable in respect thereof until it had been repeated in the Tent of Meeting. This is indicated by what is written, "Until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of my teaching" (S.S. 3:4). "Ly mother's house" means Sinai (since there Israel became cleaned from sin); "the chamber of my teaching" means the Tent of Meeting, for thence Israel was commanded the teaching, (i.e. the Law.)

Much is made of the Torah in the way of lavish comparison.

Just as it was noted above how Israel was compared to a lily,
to a vine, etc, so too is the Torah made analagous to objects
of great worth. In a passage of great poetic beauty, we
are told that the Torah, as expressed through the "speaking"
of Moses, is more precious even than gold and rubies.

(1:6)

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"There is gold, and a multitude of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel" (Prov. 20:15)
It often happens that a man possesses gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, yea all manner of delectable articles in the world, and the goodness thereof, yet possesses no knowledge. What then has he acquired? The proverb says: "If thou possessest knowledge, what lackest thou? If thou lackest knowledge, what possessest thou?" Seeing that Moses' soul was sad, and that he said: "All have brought their free-will offerings to the labernacle (gold and rubies) and I have brought nothing', the Holy One,

blessed be He, said to him: 'As thou livest, thy speaking is more acceptable to Me than all alse.' (The proof of this is) that out of all of them, the divine words called only unto Moses, as it is written, "And the Lord called unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1)

In another metaphor, it is told that the Torah is more valuable than property, for all property was created in the first six days of Creation - whereas the Torah required forty days of communion on At. Sinai before it came into the world. In this simple, yet striking passage, material values are assessed over against spiritual values, with an insight and breadth of vision which make this one of the greatest passages in the whole Midrash.

(30:1)

R. Jochanan was once walking along on the way from Tiberias to Sepphoris, R. Hiyya son of Abba supporting him. They came to a certain countryhouse and R. Jochanan said: 'This country-house was mine and I sold it in order to acquire the Torah. They came to a certain vineyard-dwelling and he said: This vineyard-dwelling was mine and I sold it to acquire Torah. They came to a certain dwelling in an olive-grove and he said: 'This dwelling in the olive-grove was mine and I sold it in order to acquire the Torah. R. Hiyya began weeping. 'Why are you weeping?' asked R. Jochanan. He answered him: 'Because you have left nothing for your old age. ' He said to him: 'Is it a light thing in your eyes what I have done? That I have sold a thing that was created in six days and acquired a thing that was given after forty days? As it says, "And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights" (Ex. 34:28).

To select a final example, there is a little section wherein the Torah is described most exotically and fancifully in terms of a verse from the Song of Songs (5:11), which says, "His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are in curls and black as a raven." This description refers, of course, to the young man in the love poem. Yet the verse is broken down by the Agadist and applied to the Law. (19:1)

"His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are in curls, and black as a raven" (S.S. 5:11).

His head (rosh) means the Torah, of which it is said, "The Lord made me (Wisdom, i.e. Torah) as the beginning (re'shith) of His way" (Prov.8:22).

'The most fine gold' means, the words of the Torah, of which it is said, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold" (Ps. 19:11).

'His locks are as curls' alludes to the ruled lines (to guide the writing in Torah-scrolls.)

Torah is given its full share of credit for operating as a special force to strenghtan goodness in a world which is evil. Israel, we saw, above, was a peculiar people - ever-present in the world as a leaven and servant of God to bring his light to the world. The Torah is the indispensable instrument utilized by the people Israel to discharge its function. Thus the Torah, too, becomes a peculiar instrument and document - and these twain, Israel and Torah, save the world from destruction, just as a single rose-bud can justify an orchard full of thorns.

(23:3)

AMERICAN JEWISH

R. Azariah in the name of R. Judah son of R. Simon says: The matter may be compared to the case of a king who had an orchard planted with one row of figtrees, one of vines, one of pomengranates, and one of apples. He entrusted it to a tenant and went away. After a time the king came and looked in at the orchard to ascertain what it had yielded. He found it full of thorns and briars, so he brought wood-cutters to raze it. He looked closely at the thorns and noticed among them a single rose-colored flower. He smelled it and his spirits calmed down. The king said: 'The whole orchard shall be saved because of this flower.'

