



## Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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### **MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.**

Series II: Subject Files, 1956-1993, undated.

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B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, correspondence, speech, and notes,  
1962-1967.

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#### **Western Reserve Historical Society**

10825 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106  
(216) 721-5722  
[wrhs.org](http://wrhs.org)

#### **American Jewish Archives**

3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220  
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# The Cleveland Trust Company

CLEVELAND, OHIO

J. M. GLADSTONE  
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT

November 8, 1962

Rabbi Daniel J. Silver  
C/O The Temple  
105th & Silver Park  
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Rabbi:

I am writing to confirm that you will speak at our Annual Meeting of The Board of Trustees of Hillel Foundation on Wednesday November 28, 1962 at the Hillel House 11409 Bellflower Road. The meeting will commence at about 8:30 and your talk should start at about 9:30.

We are happy that you accepted our invitation. Of course, your wife is also welcome to attend. Best regards.

J. M. Gladstone - President

*Jack*  
Hillel Foundation  
C/O 22511 Rye Road  
Cleveland 22, Ohio



I have had 2 expenses small hotels - one disappointed - the other unpleasant  
at Hamam - during the war - Hotel was the change of the unpleasant to the unpleasant  
unpleasant & unpleasant small hotel - a cheap cheap - coffee house - The good  
it provided even underwear and shoes -

it prevented even cultural out living -  
 1/2 in 100 - already a rebellion - I came in contact with center ~~10000~~ -  
maximum Refinement - <sup>1/8</sup> - Abundance of choice - I came prepared to learn - I  
 stayed to learn - Intellectual, Experimental, Tended towards life, brought  
academically reported people - There wasn't a day coffee was to be seen -  
 I, indeed, no pretense of being another fettering - This was the center "if"  
 the University of St. Louis & Academy of Sciences

From what my colleagues tell me the two stereotypes still exist -  
reflecting differences in 2 cultures is just life - One needs, wants,  
non-militarized - ; The other ~~militarized~~ <sup>capitalist</sup> concerned much more  
designated - more concerned with the B.M. side of things; What we  
Riddle from the western; as young people have been socialized -

The difference is Common feel to - by one religion by. College - but  
between not & mitigated - part & plaid - College & Removal - The  
largely of Common general life is the child who you carry from a deed  
home, & described congregation, & runs into a rel. institution a complex  
in a depression is the same which spoils with the maison "I'll be  
fig you up with a new general good own" - This happens more than once  
in new to be lost - It happens because young aged rel. to be lost and lost  
& are forced rel into affection and lost - The consequence

I am pleased to see your letter  
lead - The same idea - The entire team - The committee  
 for reputation - lead seems in longer time - Just 1962 is almost entirely  
 but but - order or anything, but membership - high level - General  
ivy - Because Billie across from parties - We seem  
not are



The jewel had been transferred to Carl B. DeMott - affluence - really  
surgical - followed daylight - built State House - Prime Capital  
Dirt. Grandfather - We don't believe it but tell me Kite -

They lost - Followed

lead search - "Other when shall I find the - high school in the  
house shall find the - where they all are -

both sides were

They went across & see you plotted - 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
↓

Question asked and is not - Discussion - school like place -

Because of violence

Heard - can't get across at home - letter - missing not question -  
don't believe - help search - breed number game & play

Good game



concept which is simply accepted by many -- by those who actually study it and then accept it. I feel it is accepted only after accepting certain things on faith. I am not ready to say that one divine something created the earth and controls everything in it. There is too much to make this unbelievable-- such as the fact that if God doesn't like bloodshed, why war? If God wants peace, why battle? If God wants unity among men, why segregation? I feel that man as a society is much too complex to push off on something man doesn't even comprehend. I furthermore think that with advancement will come a totally new idea as to what controls us -- an idea which will be able to be expressed in mathematical symbols. I also believe that too many people have looked for an easy out to the whole question of life and death and origin and end and have simply attached the tag of 'God' to it all. Something much more complex, in my opinion, is the answer.





This grim world really scares me. Every once in a while I realize the cruelty and insensibility of it and that's when I begin to wonder. We can't just be here to disagree, fight and eventually blow ourselves to bits. There must be some purpose or reason behind us. That is when I think of God. This ideal is, in a measure, a crutch to lean on. It gives me some hope for the future. I believe I have outgrown the 'old man in the sky watching over me' type of feeling though I can't really describe what has replaced it. Sometimes I can't really accept God, sacrilegious as it may seem, but I might as well be honest about it -- probably because the abstract concept is over my head. When I look around and see the hatred and ugliness, I don't understand how God could allow it. The closest I can come, from my experience, is conscience as that part of us which is created in God's image.

