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CENTRAL CONFERENCE AMERICAN RABBIS

# CCAR

## JOURNAL

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**Unbinding Isaac**

**Meyer Levin's Obsession**

**And Jonah Tested the Lord**

**Father's Name Forgotten**

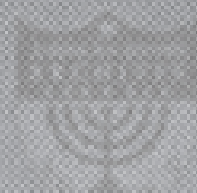
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# The Dialogue

## I. *Exceptionalism As Meta-Myth*

Jacob B. Agus

SOMETIME AGO the late Henry Hurwitz and I coined the term *meta-myth* to stand for the notion that the Jewish people are mysteriously and metaphysically different from the rest of humanity. This myth is of course deeply imbedded in the romantic and naive currents of ancient and medieval Judaism.

We called it a myth because in itself it is a vestige of ancient, pre-critical thought, though it is frequently associated in Judaism with the noblest ideals of self-sacrifice. Myths have a life and even a logic of their own, since they draw their power from the collective Unconscious. In mythology, the "will to believe" is directed toward concrete things — in this case, an empirical people of flesh and blood. Also, myths reflect the drive of instincts, which were developed in the struggle for survival, rather than the outreach of ideals — in this case, the hurt of injured pride and ethnic prejudice. Again, as Emile Durkheim and Lucien Levy-Brühl pointed out, primitive, pre-culture peoples worshipped "collective representations" of their own corporate being, in effect deifying the life of the tribe or the folk. In all its brute power, this kind of myth has been reincarnated in the "folkist" movements of our own day. And its power is not yet spent.

The meta-myth is not identical with the "Chosen People" concept, which could be interpreted in historical and rational terms — that is, as a fact of history, the Jews became the first bearers of monotheism. "My first-born Israel" (Exodus 4:22) — first in a family of many sons. This priority doubtless imposes upon Israel special obligations, in accordance with the famous "therefore" of Amos (Amos 3:2). But, apart from the initiative of God, the character of the Jewish people may not be different from that of other nations. Indeed, they may well be a "stiff-

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JACOB B. AGUS is Rabbi of Beth El Congregation, Baltimore, Maryland, an academician, and an author.

necked" people (Exodus 32:9). Furthermore, the Jews could be "chosen," in the sense of *example*, rather than *exception*; that is, the career of Israel dramatizes the turbulent love-affair between God and mankind. In its liberal interpretation, Israel represents both the greatness and the littleness of humanity, according as it turns toward or away from God.

The meta-myth, on the contrary, stresses Jewish *exceptionalism*. It insinuates the nightmarish fog of mystery into the public image of the Jew of our day. It transfers the secret of the purpose of God, which was not revealed to any man, not even to Moses, to the mundane struggles of the market-place. A whole community is either chosen, or rejected, pre-determined for salvation or perdition. A fantastic theology becomes an invidious biology. Our so-called "uniqueness" is made to depend upon our blood. The Jews are "a people apart that is not counted among the nations" (Numbers 23:9). Halevi puts them in a unique domain, extending between humanity and the angels (Halevi, *The Kuzari*, I, 103). This mode of thinking became axiomatic in the vast literature of *Kabbalah*, and in the folk-imagination of our people.<sup>1</sup> In the popular imagination, it drew immense power from the dispersion of the Jewish people — their "ghost-like" unity, in spite of their utter fragmentation.

The Christian religion took over the meta-myth, but changed its valence from plus to minus. The Chosen People, favored by divine fiat, were now the "rejected" people, living under a curse until the end of days. The pro-Semitic theologians labored hard to prove that Israel's fate was distinguished from that of mankind in two ways, a plus and minus, chosen, rejected, to be chosen again.<sup>2</sup> But even in the more favorable view, the Jew was not to be seen as just another human being, to be judged by the same standards, praised and condemned by the same lights. The historical categories of nationality and religion, cultural amalgamation and segregation, rationality and romantic fantasy do not apply to him. Superhuman and sub-human, he is accordingly in a class apart.

The historical consequences of the meta-myth were inevitable — about the Jews, the wildest charges were believable. After all, they were an enigmatic mystery, akin to that of the Incarnation; only unlike the latter, they incarnated, in the Christian view, God's Love turned into Wrath.

It is hardly necessary to pass in review the various expressions of the meta-myth in the long and dismal record of Christian



anti-Semitism. Jules Isaac has put us all in his debt by his collection of material from French Catholic sources. The Vatican Council had made a valiant effort to inhibit, if not to destroy completely, the dragon's seed of anti-Jewish mythology still rampant in the Christian world. The Christian task is far from completed, however. Christian writers still speak of the "rejection" of the Jewish people as a result of the Crucifixion — as if God had intervened in the course of history to put Jews, and only Jews, under His continuing "wrath." Even Augustin Cardinal Bea, who authored and defended the *Schema* calling on Christians to desist from acting as "avengers of Christ," nevertheless claimed that a cosmic guilt somehow persisted within Jewry. All Jews must not be condemned for the crime of deicide (Augustine Cardinal Bea, *The Church and the Jewish People*, New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 69). However, the guilt "falls upon any one, who in some way associates himself with the 'perverse generation,' which is primarily guilty . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 78). And "the refusal to believe in the Gospel and in Jesus is a factor in this judgment, and so, in one way or another, is a free decision to ally oneself with the 'perverse generation,' with the powers opposed to God" (*ibid.*, p. 85). Accordingly, Jews are left in an ambiguous position. Their "refusal" is a factor, not *the* factor. The meta-myth is suspended, not dissipated.<sup>2</sup>

It is exceedingly difficult for an orthodox faith, claiming infallibility, to move clearly and unequivocally to a new position. Its protagonists have to back into the future obliquely, while protesting that they cling to an unchanged past. Nevertheless, I believe that in the contemporary Dialogue, the humanist position can be asserted and developed, in a way which will result eventually in the total repudiation of the meta-myth. This assurance is based upon the fact that the humanist outlook is itself part of the Judeo-Christian heritage. The very concept of Dialogue derives from the irresistible momentum of the humanist ideal within both Judaism and Christianity. In a meaningful Dialogue, this common heritage is likely to be reinforced in numberless and intangible ways.