In a similar manner the whole world was created only for the sake of the Torah. After twenty-six generations the Holy One, blessed be He, looked closely at his world to ascertain what it had yielded, and found it full of water in water. (Wicked people in a wicked environment.).....So he brought cutters to cut it down; as it says, "The Lord sat enthroned at the flood" (Ps. 29:10). He saw a single rose-colored flower, to wit, Israel. He took it and smelled it when He gave them the Ten Commandments, and His spirits were calmed when they said, "We will do and we will hear" (Ex. 24:7). Said the Holy One, blessed be He; 'The orchard shall be saved on account of this flower. For the sake of the Torah and of Israel the world shall be saved."

And so the triad is complete - God, Israel, and Torah - all working together as co-partners in the scheme of the universe - all interdependent - God not all-powerful, but requiring the other two as vehicles for his expression.

The will of God cannot be made known in a vacuum it must manifest itself through something. For this has
Israel been selected. For can Israel operate on the sheer
plane of religious abstraction - she too is part of the
concrete universe. And so the Torah completes the circle
by relating Israel, the God-inspired, to this world, through
the expedient of offering a goal in history twoard which
Israel can march. The Torah, representing the divine will,
is the plan, the blueprint, whose actualization in a social,
economic and political sense is the function of Israel,
and whose final realization is called the Days of the Messiah.

This is the theology of Judaism - all this which has been discovered in our Midrash.

May an understanding of it illuminate our hearts and minds.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

POPULAR OPINIONS

Purely incidental to the pursuit of the main thesis, has been the compilation of an interesting series of notes illustrating folkways and mores of the time of the writing of this Midrash, as well as certain moralistic epigrams extolling the value of hard work, of charity, and many other functions.

These notes are now offered as a sort of dessert.

Admittedly not cogent to the main theme, they nevertheless represent that type of by-product so entertaining and valuable in its own right that it merits recognition along with the main article.

And so here is the "Poor Richard's Almanac" of Leviticus-Rabbah, loosely grouped into sections and submitted for the delight of the readers as a reward for his earlier and more strenuous labor.

I. VIRTUE AND HARD WORK

1. Doing Public Service Deserves Great Reward (9:2)

Doing a public service was considered important enough to merit application of the quotation "And to him who setteth right the way" (Ps. 50:23) to the doer of the service. Saul merited kingship because his grandfather used to light lamps for the public.

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2. Consideration for the Poor (34:1)

Consideration should be shown for the poor, not only to sid them, but also not embarras them with charity.

3. Value Of Hard Work (25:5)

Folk-story of the value of hard work. Man who works honestly and long deserves reward. Man who attempts to get rich the short way receives cunishment.

4. Virtue Carries Its Own Rewards (37:2)

Story of man who gave everything to charity, afraid to go home, departs for a foreign land with bag of citrons as sole possession, and finally returns home wealthy, due to essential virtue.

5. Philosophy of Divine Retribution (27:1)

One school (R. Ishmael) says that the righteous are rewarded, while the wicked are punished. Another school (R. Akiba) says that the righteous punished in this world, even for the few misdeeds they commit, but get their reward in the World to Come; while the wicked enjoy peace in this world, for the few good deeds they may have do e, and get their punishment in the World to Come.

II. SEX

1. Procreation Makes God Happy (14:2)

Just as one who entrusts an ounce of silver to another's keeping is happy then the latter returns him a pound of gold, so it is with God, who entrusted with a drop of seminal fluid and returns a completely formed human being. Is this not a matter for praise?

2. Sexual Morality Considered Holy (24:6)

In the book of Leviticus the section dealing with sexual immorality (Ch. 18) was placed next to the section on holiness (Ch. 19) in order to show that who so practices sexual morality is called holy.