I'm really not sure what I believe about God. I think that there must be something -- something larger, better than that. It is within each person helping to draw the line between what is right and what is wrong. I cannot admit to myself that there is a Supreme Being Whom we call God. I would like to believe this. I want to believe that when I do something wrong it is all predestined and that there is nothing I can do about it but I can't. However, there must be something bigger than science -- guiding light, love, fear in all things. This I do believe. I cannot simply state there lives a God because I just don't know. I don't really feel qualified to give an honest opinion.

I have not yet developed any definite ideas about God and I probably won't for a long time. I feel there is some reason and some kind of logic in life and why men live, but I am not saying it is God yet. To me God is a

STATION W.G.A.R. - RE COUNTRY WELFARE LEVY ISSUE

APRIL 12, 1966

There is an America of green lawns and happy children and there is an America of gray streets and crowded tenements and hungry children. These other Americans are as precious to God as you or I. One way to help them is by voting for the renewal of the County Welfare Levy.

- 30 - 30 - 30 - 30 -







# B'NAI B'RITH HILLEL FOUNDATIONS

Devoted to Religious, Cultural and Counseling Activities among Jewish Students at Colleges and Universities

MIDWEST REGION: 46 Sixteenth Avenue, Columbus 1, Ohio AXminster 4-4797

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May 4, 1966

Rabbi Daniel Silver  
The Temple  
University Circle & Silver Park  
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

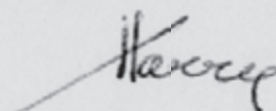
Dear Dan:

I want to tell you again how much we all appreciated your excellent lectures at our Regional Institute. Your thoughtful presentations were well received by our students and Directors. Too bad that the elements were against us. We would have had an even better response if we could have stayed in one comfortable place.

You added greatly to our Institute experience. I want you to know how much I, as well as the other men valued your being with us.

I look forward to seeing you in Toronto. Until then, warm regards and all good wishes.

Cordially yours,

  
Rabbi Harry Kaplan

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# B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation

at the OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

46 sixteenth avenue  
columbus, ohio 43201  
294-4797

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March 7, 1967

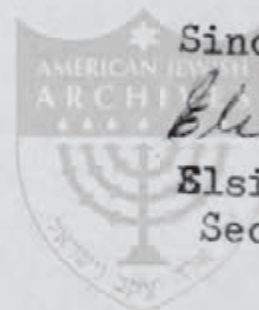
Rabbi Daniel J. Silver  
The Temple  
E. 105th St. & Silver Park  
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Rabbi Silver:

We would appreciate your sending us a glossy picture  
for use on our forum program for the quarterly bulletin.

Thank you,

*April 9*



Sincerely,

*Elsie Rosenfield*

Elsie Rosenfield (Mrs. Ralph)  
Sect'y.

*Sent 3/13/67*



April 11, 1967

Rabbi Harry Kaplan  
B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation  
Ohio State University  
46 - 16th Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio 43201

Dear Harry:

It was a most pleasant visit with you. It was a nice group and I enjoyed talking to them about the Golem. I charged the motel to Hillel. Beyond that my expenses were simply \$12.50 for gas. I am enclosing under separate cover a copy of my book on Maimonidean controversy. You might make out a check for \$7.00 to The Temple Library.

With all good wishes to your charming wife from Adele and myself, I remain

Cordially yours,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:rvf



[April 1967]

The Golem - Judaism's Sorcery and Science Fiction

Dr. Daniel Jeremy Silver

February 17, 1967

The child wants his freedom and the old fuddy-dufs, his parents, insist on telling him where to go, what to do, and when to <sup>be home</sup> ~~do it~~. He dreams brave deeds— of single handedly routing an enemy attack—of catching a notorious criminal and holding him for the police— of hitting a home run in the last inning of the last game of a world series— thunderous applause after a starring role in a Broadway musical; and to his daily frustration he is bundled off to the familiar routines of school. Childhood is a time of high expectation and mundane routines and children have always made their own a Hercules, a Robin Hood, a Superman whose bravery and skill are a vivid projection of their fantasy world and whose certain success is a happy reflex of their innocent confidence.