However, this blessing will surely elude us, if our own ideologists continue to move within the shadowed underbrush of mythology. We live today in continuous interaction with our Christian neighbors, so that a Dialogue, implicit and many-sided, is constantly in progress. Indeed, we speak loudest when we think we speak to ourselves alone. Unfortunately, in recent years, the



meta-myth in our tradition has gathered fresh force and a massive world-wide impetus. Within three decades, our generation was cast into the darkest depths and exalted to the loftiest heights. Such a fantastic chain of events fits better into the mold of mythology than within the compass of a reasonable world-view. But our destiny depends on the growing power of reason in human affairs. Say our Sages, "If a person devotes himself to understanding, it is as if the Holy Temple were built up in his day" (*Sanhedrin* 99a.).

By way of clarifying the general posture that an authentic life of Dialogue implies, I wish to call attention to the exchange of letters which took place in 1916 between Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. It illustrates vividly what a *Dialogue must not be* — since both parties were seized by the meta-myth, as by a *Dibbuk*.

This historic Dialogue is especially significant because of the stature of the two exponents. Rosenzweig continued to grow as a Jewish theologian, with his best insights appearing in his "minor essays" (*Kleinere Schriften*, Schocken, Berlin, 1937). Rosenstock-Huessy was a formidable philosopher, who, as a Jew, could not be accused of anti-Semitism. He was converted at age sixteen, ten years or so before this debate. Nor, as his later life demonstrated, could he be accused of the perversion of "self-hate."

Alexander Altmann extols this Dialogue as an epoch-making event:

... one of the most important religious documents of our age ... Unlike the medieval disputations, in which dogma was arrayed against dogma, verse set against verse, this discussion is a true dialogue. It is indeed the most perfect example of a human approach to the Jewish-Christian problem. It is also an exemplification of what is called the "existential" attitude to theological problems ... (*Judaism Despise Christianity*, Schocken Press, University of Alabama, 1969, pp. 26, 27).

Hans J. Schoeps also heaped extravagant praise upon the Dialogue. Schoeps and Altmann were enamored of this Dialogue because both participants were passionately "existentialist," repudiating the intellectual "common ground" of humanism and rationalism. Both disputants held fast to the myth that the Jew was metaphysically unique. Both had come to reject the kind of religion which was at that time best articulated in Adolf Harnack's *The Essence of Christianity*, an exposition of the Protestant faith in terms of three principles — the Kingdom of God, as an inner

dedication to living in accord with the highest ideals, the awareness of God's Fatherhood as a living reality, and the task of striving for a "higher righteousness." These principles are clearly not in conflict with Judaism. A dialogue on this basis would be a friendly exchange of similar views differing only in nuance, and in historic associations with divergent patterns of rites and symbols.

But, according to both participants, such an approach would rob the Dialogue of the sharpness of confrontation. Both the Jewish Jew and the Christian Jew were eager to move the Jewish-Christian argument from the rational sphere to the domain of the trans-rational, the mysterious course of God's redemption within the flow of human history.

As Eugen phrased their common axioms fifty years later in his Epilogue:

Franz and Eugen came to agree on the futility of the shilly-shallying academic shibboleths of their day — objectivity, humanism, and the so-called enlightenment. They agreed that real people can be Jews or Christians, but they may not play the roles of "Benjamin Franklin," or "Thomas Paine," at least not for long, since there can be no common sense — certainly no good sense shared in common — among men who are content to be ciphers, dealing in generalities and platitudes. (*Judaism Despite Christianity*, *op. cit.*, "Prologue-Epilogue," p. 75)

Strange, is it not, that "common sense" must be thrown overboard in order that one should rise above a cipher? Yet, Eugen describes this repudiation of "all positivists and pragmatists" as "a united front of Jews and Christians." By that time, Eugen had come to believe that God takes the initiative through the vision of Christ in opening the human soul to His call. He had written of "speech-thinking" and the "I-Thou" event long before Buber and Rosenzweig. "The soul must be called *Thou* before she can ever reply *I*, before she can ever speak of *us* and finally *it*. Through the four figures, *Thou*, *I*, *We*, *It*, the Word walks through us, the Word must call our name first . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 70).

Can one argue with the private revelations of latter-day prophets? Yes and no. If one pretends to live in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, he must ask himself whether he is not one of the "prophetizers," from whom the prophets separated themselves. The distinguishing quality of the prophets, even if they did not always rise up to their own ideal, was to identify the Word of God with the moral-rational imperative. Whatever is

contrary to this twofold demand cannot be divine.<sup>4</sup> Yet, Eugen, presuming to rise far beyond "common sense," quickly sinks to the dark depths of mythology, which can hardly be distinguished from medieval superstition. Super-sophisticated as he was, he demonstrated the treacherous pitfalls that await those who depart from the well-lit highway of religious humanism. Their private "lights" turn out to be will of the wisps, leading to ancient prejudices. Consider the following phrases, which were interwoven into Eugen's dialectic:

- (a) The Jews "always crucify again the one who came to make the word true."
- (b) "With all the power of their being, they set themselves against their own promises."
- (c) "... the image of Lucifer."
- (d) Israel's "naïve way of thinking that one has won inalienable rights in perpetuity against God."
- (e) "You [the Jews] have no aptitude for theology, for the search for truth, any more than for beauty."
- (f) The Jew strives too hard just to live.
- (g) "The Jew dies for no country and no cause."
- (h) The reliance of the individual Jew is "on the number of his children." To sum up, "He is a paragraph of the Law, *C'est tout*."

We all know that these and similar stereotypes come naturally to the minds of traditional Christians. What is surprising in this Dialogue is that Franz, at that time groping his way to authentic Judaism, sees virtually the same picture. To him, the Jew is a mysterious, solitary wanderer, overlaid by a mountainous metaphysical burden, moving among hostile, uncomprehending people, resolutely rejecting their occasional friendly embraces and steadfastly insulating himself from the world. One is reminded of Sartre's image of the "authentic" Jew, choosing his own damnation from the hands of his tormentors. Is this the meaning of the title the editor gave to this exchange, as if Judaism finds its fulfillment in "spitting" Christianity? — Such an empty, negative definition of the Jewish faith ignores the living kernel and casts the spotlight exclusively on the outer husk of Judaism.