3. God Hates Whoredom Worst of All (23:9)

Anyone who acts in accordance with the practices of whoredome will be blotted out of the world, and especially will bring about a situation where all men will be punished, regardless of their suilt or innocence, because Cod hates whoredom worst of all.

4. Adultery Considered Particularly Criminal (23:13)

In a case of adultery, the features of the embryo are so fashinned as to reveal the true father. Adultery was considered especially heinous even if not actually practiced, but only contemplated.

III. LEARNING AND STUDY

1. Manners Are More Basic Than Torah (9:3)

Fven if a man be lacking in all knowledge of the Law or Hagadah, even the ability to say Grace, he is not to be slandered or calumniated, so long as he possesses , good manners. Manners are a saving virtue. The duty of preceded even the duty of the Torah (by 26 generations) since the former was imposed on Adam and the latter not until Moses.

2. Children Perpetuate Torah Study (11:7)

Just as young animals are necessary to replenish the flocks, so are young children constantly necessary to become scholars and study the Torah so that it may be preserved and God may remain in the world.

- 3. Scholars
- 3. Scholars Accorded Highest Honors (11:8)

Israel's scholars are as necessary to her as wings are to a bird. In many passages is honor accorded to the Flders - who are scholars, even though they be young men.

4. Learning And Good Deeds Both Necessary (30:12)

Just as in the four types of branch used in the Lulav, some have tase but no fragrance, some fragrance but no taste, and so forth - so in Israel are some men with learning but no good deeds, some with good deeds, but no learning, and so forth. When they are all tied together, they make up for each other. Thus both learning and good deeds must be present.

IV. DRUNKENESS (12:1)

Two stories about drink - in one, the habit is apparently condoned by God and the drinker is allowed to continue; in the other, apparently the drinking was done to excess and the drinker suffered.

V. LEPROSY

1. Lepers Avoided, Fven by Great Rabbis (16:3)

Fven the great rabbis avoided lepers, would not eat food that came from an alley of levers, and threw stones at them, because they felt they would be defiled by them. (Cf. Jesus).

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2. Youthful Sinning Leads to Leprosy (18:1)

The righteous man has his just reward. The righteous enjoy the prospect of God's receiving back their souls fter death. The wicked will have their souls thrown away. But if a man sins in his youth, (probably reference to sexual sinning with attendant venereal infection) he is punished by leprosy (possibly syphilis).

VI. PFACE

1. Peace, Fven By Compromise And Appeasement (9:9)

"Great is Peace" for it permits fabrications, even in scriptures, to be consummated for its sake (between Abraham and Sarah, Manoah and his wife in re her baroness, Joseph and his brothern).

Besides condoning untruths peace is necessary in heaven (Job 25:3) among the celestial beings, therefore, how much more so on earth among humans. R. Meir allowed a woman to spit in his eye in order to preserve peace between her and her husband.

Prayers end with an innvocation for peace, and even in the Messanic era, the Messiah will commence with peace (Isaiah 52:7).

2. Slander Fvil, Because It Disturbs Peace (26:2)

Slander was considered a very evil thing, and a slanderer was called, in popular parlance, "Third", because by his slander he killed three people - the one who utteres it, the one who listens to it, and the one about whom the slander is spoken.

3. Peace Between God and Man - Atonement (10:5)

There are two opinions on the proper way to atone. One rabbl says repentance effects half-atonement while prayer effects complete atonement. The other rabbi insists on the reverse. They agree, in essence, of course, that these two are the most important measures whereby one obtains peace between himself and God.

VII. AGRICULTURE (35:11)

This passage expresses Rebbinical respect for agriculture. "Then will I give your rains in their seasons." Indicates that Israel will have plenty of produce and the other lands will be dependent on her.

VIII. HISTORY HAS PURPOSE - ALL THINGS HAVE MEANING (22:4)

Snakes, herbs, scorpions, a thigh-bone, and other items are worked into various stories to prove that everything in the world, no matter how lowly, has a purpose, and is part of a Divine Plan.