The last few years have seen a sudden upsurge in the popularity of these heroes of the daring do. Batman and James Bond <sup>ENTERTAIN</sup> ~~draw~~ audiences numbering in the millions. The thoughtful cartoonist Jules Feiffer offers this explanation ~~of our cultural tastes~~ "We are helpless about twenty years of the Cold War— we are helpless about Vietnam— we look for superman when we feel most impotent." Deep down we <sup>ARE TO A CERTAIN</sup> ~~are not so much~~ different than <sup>DEGREE</sup> ~~our~~ children. To be sure we make sarcastic remarks about these wild <sup>Adventures</sup> ~~ventures~~ yet we tune in for next week's episode. Why? I wonder if the Man from U. N. C. L. E. 's <sup>ESCAPADES</sup> ~~adventures~~ and his eventual success do not gratify some deep inner need for reassurance. We too suffer.



The growing Folly and horror,

Our security is often endangered. We despair as we watch, The television hero who diffuses the bomb before it falls on the city becomes the nation's savior who will diffuse the real bomb before it destroys our civilization. The super-hero <sup>SOULLESS MOMENTARILY REASSURES US</sup> ~~is a concrete symbol of our anxious need for reassurance.~~ When our national problems seem beyond understandable solution we encourage ourselves with the exploits of the made-up hero. Our avid interest is really a prayer for reassurance.

The Golem was a robot whose function it was to protect the ghetto from the forces of evil. The Golem legends were born of the same psychic urgency as Batman. The Bible promises that "The guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers." The medieval Jew's life was so desparate that he needed <sup>A MORE</sup> concrete reassurance — and he <sup>STUN THIS</sup> ~~was~~ reassurance out of his imagination. Life was short, dangerous and impoverished. War and plague were familiar companions. Childbirth was dangerous. One mother in three died in labor. Childhood was dangerous. One child in two did not reach maturity. Death was certain and more often than not came early. The realities of medieval life gave little reason for confidence in a better tomorrow. "We look for superman when we are most impotent." The Golem was the superman of the ghetto, the defender of the poor, the protector of the innocent, the shield of the weak. ~~THE~~ The paralell should not be overstated. Unlike his modern counterpart, the Golem was not a savior in the disguise of a mild mannered newsmen or social fop who moonlighted as the scourge of the arrogant and the wealthy. <sup>INDEED</sup> He was not a man but a creation of man. He was a statue come alive. He was the legendary descendent of those wooden automata whom the Buddhist Aeneas <sup>NARAYANA HANDATTA</sup> ~~Narava Handatta~~ came across in



a ghost city. Its lone inhabitant, a carpenter, had whittled these life size dolls to keep him company in his loneliness and such was his skill that he gave them not only similitude but <sup>SENSATION</sup> ~~action~~ - every human capacity save thought and speech. The Golem was <sup>A LATTER DAY</sup> ~~the legendary~~ descendent of Galatea. Ovid tells the story: The sculptor Pygmalion fashioned a statue of consummate beauty and fell in love with his handiwork. ~~Such was his skill that~~ With the divine aid of Venus the marble figure stepped down from its pedestal and became Pygmalion's bride. The dream of duplicating life is as an ancient ~~human~~ dream.

IT IS THE SAME DREAM

AND MORE PRACTICAL

DIFFERENT METHOD

Our geneticists and biologists are at ~~this moment~~ <sup>WITH</sup> eagerly pursuing ~~this~~ <sup>different</sup> ~~method~~. In the classical world the legend makers conceived of a stone image

having all the external features of a man or woman which miraculously becomes a breathing and feeling being. <sup>IN THE CLASSIC JEWISH WORLD LEGEND</sup> ~~Jewish~~ makers took their imagery from the Bible. The Golem is simply made of earth and clay. This imagery reproduces God's actions in Genesis:

"And the Lord God formed Adam from clods of the soil and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."

Who creates the Golem? Not a carpenter or sculptor, but a Rabbi - not a chisel but Kabbala - not art but wisdom.

The Jewish legend insists that the Golem cannot be a product of man's skill alone. The rabbis who created the Golem only followed out God's order. It was God himself who taught them <sup>THE</sup> ~~technology~~ <sup>A</sup> of a golem's fabrication. Judaism, even in its legends, insists that there are limits to man's capacity.