Franz, then in the early stages of his spiritual development, interprets anti-Semitism as a reflection of the Divine Will, as it were. Far from being only a consequence of ignorance, envy and hate, it is a metaphysical phenomenon, an expression of the deep wisdom of Providence, not to be judged "by its vulgar and stupid expressions." It reflects a "theological idea," which both Jews and Christians sense, even if they do not understand; the former

articulate it in a peculiar "pride," the latter in an imperious hate, which transcends the limits of understanding.

This practical way, in which the theological idea of the stubbornness of the Jews works itself out, is *hatred of the Jews*. You know as well as I do that all its realistic arguments are only fashionable cloaks to hide the true metaphysical ground: that we will not make common cause with the world-conquering fiction of Christian dogma . . . and putting it in a popular way: that we have crucified Christ, and believe we would do it again every time . . . (*Ibid.*, p. 113).

Did we crucify Christ? Do we do it again, every time? —

For a century and a half, liberal Jewish thinkers have been proclaiming that "the religion of Jesus" was fully within the compass of Judaism. It is "the religion *about* Jesus" which emerged and developed within the Hellenistic world that Jews refused to accept.<sup>5</sup>

Not content with providing a metaphysical root for anti-Semitism, the young Franz, fired by the boundless fervor of a neophyte, maintains that the "metaphysical basis" of the Jewish attitude to Christians consists of three beliefs — 1) "that we have the truth," 2) "that we are at the goal," 3) "that any and every Jew feels in the depths of his soul that the Christian relation to God, and so in a sense, their religion is particularly and extremely pitiful, poverty-stricken and ceremonious; namely, that as a Christian one has to learn from someone else, whoever he may be, to call God 'our Father.' To the Jew, that God is our Father is the first and most self-evident fact — and what need is there for a third person between me and my Father in heaven? That is no discovery of modern apologetics but the simplest Jewish instinct, a mixture of failure to understand and pitying contempt" (*ibid.*, p. 113).

One can hardly believe that these words were written by a reverent disciple of Hermann Cohen, who was prone to identify the inner core of Christianity with what he called "prophetic Judaism." As he put it in a conversation with Prof. Lange: "What you call Christianity, I call prophetism" (H. Cohen, *Jüdische Schriften*, II, in his essay, "*Der Jude in der Christlichen Kultur*," p. 194). By the same token, Rosenzweig was aware that the Christian includes the Old Testament in his heritage, hence also God's Fatherhood, though, to be sure, some radical Protestants in his day were prepared to follow Marcion and jettison the Hebrew Bible. We wonder, too, how he could possibly speak of a "Jewish instinct," prompting the individual's awareness of



God's Fatherhood, in the second decade of the twentieth century, when atheism was rampant among Jews as much as among Gentiles and when the horrors of racism were becoming manifest.

Furthermore, as a Hegelian who saw the hand of God in the actual evolution of world-history, Franz Rosenzweig saw the Christian Church, and only the Church (excluding the faith of Islam), as the agency through which Judaism carried out its divine mission. We recall his image of the "star" of Judaism, with the rays of Christianity issuing from it to illumine the darkness of the universe. In the *Star of Redemption*, he wrote, "This existence of the Jew constantly subjects Christianity to the idea that it is not attaining the goal, the truth, that ever remains — on the way. That is the profoundest reason for the Christian hatred of the Jew, which is heir to the pagan hatred of the Jew. In the final analysis, it is only self-hate, directed to the objectionable mute admonisher, for all that he but admonishes by his existence . . ." (F. Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, English translation by W. W. Hallo, New York, 1971, p. 413).

We overlook for the moment this psychoanalysis of anti-Semitism. A "metaphysical" phenomenon will harbor in its dialectic all kinds of fantasies. But, we note how readily such romantic, self-glorifying rhetoric quickly sours into the typical verbiage of anti-Semitism itself. The Jew must serve as "a ferment on Christianity and through it on the world" (*Judaism Despite Christianity*, p. 136). Indeed, anti-Semitism is now "metaphysically grounded," for within the nations of Europe the Jew cannot but act as a "parasite."

For you may curse, you may swear, you may scratch yourself as much as you like, you won't get rid of us, we are the louse in your fur. We are the internal foe; don't mix us with the external one! Our enmity may have to be bitterer than any enmity for the external foe, but all the same — we and you are within the same frontier, in the same kingdom (*ibid.*, p. 130).

If all this masochistic posturing were not bad enough, Franz does not hesitate to draw the logical consequences of his self-image, as an incorrigible outsider.

I myself have written fully already of how our whole part in the life of the peoples can only be *clām, vi, precario* (secret, perforce, precarious). No doubt all we can do is hack's work; we must accept the verdict of what people think of us, and we cannot be our own judges (*ibid.*, p. 135).

I myself, since you mention it, conduct myself merely dutifully

toward the State; I do not take a post in one of its universities, and do not offer myself as a volunteer in the army, but go to the International Red Cross . . . (*ibid.*, p. 136).

It is left to Eugen, the Christian Jew, to remind Franz that the Emancipation was also part of history.

Twist and turn as you like, the emancipation of the Jews is the process of the self-destruction of the European tradition, which has removed the dogma of the stubbornness of the Jews just as it blotted out that of the Christian Emperor (*ibid.*, p. 143).

We can forgive Franz Rosenzweig for his macabre vision of the Jewish destiny, his racial mystique and his rebellion against the classical tradition. In the Germany of his day only the Liberals and the Socialists could accept the Jew fully as a citizen of the German nation-state. The traditional Conservatives longed for a "Christian" state, and the rapidly rising cadre of deracinated intellectuals sought greatness in the revival of ancient Teutonic mythology. The Nazi ideology, built up steadily by Wagner, Nietzsche, Moeller, Chamberlain and Spengler in diverse nuances, was rising fast and furious on the horizon. A sensitive Jew, who for his own reasons rejected the liberal philosophy, could not but seek refuge in the counter-myths of *Volk* and *instinct*, the "decline of the West" and the resurgence of Teutonic fury, with the Jew retiring to live under the protective shadow of a *unique* Providence.