The brain with which we think, and the hands with which we tinker, are gifts <sup>IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS</sup> ~~of~~ God's blessing. Men who create Golems have a tendency to deify themselves.



If God created man and they can create a facsimile man - are they not God's equal? <sup>WE SEE THIS TO-DAY -</sup> ~~Does not~~ our generation with its computers and its robots - its golems - walk in its pride and prates about the death of God? The Jewish legend acknowledges man's powers but insists that we take another look at the source of these powers. The Golem is our handiwork but we are God's handiwork. Furthermore, the Golem is always less than a full man. Unlike Galatea, the Golem does not become a <sup>COMPLETE</sup> human being ~~complete in all its parts~~. The Golem <sup>ALWAYS</sup> lacks the power of speech. Our skill does not match God's. The computer is not yet a man. <sup>EVEN IN FOLK LEGEND JUDAISM INSISTED ON ITS FUNDAMENTAL</sup> ~~Our skills do not yet match God's. Our rich wisdom have~~ <sup>TEACHINGS.</sup> ~~become into the~~ ~~stuff of the Golem legend many of the most important insights of our faith, but~~ ~~for the moment let us concentrate on the stuff of the legend itself.~~

Many of us were weaned on Grimm's Fairy Tales. If we bothered to wonder who these men who spun for us the wonderful tales of Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, and Peter and the Wolf, we discover <sup>ed</sup> two erudite pedagogues - brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm, who spent their lives researching the origin of language and the meaning of myth. In the early 19th century, the Grimms set out to record and collect mankind's folklore and to analyze how each nation used familiar situations and fables to express its own crude attitudes and unconscious prejudices. The Grimms founded the science of comparative literature and taught historians to use national sagas and myths to recreate a civilization's early history. In the course of his research, Jacob Grimm heard of the legend of the Golem. In 1808 in a little book, Journal for Hermits, he brought his legend to the attention of the academic world:

After saying certain prayers and observing certain fast days, the Polish Jews make the figure of a man from clay or mud, and when they pronounce the miraculous Shemhamphoras (the name of



God) over him, he must come to life. He cannot speak, but he understands fairly well what is said or commanded. They call him golem and use him as a servant to do all sorts of housework. But he must never leave the house. On his forehead is written 'emeth (truth); every day he gains weight and becomes somewhat larger and stronger than all the others in the house, regardless of how little he was to begin with. For fear of him, they therefore erase the first letter, so that nothing remains but meth (he is dead), whereupon he collapses and turns to clay again. One man's golem grew so tall, and he heedlessly let him keep on growing so long that that he could no longer reach his forehead. In terror he ordered the golem to take off his boots, thinking that when he bent down he could reach his forehead. So it happened, the first letter was successfully erased, but the whole heap of clay fell on the Jew and crushed him.

Grimm's Golem is a German hausfrau's dream. He is a robot maid who never asks for time off or higher wages. <sup>IN THIS INSTANCE WAS</sup> Grimm confused ~~elements~~ of ~~other similar legends with the special quality of the Jewish folk tale.~~ As we shall see the Golem could not be put to mundane service. Otherwise, Grimm's report is faithful. He describes correctly its creation by what we must call a semi magical or Kabbalistic act. The clod is molded and the mannikin is enlivened when the rabbi places on his tongue a parchment inscribed with the awesome power of God's hidden name. The fearful power of God's special name is an ancient piety among our people. The Bible, as you know, writes God's proper name <sup>א / ה / ו</sup> and we deliberately mispronounce these letters as "Adonai." The secret of God's proper name was reserved to the High Priest who pronounced it only once each year on that awesome moment of Yom Kippur when he entered the holy of holies to ask God's pardon for his sins and those of Israel. The ancients believed that a man and his name share the same essence. The Bible is full of occasions on which our ancestors had their names changed to express God's special favor or their unique achievement. It was altogether natural



for the belief to develop that God's name had a vast and rightening power.

The writing of 'פד on the outside of a mezuzah derived from the same piety.

Even God's other names had a protective power. The letters of God's name

א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת are the same letters as those in the verb "to be." The stuff of

legend is here - by placing the letters which are the essence of life in the

mouth of an inanimate object, he might indeed come alive.

Words had a charisma for the ancients which it is hard for us to understand. All wisdom was necessarily capsuled in language. Language

had a reality of its own. Words were not only symbols of reality but reality

WORDS WERE NOT ONLY THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF WORDS BUT NUMBERS - THE  
itself. The word א נ ח , truth, was inscribed on the Golem's forehead. building  
blocks  
of the  
universe

This inscription was an effective amulet which prevented the Golem from running amuck or using his powers for any purpose but good. The word א נ ח

was a failsafe device to constrain the awesome power of the robot. Man has

always dreamt of creating more powerful machines and at the same time he

had had nightmares about their potential for harm.

The inscription א נ ח limited the Golem's powers. A simple erasure of one letter ח unplugged the machine and turned off its power.

א נ ח became met א נ - death. Once the Aleph was erased the Golem disintegrated into the clay from which he sprang.

Men can conceive of controls but they are not always effective. Our fathers were not sanguine that the radar would not malfunction or that a random electric shock might not activate the missile in its silo. The Golem, as it collapses falls upon his creator kills him. There is always the fear that some



miracle worker - some scientist - some nation will push its technical <sup>power</sup> ~~power~~ too far and trip over its vanity. The anti-missile missile can as easily destroy mankind as the original missile itself.

Jacob Grimm did not ascribe the Golem to any particular maker. Jewish sources tend to cluster the Golem stories around two 16th century rabbis - Elijah of Chelm and his more famous and younger contemporary, Loew of Prague. Of Elijah little is known. He was a Polish Jew and apparantly a competent Talmudist. The traditions which label him as a Golem maker appeared more than a century after his death and they may have no firm basis in fact. ~~What~~ We know is only that Elijah was at one time a student of the mystic scholar and Kabbalist, Solomon Luria, who was among other things a self-styled forerunner of the Messiah. Whatever the basis of Elijah's being labeled as a maker of Golems, I delight in the perhaps fortuitous fact that Elijah was the rabbi in Chelm - the city of nudnicks and schlemeels. You remember Chelm - each morning the stork flew from heaven laden with two bags - in one he carried the souls of future wise men and in the other the souls of - well let us be kind - simpler folk. One day he flew over Chelm and by chance the second bag ripped open. Only fools were born in Chelm. When Chelm wanted to fence in a new cemetery, the village elders ordered the entire population to lie down side by side. The fence was never built. Why? There was not one left standing to draw the boundary lines. I wonder if by setting the Golem stories in Chelm some wise teller of these tales was not reminding the more innocent in his audience that despite the bizarre appeal and the more than occasional insight in these stories they were and are childish folklore - a statement of the innocence rather than of the maturity of the Jewish tradition.



Of Loew of Prague much more is known. His full name was Judah Loew Ben Bezallel. His dates are 1513-1609. Loew came of a well known and scholarly family. His uncle was chief rabbi of the German communities. His father and all his brothers were recognized scholars. Loew, himself, was one of the best known Talmudists of his age and one of the few Jews in that dark century to interest himself in the physical sciences. His published works show no interest in Kabbalah and it is hard to credit this rather scientific and urbane man of letters with such an interest. The medieval suspicion of scientific learning seems to have been the mother of the Loew legend. Loew was a companion of the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe who for many years had an observatory near Prague. He may also have known Tycho's more famous student Johann Keppler who is credited with being the founder of the science of astronomy. Rudolph, the Count of Prague, was a patron of both men and we know that Loew was among the circle of scholars occasionally invited to the palace.

For a 16th century rabbi to be welcome in the palace was to invest him among Jews with extraordinary powers.= If, in addition, the rabbi scanned the stars and investigated mathematics, he was sure to be turned into a Merlin and invested by the popular mind with the skills of a wizard and if the rabbi used his contact at court to spare his community from the incitements of a fanatic monk, his powers naturally became supernatural. At that time Christian and Jewish worlds simply did not mix or mingle. The medieval Jew was ignorant of the ways of <sup>personal</sup> ~~quiet~~ diplomacy. Loew must have had some special help from God. Since the help could not otherwise be accounted for, why not







*praised and*

"~~T~~hou, O Lord, our God, ruler of the world by whose light the shadows

of evening fall and the gates of the morning are opened. In wisdom Thou has established the changes of time and season." He unconsciously mispronounced the text. *פונסו אל פ'סוני* "He changes the seasons" became " *פונסו אל פ'סוני*"

"He sours the seasons." Something was wrong. Loew knew nothing of Freudian slips <sup>but</sup> he knew his prayers. It was ~~not~~ God not his subconscious who had guided his tongue. There was danger afoot. What should he do? That night the answer came to him in his sleep. In his dreams he heard a heavenly voice

say an acrostic:

*הוסיף להם חסד ורחמים ואלוהים יברך את ישראל*  
Make a Golem of clay and you will destroy the entire evil company of those who attack Israel.