To get a feel of that age, we need only read the autobiography of Jakob Wassermann, a contemporary of the two young theologians, whose despair is summed up in these words:

It is in vain to keep faith with them [anti-Semites], be it as co-fighters or as citizens. They say — he [the Jew] is a Proteus, he can do everything.

It is in vain to help them knock off the chains of slavery from their bodies. They say he will surely make profit out of the deal.

It is in vain to counter any poisons; they brew it afresh.

It is in vain to live for them and die for them; they say — he is a Jew. (Jakob Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, Berlin, 1922, p. 122)

To be understood and appreciated for his valid insights, Rosenzweig must be viewed within the context of his age. His mind was as a lambent flame which blended together many diverse fires. As we read his fervent prose, we can see him struggling to find a way in the treacherous minefield that was the German intellectual scene between the two World Wars. We have much to learn from Rosenzweig and Rosenstock, but we must recognize



the "meta-myth" wherever we find it and know that its concentrated social venom is the invariant catalyst of mythological anti-Semitism.

This awareness is a timely warning. For while the "meta-myth" in its Christian form has been allayed in recent years, it appears to have been born in a fresh guise in the Moslem world. Indeed as the Islamic nations see the dawn of a new Golden Age in their newly found oil-wealth, they are impelled by daily headlines to see the little state of Israel as their collective enemy. Naturally, the antagonist must be worthy of the steel of so mighty a horde; hence, the stature of Israel must be blown up to mythic proportions.

Even now, we see the ancient myth taking on an Islamic shape. Moslem writers see Israel as the body of a mythical octopus-like monster, with tentacles, visible and invisible, extending into the mighty capitals of the world, pulling the wires of the marionettes of parliaments and congresses. Soon enough, they will resurrect forgotten *Hadiths*, depicting the Jew as the inveterate minion of Satan. Hold on to your copies of *The Jewish Encyclopedias* and to the classic Jewish works on the Moslem faith, for in a little while we shall be inundated with tracts demonstrating that Islam was always and everywhere wedded to mythological anti-Semitism! So, *ain beraira*, we never have an alternative.

In Greek legend, ghosts are reincarnated when they drink blood. Even now, this particular ghost has drawn blood and behold — it is materializing before our very eyes.

As Jews, we are all too prone to be fascinated and even intoxicated by the "meta-myth," with all its dark and heart-warming pathos. Only now, the myth is centered around the state of Israel rather than about the widely scattered Diaspora. Everything about Israel is seen in an eerie light, so that it is either bathed in messianic, unearthly glory, or in the dark colors of pseudo-messianic despair. Overblown rhetoric resounds all about us, as if we were standing at the Eschaton.

In the past, we have prided ourselves on our capacity to reject the hold of myths upon our faith. Ezekiel Kaufman sought to demonstrate this thesis with an amazing display of erudition and brilliance. Reform thinkers in particular have been the stout champions of an anti-mythological mentality. The renowned philosopher, George Santayana, wrote in 1951, "Hebraism is a striking example of a religion tending to discard mythology and

magic" (G. Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, condensed one-volume edition, p. 258).

But have not some of us turned ourselves into a myth, uprooted from humanity and endowed with a unique, mysterious sanctity? Have we allowed the momentum of this historic myth to seduce us to the worship of "blood and soil?" Have we joined in the chorus of the Israeli chant of despair, "the whole world is against us?" Has the messianic mood, in all its millennial depth, distorted our perception of reality, like a psychedelic drug? Have we lost the capacity to glory in the imageless Absolute, the source of the ideals of rationality and humanism? These are some of the questions that we should ponder, as the future rushes upon us with the speed of jets.

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<sup>1</sup> It is axiomatic in Kabbalistic writings that the higher souls of Jewish people are derived from the divine *pleroma* the realm of *Sefirot*, whereas the souls of all other nations are derived from the "shells." Rabbi Hayim Vital does not exempt converts from this rule (*Aitz Hayim* 7, 10, 7) (*Aitz Hadaat, Bamidbar*). The "Tanya" of Rav Shneur Zalman was written for the general public. Its view of Gentile souls is in Chap. 6.

The Zohar follows the same line, save that in the *Midrash Haneelam*, we note a certain effort to account for this difference. Before Adam sinned, he possessed the higher soul; after his sin, only his animalic soul remained. Thereafter, the divine soul comes only to those who are preoccupied with *Torah*, entering the body of the Jewish male at age thirteen (*Zohar Hodosh, Bereshit* 18b-19a, *Midrash Haneelam*).

<sup>2</sup> The basis of this belief is in Romans 11:25. Jacques Maritain, the recently deceased Catholic theologian, undertook to combat anti-Semitism in a number of addresses. Yet, he continued to represent Israel as "a mystery": "Thus from the first Israel appears to us a mystery; of the same order as the mystery of the world and the mystery of the Church." We recall that the "mystery of the world" is satanic in character. So, Maritain continues, "But, since the day, when because its leaders chose the world, it stumbled, it is bound to the world, prisoner and victim of that world, which it loves, but of which it is not, shall not be, and never can be. This is the mystery of Israel understood from a Christian viewpoint" (Jacques Maritain, *A Christian Looks at the Jewish Question*, New York: Arno Press, 1973, pp. 25, 27).

<sup>3</sup> Eric Werner points to the fact that the deicide charge is the theme of a poem called *Impropria* that is still part of the Catholic service. See his article, "Melito of Sardes, The First Poet of Deicide," *HUCA*, XXXVII, 1966, 191-210.

<sup>4</sup> The essence of prophecy was seen in many different ways by various scholars. To A'had Ha'am, the prophet represents the ideal demand in all its purity, in contrast to the priest who practices the art of the possible. Heschel focused attention on the "pathos" of the prophets as the great ethical reformers of Jewish religion.