This formula was both God's command and a practical blue print. In the ancient and medieval worlds the belief was widespread that letters were the ultimate building blocks of the universe. The Greek word stoichia means both letters <sup>atomic</sup> and elements. ~~We require letters and numbers to express our understanding of the universe. The fundamental laws of nature as we understand them are mathematical equations.~~ The ancients had no separate numbering system.

Letters expressed both thought and quantity. If you wanted to multiply one time one, you wrote Aleph X Aleph = Aleph. The Greek teacher Pythagoras had taught that "all things are numbers." Reality can be comprehended only through numbers. Was it not logical to assume that numbers and reality were one and the same? And since all numbers were at the same time letters it seemed logical that the fundamental laws of nature could be expressed in words as well as in equations. From this idea it was just a short step to a belief (that became



The Biblical Text was both a philosophy and a mathematical equation

widespread in both Christianity and Judaism) that since the Bible contained all truth God had revealed <sup>in Scripture</sup> ~~these~~ not only the basic religious law but the entire physical structure of the universe. Reduce the letters to number and you will uncover the fundamental equations of life.

The dream born acrostic revealed to Loew how to manipulate the sacred text to create the Golem. Commanded by God so to do and armed with the proper Kabbalistic formula he set out with this son-in-law and a pupil to fashion the clay image, perform the appropriate rites, pronounce the proper formulas and to place the all powerful name of God on the tongue of the Golem. At night, under the veil of secrecy, he brought the Golem into being. As man was created in the image of God, so the Golem was created in the image of man. The Golem had the shape of a man and all the powers of man save speech. There was one other difference. They ~~Men~~ can do good or evil. <sup>MEN</sup> ~~They~~ are free agents. The Golem could be used only for useful purpose and he might not be used for menial purposes even if these were harmless. The creation of the Golem was not an idle exercise. He was to be God's shield between Israel and its enemies.

Now, what man proposes, woman often disposes. Loew brought his Golem home and admonished his wife not to use the Golem as a scullery maid. Man does not need God's help to create labor saving devices. Indeed these are not always unmixed blessing. In our gadgeted century the idleness of the housewife is often the cause of much unhappiness for her and her marriage. <sup>IDLE HOURS HAVE LED TO MANY A</sup> In any <sup>public</sup> ~~private~~ case, the temptation was too powerful and on one particularly harried day the rabbi's wife ordered the Golem to fetch water for her tubs from the village well. Before she could turn around the kitchen was flooded. The Golem did not know to stop when the tubs were full. Goethe used this theme in the Sorcerer's



Apprentice. The young apprentice who cleans the master's magic garments, sweeps his floor and fetches his water is left alone by the sorcerer and told to fill the water barrel. Having a full portion of that laziness which enfolds us all, the boy remembers some fragments of an incantation which he had heard from his master and puts the broom to work fetching water. The broom carries out its task promptly and eagerly. Soon water overflows the barrel, and the apprentice realizes that he does not know the incantation to stop the broom. The boy is on his way to being drowned when the magician returns, recites the appropriate formula to unplug the broom and gives the apprentice a not unmerited thrashing. Machines run amuck and threaten those who do not understand their control. Think of the devastation which we have inflicted on our cities and on our bodies by the ignorant use of the automobile.

The Golem had been ordered built by God because Prague's Jewish community was threatened by serious danger. (Even as we order a missile screen to protect us in the cold war. There is always somebody who wants to use the bomb in Vietnam and we have no sorcerer to protect us from retaliation.)

A Christian butcher owed a Jew a sizeable debt. The Jew sued for repayment. Rather than pay up the butcher tried to implicate his creditor in a charge of ritual murder. He opened the grave of a newly dead child. He slit the corpse's throat to give it the appearance of ritual slaughter, wrapped the child in a talis and placed it inside a pig, elements sure to incite his credulous neighbors. He hid the child in his wagon and began to drive towards the ghetto. The Golem, as you have long since guessed, is God's protection made manifest. Truly "He that keepeth Israel does neither slumber nor sleep." The Golem alone among the ghetto dwellers was awake and heard the rumble



of the butcher's wagon. Stealthily he followed it down the street. Nimbly he climbed aboard and skillfully he searched the wagon. He discovered the corpse. A Hollywood style fight scene followed. The butcher puts up a good battle but soon he lies prostrate. The Golem drives the wagon, the butcher and the corpse to the police station where he vanishes as the sheriff discovers the villain.

There are as many episodes to the Golem's daring do as there were evenings on which these stories were told. The Golem specialized in nick of time rescue. He protected the community from the terrible charge of ritual murder and from the slander of renegade Jews who villified their families in order to prove the sincerity of their conversion. In those days monks specialized in fishing for souls among disturbed adolescents. Even as today, there are Christian missions on many college campuses who reach out for the souls of young Jews during these turbulent years. The wily monk Thaddeus is the <sup>RECURRING</sup> ~~lead~~ villain of the piece. Thaddeus played on the susceptibility of a love sick teenager, Dina, and she was converted. And at about the same time, Prague was disturbed by the mysterious disappearance of a Christian girl who served as a maid in a Jewish home. Dina, brainwashed, came forward and stated publicly: "I have seen each year the Jews slaughter a Christian for the purpose of mixing his blood in the Passover bread." She claimed that she had seen her father receive a vial of Christian blood from the servant of the rabbi. A trial of the Rabbi's servants was ordered. Tensions mounted. A guilty verdict would unleash a blood bath. The Golem disappears into the countryside and by a skillful investigation which would have done credit to Sherlock Holmes, he tracks the servant girl down to her love next where she is enjoying a moment's dalliance with a young dandy



of the neighborhood. Just as the court is about to pronounce sentence against the rabbi's servant, the Golem, like Perry Mason's Paul Drake bursts into the court pushing the very much alive servant girl ahead of him to the audible gasp of the spectators.

A thousand dangers threatened the medieval Jewish community and the Golem defends Prague against each. Offering us in the tales a clear insight into the dangers of medieval Jewish life.

Finally, the audience tired of the Golem. His ratings began to slip. It is announced that Rabbi Loew has decided that Prague is no longer in danger. One night the rabbi orders the Golem to sleep in the loft of the Altneu Shul - the biggest synagogue in Prague and one which survived until 1940. While he was asleep those who brought him to life undertook his disarmament. The name of God was removed from his mouth - the various incantations were recited in reverse order. The Golem became again a clod of clay. The rabbi covered the clay with some old canvas and left it in the attic. It was said that one could still see the Golem under the eaves of the synagogue. Such is the stuff of the Golem legend.

In conclusion I would deal with two questions: How did the idea of the Golem originate and what ideas are implicit in the Golem story. What does it tell us of the wisdom of our people?

The Hebrew word Golem occurs only once in the Bible in Psalm 139. Here it is in a sense of embryo of a yet unformed child.

"I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Thy works;  
And that my soul knoweth right well.  
My frame was not hidden from thee,



When I was made in secret,  
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of  
the earth.  
Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance, " *אנכי*

Let it be emphasized the Biblical Jew knew nothing of the legend of the Golem in the medieval sense dealing with man's duplicating the creative act of God.

In Talmudic literature "Golem" embryo came to have another meaning. It was used to describe the form of a living thing, that which is shaped yet which is not alive. Legend had it that Adam was a Golem before God breathed into him the breath of life. An interesting legend was told of this not yet born Adam. We read that when Adam still lay inert as a golem, God showed him all the generations and their wise men, all the generations and their judges, all the generations and their leaders. We have here an early attempt to explain what the Swiss psychoanalyst Jung later called the unconscious memories of the race. Men sometimes seem to evidence knowledge which they have not absorbed through their environment. This assumption of knowledge absorbed through our genes would explain such phenomena as *deja vu* - a sense we all have had on entering a place which is new to us - that we have been there before. This psychological speculation of the rabbis gave to the word golem <sup>*the designation*</sup> ~~a sense~~ of *innocence but impressionable* an ~~unformed~~ mass. One can readily see how it became a convenient word <sup>*h*</sup> with which to label the clay with which men sculpted the shape of a man. But we have still to explain the idea that man could enliven the clay image.