This writer regards the prophets as philosophers, for it is the rationalistic viewpoint which interprets the Will of God in terms of man's moral perfection. The Hellenistic Jews who believed that Plato and Aristotle were disciples of the Hebrew prophets were wrong in their chronology and history, but they were right insofar as they recognized the inner affinity of philosophy and prophecy. The latter centers on a God-given revelation, a mystical experience, which cannot be fully comprehended. But, and this is the genius of classical prophecy, this "Word of God" must be interpreted in rational-moral terms.

This view is elaborated in this writer's essay, "The Prophet in Modern Hebrew Literature," *HUCA*, LXXXVIII, 1957, 289-324; reprinted in *J. Agus' Dialogue and Tradition*, p. 385.

\* Most Jewish scholars classify Jesus as belonging to the Pharisaic school, in the broad sense of that term. Samuel S. Cohon described Jesus as a *Hasid*, also as a champion of *Am Ha'aretz*:

"His emphasis on faith, prayer and forgiveness, on love even for the enemy, and on returning good for evil, places Jesus in the company of the *Hasidim* who stood outside of Pharisaism. Like them, he went in his Aggadic preaching beyond the letter of the Law to its innermost spirit. Like them too he claimed the possession of the Holy Spirit and manifested it in his ministry of healing and prayer." (Samuel S. Cohon, "The Place of Jesus in the Religious Life of his Day," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 38, New Haven, 1929. Reprinted in *Judaism and Christianity*, New York: Arno Press, 1973, pp. 82-105).

\* Even the Liberals who set out to combat anti-Semitism were not fully at ease with the notion of modern Jews maintaining their separate identity. Theodor Mommsen in a famous address called upon non-Orthodox Jews to hasten the tempo of their total assimilation. Ismar Schorsch quotes an address by Otto Caspari in 1907, calling for the total disappearance of Jews through intermarriage with Germans. "Only through this most profound willingness to sacrifice can the mutual racial hatred be extinguished in the course of many centuries." Caspari was one of the founders of the Verein against anti-Semitism. (Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914*, New York: 1972, p. 229. Uriel Tal, *Anti-Semitism in the Second Reich*, (Hebrew)).

\* Alexander Altmann in his brilliant essay on "Leo Baeck and the Jewish Mystical Tradition," (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1973) traces the gradual drift of Baeck to the mystical tradition. He started out as a disciple of Hermann Cohen, in the first edition of his *The Essence of Judaism*. Under the impact of events he adopted a "theology of existence" in 1935, yielding totally to the fascination of mysticism when he wrote "This People" on scraps of paper in the concentration camp of Theresienstadt. As Altmann summarizes Baeck's work,

In *This People* he anchored Jewish otherness in the very character of Israel as a people "from beyond," as "a people of metaphysical existence" . . . The experience of the holocaust, far from forcing upon him a new theology simply reinforces his belief in the unique character of Israel as "a nation that dwelleth alone." Leo Baeck's *This People* reverts to the mystical understanding of Jewish existence (p. 211).

We can understand the urgencies which impelled Baeck to resort to mythology in order to retain his sanity amidst the inhuman horrors of a Nazi camp, but we should hardly look for gems of balanced wisdom in circumstances which broke the spirit of the stoutest sages. In the fullness of his powers, Baeck identified Judaism with the world-view of classicism.

## II. *The Islamic-Jewish Imperative*

*Leo Trepp*

AMONG THE UNDERSTANDINGS to emerge from the peace settlement between Israel and the Arabs there ought to be the establishment of a permanent dialogue between Judaism and Islam. The conflict between Israel and the Arabs has definite religious roots on the Arab side; only if the two religions can be brought to recognize and respect each other can a lasting peace be expected. It is no accident that Colonel Gaddafi of Libya is one of Israel's most intrepid foes; he returned his country to the strictest interpretation of Islamic law, and he divides mankind into friends and enemies of Islam. It is no accident that King Feisal spearheaded the oil boycott for the specific purpose of restoring Jerusalem to Islamic sovereignty. Mohammed had declared that the holy place of Islam may never be in the hands of infidels; he spoke of Mecca, but Jerusalem is Islam's third holy city. Freedom of worship is not the issue for a deeply religious Moslem; possession is the issue.

Islam considers itself the only true religion. The Koran rebukes both Christians and Jews for their heresy and for their blindness in failing to join the true religion. Jews are treated even more harshly than Christians. And yet, the tenth century saw so cordial an interchange of ideas between liberal Moslem thinkers, the *Kalam*, and Jews as well as Christians, that contemporary observers could ascribe it only to a waning of the truth. It may well have been a deeper understanding of the varieties of religious truth (see Altmann, *Saadga Gaon*, p. 11).

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LEO TREPP is Rabbi of Temple Beth Sholom, Napa, California, and author of the Behrman publication, *A History of the Jewish Experience*.

Nor should it be forgotten that the Koran permits Moslems to eat in Jewish homes that are observant of *kashrut* (*Sura* 5).

Yet the obstacles to dialogue may be more powerful than the incentives, and here lies the challenge. The task may be much more difficult than the establishment of the dialogue with Christianity. Christianity is declining and therefore more open to dialogue; Islam is on the ascendancy. Christianity cannot help being afflicted in conscience by the holocaust that took place within the sphere of its religious influence; Islam bears no direct guilt in connection with the extermination of European Jewry. Above all, Christianity sees in suffering, even death, the crucifixion — an expression of the divine will, an ultimate act of blessing.

Islam does not recognize suffering as divinely willed in behalf of God's beloved. To His faithful, God gives victory; defeat is evidence of divine displeasure. This has two consequences: it makes it extremely difficult for Moslems to give up sovereignty over a piece of land which had long belonged to the Islamic sphere of influence, and which as a matter of fact occupies the very center of the Islamic area. It makes it even more difficult to give up this territory to the Jews, whose very suffering must be evidence to pious Moslems that Jews have failed in their obedience to God and are being punished. The claim of the Palestinian Liberation Groups may therefore not so much be based on political sovereignty, but on the land's belonging to the Moslems and being their inheritance, once they took it. King Feisal's statement, that the Jews had been unfaithful to the teachings of Moses and are therefore unworthy of recognition, must be understood in the same way: Islam holds dear the word of Moses and is entitled to the land which Moses pledged to his flock.