This conceit seemed to have been borrowed from the common



folklore of the ancient near east. The Greeks had Galatea - the Romans had Virgil's statue. The Talmud tells that Rava created a man and sent him to Zera. Zera spoke to him and the Golem did not answer. Then Zera said: "You must have been made by the magicians. Return to dust." The passage expresses opposition to such magical speculation. It acknowledges but does not credit a legend which must have had common currency. Yet what was originally discredited is often resurrected by piety and imagination.

In the fifth and sixth centuries of the common era Pythagoras' ideas spread rapidly in the Jewish community. Books were written which claimed to contain the secret gnosis - the secret depths of the Biblical text. To know the Biblical physics was to gain the power of creation. Indeed one of these texts was called "The Book of Creative Power." Men came to believe that certain wise men actually possessed the power of creation. By the dark ages, these ideas had grown into legend and Jewish wisdom had recast the simple legends within a mold which gave them depth and bite. We read in a 13th century Provencal text this very interesting description of the making of a golem:

"The prophet Jeremiah busied himself alone with the Book Yetsirah. Then a heavenly voice went forth and said: Take a companion. He went to his son Sira, and they studied the book for three years. Afterward they set about combining the alphabets in accordance with the Kabbalistic principles of combination, grouping, and word formation, and a man was created to them, on whose forehead stood the letters YHWH Elohim Emeth. But this newly created man had a knife in his hand, with which he erased the aleph from emeth; there remained: meth. Then Jeremiah rent his garments (because of the blasphemy: God is dead, now implied in the inscription) and said: Why have you erased the aleph from emeth?



He replied: I will tell you a parable. An architect built many houses, cities, and squares, but no one could copy his art and compete with him in knowledge and skill until two men persuaded him. Then he taught these two the secret of his art, and they knew how to do everything in the right way. When they had learned his secret and his abilities, they began to anger him with words. Finally, they broke with him and became architects like him, except that what he charged a thaler for, they did for six groats. When people noticed this, they ceased to honor the artist and came to his pupils and honored them and gave them commissions when they required to have something built. So God has made you in His image and in His shape and form. But now you have created a man like Him, people will say: There is no God in the world beside these two! Then Jeremiah said: What solution is there? He said: Write the alphabets backward on the earth you have strewn with intense concentration. Only do not meditate in the sense of building up, but the other way around. So they did, and the man became dust and ashes before their eyes. Then Jeremiah said: Truly, one should study these things only in order to know the power and omnipotence of the Creator of the world, but not in order really to practice them."

Here we have an amazing adumbration of so many modern problems.

The machine becomes master and makes itself dominant, the motif

quickly changes from "

ف ن ٤      ٢١ د' ٢١      "      "

The Lord God is truth. "

ف ن      ٢١ د' ٢١      "      "

The Lord God is dead. There is a new and dangerous power operating

and man worships power. When the machine becomes God, men begin

to write about the death of God. Make a computer and soon "Death of

God" theologians will make a splash claiming that God is dead. The

modern idolator worships either the maker of the machine or the machine

itself. We no longer ask who made the maker, who gave him his brain,

his skills.



Each day the golem becomes larger and larger. Ever more powerful. Each day our computers become more refined and begin to perform their own mental gymnastics. The dangers increase. Ultimately the machine falls on its maker and destroys him. The golem cannot speak. The machine has power but lacks any sense of morality. Power without control is certain death. When the maker reaches up to pull the plug from this machine, he may find as did the rabbi of old that he will be the victim of the machine's destruction.

Three years ago the first large computer in the State of Israel was dedicated at the Weitzman Institute in Rehobot. Our people have a wonderful sense of history and this giant computer was named Golem I. Those who spoke at the dedication recalled the legend of Rabbi Loew and the Golem of Prague and they reminded themselves that as man magnifies the power of his machines he must be increasingly diligent to retain perspective and mastery and he must be increasingly humble before the ultimate source of all skill and wisdom - God.





RABBI DANIEL SILVER

SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 8:00 P.M.  
THE LEGEND OF THE GOLEM,  
PROBLEMS OF FAITH IN A  
TECHNOLOGICAL AGE

**SPRING QUARTER — 1967**

**SUNDAY EVENINGS AT 8 P.M.**

## **THE HILLEL FORUM**

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