Without a change of mind, Islam may well feel that, under divine command, it must retake all of Israel, first depriving it of defensible borders, and then overrunning it, as ~~Max~~ Morgenthau gloomily predicted. The security of Israel thus rests largely on the reconciliation of the two religions.

The Koran has praise for the fathers, prophets, and even the rabbis, but warns that, with few exceptions, the living generation of Jews is not to be trusted, particularly since they may profess respect for Islam when in contact with Moslems, only to disparage it when among themselves. These are, of course, reflections of Mohammed's own disappointment — he had hoped to win the Jews and turned against them when they failed to follow



his new faith. But the words of the Koran are regarded as the unchangeable word of God (see *Sura 3*). Mohammed assured his followers that the enemies of God would never succeed in harming God's chosen, and would eventually turn their backs in flight. The Koran called on the faithful to make war on the infidels until Allah's religion reigned supreme. At best, a tactical retreat was permitted (*Sura 8*). The aliens expend their wealth to lead the faithful astray; their prayers are but whistling and clapping of hands (*Sura 8*). This may explain why the Arab leaders did not wish their people to be led into the twentieth century. Rather than seeing in Israel a helper who would lead in the task of improving the lot of the simple Arab, they saw in Israel a seducer. The choice of *Yom Kippur* as date of the attack reveals the disregard of Islam for Jewish religion.

In Mohammed's day, Jews had succeeded in improving agriculture throughout the land and were skilled in the forging of weaponry. They were rebuked and cast out in spite of their contributions. No wonder, then, that the Israel of today may be seen by the Arabs as simply the exploiting tool of "western imperialism."

But Jews did fare well under the Caliphate, and this may offer hope for understanding. Yet conditions under the Caliphate were different in two essential points. The Caliphate was not in the hands of Arabic leaders; we have a parallel now in the relationship between Israel and Iran, which today is a Moslem country, but not an Arab one. Furthermore, the Jews had no sovereignty; they were tolerated, but they were not masters of their own fate. But coexistence in friendship did prevail, and here may be a pragmatic starting point for dialogue.

In 1971, when I was teaching at the University of Hamburg, I proposed a Christian-Islamic-Jewish roundtable. The chairman of the department was enthusiastic, but the project never materialized. The Islamic representative, a professor at the university, refused to join; I was told he claimed that a state of holy war existed. Perhaps there was another reason. We wished to take Abraham as the focal point of our discussion, since he is father of the Jews, spiritual father of the Christians (*Galatians 3:7*, etc.), and, through Ishmael, father of the Moslems. We may have overlooked that Abraham, according to the Koran (*Sura 3*), was neither Jew nor Christian. He was a follower of Allah, and "the people of the book" have, in fact been untrue to his faith and example. Hence, Jews were never permitted to enter the



Cave of Machpelah; this was reserved to Moslems, his true and faithful descendants.

The difficulties besetting the dialogue only reveal its imperative. Christians and Jews were brought together by outside forces in history. Now, history has again brought Arabs and Jews, Islam and Judaism face to face. Perhaps this offers an opportunity for dialogue.

It would be presumptuous on my part to offer concrete suggestions, since I am removed from the centers of Jewish thought and action. But perhaps a few ideas may be in order as the starting point of an intra-Jewish discussion. The call for dialogue might be issued and publicized; perhaps it will bring a response from Islam. Our own rabbis who teach at various universities might spearhead the project, calling for joint seminars to be conducted by Jewish and Islamic scholars, perhaps offering courses on their own if no response is elicited.

The task is so vital that it may well deserve to be financially supported by American Jewry as a whole through the Welfare Federations. In actuality, its implementation will be the burden of the non-Orthodox rabbinate. HUC would be a logical center. Here, Jewish university teachers could be given in-service training and scholarship could be promoted. From here the work could be extended to the Jerusalem campus, as a center of studies and dialogue in Israel itself. Non-Orthodox rabbis in Israel might be given the significant task of promoting dialogue on local levels as far as possible; this, in turn, might convey an awareness among the Israelis of the value of non-Orthodox rabbinical work and its vocation.

The tenth century could be explored, in addition to the fundamentals of Islam in relationship to Judaism. What caused the three religions to interact so freely during the tenth century? What can we learn from them? Martin Buber called the Jewish people a bridge-builder between East and West. History may have placed us in the position of building bridges between Western and Arabic worlds. The building of these bridges between the faiths may spell the difference between armistice and peace for Israel, between friendly coexistence and an abiding threat to Israel's survival. It may be a blessing for the Near East and a benediction for the entire world.

# And Jonah Tested the Lord

## *God As A Preacher*

*Daniel Jeremy Silver*

THE SYNAGOGUE CAN award no greater honor than *maftir* Jonah. The story of the wrong-way prophet was chosen for reading on *Yom Kippur* because it emphasizes the wide range of God's mercy, suggesting that the repentant sinner can depend on God's concern. The gates of repentance are wide open.

The more I reflect on Jonah, the more I am convinced that its original story concerned the nature of God rather than the theme of forgiveness. Conventional interpretations tend to develop from the parable of the gourd with which the book concludes. The gourd episode turns the book into a rebuke of Jonah and, by inference, suggests that the book is a spirited example of prophetic universalism and a rebuke to a narrower spirit, personified by Jonah, which limited God's concern to Judeans. I am convinced that the gourd passage is an add-on.

Although Jonah is a slender volume, the four chapters comprising only forty-eight verses, it is not a seamless literary creation. The psalm Jonah offers to the Lord while in the belly of the great fish, "Thou didst bring me up alive from the pit" (2:6), is a hymn of gratitude for deliverance gained, not a plea for deliverance desperately needed, and obviously an insertion.

The original ending would seem to have come in chapter 4 after verse 5. Jonah has prophesied to Nineveh. Led by its king and nobles, the city had repented and "God saw what they did . . . and He repented and did not bring upon them the disaster He had threatened" (3:10). This is what Jonah had feared before he left home, the reason he had fled to Tarshish. He had known then that the Lord is a "God gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and ever constant, and always willing to repent of the disaster" (4:2). Jonah asks for death. God responds non-responsively: "Are you so angry?" (4:4). Jonah goes out and takes a

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DANIEL JEREMY SILVER is Rabbi of The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio.

seat east of the city under a shelter which he, himself, prepares to see what would happen to the city.

At this point the gourd is incongruously introduced. Since Jonah has a shed "as a shadow over his head," he would have no need for further protection from the sun — particularly the uncertain shade of a gourd plant. The gourd is not needed to shade Jonah, but so that when it withers, God can point out to Jonah the sympathetic concerns which move Him to be merciful. This parable clearly defines a God in whom the quality of mercy outweighs His need to be God, in the sense of speaking only what will be — words that are dependably effective and beyond cancellation.

The parable is high-minded and not antithetical to the spirit of the basic story, but also not fully congruent to it. It describes a God who forgives the penitent city even after He has spoken its sentence of doom. In His desire to be merciful the God of the parable will allow history to follow a course other than the one He has announced. This raises serious doubts as to the reliability of God's words. What happens to faith in God's dependability when, as in this case, a specific promise is not fulfilled?

If the parable of the gourd had not been introduced and the book had ended with 4:5, the story of Jonah would end on a note of suspense. Jonah sits down to see what will happen in the city. He waits. What is he waiting for? Obviously he doubts that God truly intends to forgive Nineveh. The brief oracle which Jonah had brought, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown" (3:4), had pronounced flat out the city's doom. It had not included an escape clause beginning, "Unless the city repent." The Jonah who sits and waits under his shed does not believe that God's words are ever devoid of consequence, idle. Why not? On what could his doubts be based? Perhaps he doubted the sincerity and reach of Nineveh's repentance. In Jonah's day, repentance was not a category of a humanist ethic, but a religious category which certainly included a requirement to abandon idolatry. It was hard to imagine the great cult center of Nineveh dedicated to Ishtar abandoning its rigurat and its gods. A more likely reason for Jonah's doubts develops from his piety, his assumption that the words of God, once spoken, will have consequence and are never cancelled — an original and fundamental assumption of the prophetic movement. "It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

If Balaam had cursed Israel, Israel would have stood accursed. When Jeremiah spoke of the impending destruction of the Temple, its doom was sealed and Jerusalemites understandably, if inappropriately, held the prophet guilty of an act tantamount to treason. The authority of prophecy depended on this assumption of its immutability. What was God if His word was not certain and portentous? It was not that anyone wanted the words of doom to be irrevocable; but the promise of national deliverance depended equally on the immutability of God's word. If, in order to make room for divine forgiveness, the prophetic message was accepted as conditional, an unfortunate and inevitable side effect was to raise doubts about the reliability of God's national and messianic promises. Might these, too, not be cancelled?

The assumption of the unconditional nature of the prophetic word had been generally accepted and had provided prophecy its authority. This assumption came under increasing challenge, a fact which certainly contributed mightily to cessation of the prophetic movement. Classic prophecy tried to assert the older claims of the dependability of God's word *and* the conditionality of the covenant. Jonah brought an old-fashioned, unconditional oracle: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4). When the newer breed of prophets like Amos prophesied the doom of Israel, God's word often included an escape clause: "Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it *may be* (*ulai*) that the Lord of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (5:15).

As covenant thinking took hold, the religious spirit accepted conditional forms and much was made of the possibility of repentance. Folk began to lose their fear of the prophetic oracle and some small measure of their faith in God's omnipotence. When Jeremiah was tried for having spoken the words which doomed the Temple, his defenders cited evidence of other prophets who had spoken words of doom which had not occurred and won his acquittal. More and more the words of the prophets lost the flat out finality of the early oracles. Quite often there is a qualifying clause, "But even in those days I will not make a full end of you" (Jeremiah 5:18), "I will not bear a grudge forever" (Jeremiah 3:12). The paradox of classic Judean prophecy is that it becomes existentially significant precisely at a time when the best minds of Israel were outgrowing the assumptions on which the original authority of the prophetic movement was based, precisely when prophecy began to change into sermonics. Prophecy ceased in

Israel because it was sabotaged by the appeal of the doctrine of repentance. In time the conflict between repentance and prophecy was solved by imaginative compromise. Both were upheld by the simple device of redefining prophecy as apocalypse. In the here and now, repentance played the dominant role and thought was centered on the moral equations of the covenant; but for the long term, covenant thought was abandoned for apocalypse, God's revelation of his special and immutable plan for the nation and mankind.

Jonah believed in a God who acts as a god should and who speaks with the consequential force one expects of God's words. He cannot believe that God's words are not reliable, that Nineveh will not be destroyed. He has no alternative but to sit and wait and put God to the test.

Chapter 1 gives no reason why Jonah had fled to Tarshish. Chapter 4 does. He had fled because he knew that God was determined not to act as God should.

"This O Lord is what I feared when I was in my own country and to forestall it I tried to escape to Tarshish. I knew that Thou art God, gracious and compassionate, longsuffering and ever constant and always willing to repent of the disaster" (*V'nicham al ha-ra'ah*).

Jonah here uses and amends the doxological formula of Exodus 34:6 which must quite early have become liturgically conventional. The God of the Exodus formula is reliable. He forgives, but His words always have consequence.

"The Lord! The Lord! A God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of fathers upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations."

The text is obviously inflated and is certainly not a haphazard or accidental accumulation of attributes. The attribute of reliability seems deliberately introduced. In all probability a serious division of opinion existed in post-exilic Judea over the nature of God and that debate focused on this formula. Other variations exist which differ substantially only in the matter of the reliability of God's announced decisions.

Numbers 14:18 "The Lord! Slow to anger and abounding in kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression, yet not remitting all punishment..."



## AND JONAH TESTED THE LORD

- Joel 2:13-14 "Turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and compassionate, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy, and repents Him of the evil."
- Nahum 1:3 The Lord is long-suffering and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty . . . (cf. also Psalms 103:8, 145:8, Nehemiah 9:16)

Our fathers had a problem. They yearned desperately for the reality of repentance. At the same time their national hopes rested on the reliability of God's revealed promises. Faith was *bittahon*, the ability to depend on God. How can one depend on a God who changes His word? Repentance is a hopeful theme for the individual; but the Babylonian exiles, the Persian diaspora, and the Judeans who squatted in an unwallled and defenseless Jerusalem needed confidence in a God whose promise of restoration was dependable.

The original Jonah, I believe, argued for a God whose word, once spoken, was unconditional, for a God who spoke words which must happen, if not immediately, then soon. He had been weaned on the God of Exodus 34:6 who does not remit all punishment. He was a deeply religious conservative who could not imagine a God who speaks of events that do not happen. He had heard and taken to heart God's revelation: "The word is gone forth from My mouth in righteousness; and shall not come back," (Isaiah 45:23); "for I, the Lord, your God, change not" (Malachi 3:1); "God is not man to be capricious nor human to change His mind. Would He speak and not act? Promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 33:19). He knew and accepted the test the *Torah* proposes to unmask a false prophet: "Should you ask yourselves, How can we know that the oracle was not spoken by the Lord? — if the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the oracle does not come true, that oracle was not spoken by the Lord; the prophet has uttered it presumptuously; do not stand in dread of him" (Deuteronomy 18:21-2).

Jonah is a post-exilic story based almost certainly on a popular tradition about a pre-exilic *navi* who had brought an oracle of doom against Assyrian Nineveh. This brief statement provided the kernel for a sophisticated fiction which dramatized the issue of the reliability of God's word. There is some external evidence that Jonah's prophecy became something of a *cause celebre* in post-exilic theological circles. The apocalyptic book of Tobit concludes with a romantic deathbed scene in which that pious worthy summons his son for certain final instructions. Tobit's deathbed



words are a surprise: "Take your sons, behold, go to Media, for I fully believe what Jonah the prophet said about Nineveh, that it will be overthrown." "My son, leave Nineveh because what the prophet Jonah said will truly happen" (14:3y).

I accept the reading of the Vaticanus and Alexandrinus texts of Tobit against the Sinaiticus in which Nahum is substituted for Jonah as the prophet sent to Nineveh. Nahum had preached against Nineveh (#3); but in the first century when chapter 14 of Tobit seems to have been written, centuries after the fall of Nineveh, Tobit's deathbed advice would represent an idle invention unless one assumes, as we must, a serious theological purpose. The context suggests that this scene was invented to underscore the reliability of prophecy. Tobit instructs and then continues: "I hold true the word of God against Nineveh . . . that all these things shall come to pass. . . . Indeed, the things which the prophets of Israel spoke, whom God sent, *all* shall happen; and nothing shall fail of all their words; and all things shall come to pass in their appointed time . . . *not a word of the prophecies* shall fail" (Tobit 14:13-4). Tobit suggests that Jonah's vigil will not be disappointed. Nineveh will be destroyed. He does so almost certainly to encourage the beleaguered of his days to trust the prophetic promises of redemption.

As repentance sabotaged prophecy, the prophet's rule becomes increasingly impossible. Jeremiah cursed the day he was born. Jonah openly rebelled. Others whose spirits might have made them sensitive to the word recognized that preaching had taken over from prophecy. It became clear to all but the diehard that the Jonah who sits and waits for God to be God will have a long wait. His vigil suggests why prophecy ceased in Israel. The God who is always willing to repent of the disaster has ceased to be the God whose powerful word describes the fate of nations and never returns empty. God revealed Himself as a preacher instead of a prophet and Israel began to produce its long line of teachers.

## More Israeli Than the Israelis?

### *Our Security Blanket*

*Gilbert Kollin*

IT IS TOO SOON to tell what effect the post-war upheaval in Israel will have on the American Jewish community. The initial effect of the Yom Kippur War was to galvanize the communal consciousness and to mobilize attention and resources around the immediate emergency. This diversion of attention has led to an informal moratorium on the reconsideration of priorities which were underway prior to October, 1973. The unique and overwhelming role that Israel — or rather our peculiar image of Israel — plays in our communal affairs rather compels one to conclude that the effect of the "earthquake," no matter, how delayed, will be substantial.

One of the intriguing aspects of the American Jews' relationship to Israel has been their rather simplistic defence of Israeli policy. Prior to October, 1973, Israeli policy was coming under increasing criticism on the domestic level, criticism which had little or no companion expression among American Jews. The years between the end of the War of Attrition on the Egyptian front (August, 1970) and the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War were marked by almost total lack of movement toward any political settlement. These years were a time of "creeping annexation" as the government responded to varying pressures for settlement of occupied areas. In the absence of any perceived military threat to Israeli occupation, the attention of the government and the people was focused on the terror campaigns of the Palestinian groups. (The British *Sunday Times Insight* report on the war, assembled in late December, 1973, even suggested that the Schönau Castle closing, which riveted Israeli attention in September, was a calculated diversion on the part of the Syrians.) Israel seemed to feel that its major security problem was to find an effective response to the terror campaign.

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GILBERT KOLLIN is Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, Flint, Michigan.

American Jewish reaction, on the level of national organizations, was an almost *carte blanche* defense of Israeli countermoves in the terror war. What interested me at the time was a growing wave of Israeli re-evaluation of the government's policy, much of it suggesting that Israel seemed incapable of dealing with the problem politically, and limited itself to the technical-operational aspects of response without evaluating potential political fall-out. A case in point was the Israeli hi-jacking of a Lebanese airliner in August of 1973. The information that the terrorist leader George Habash was on board proved to be inaccurate, and the plane and passengers were released. The overwhelming American Jewish reaction was to justify the action, but there was vocal criticism in Israel by a reflective minority. Perhaps such action undermined Israeli efforts to mobilize world opinion against hijackings? What if they caught Habash? Did Israel really want a televised show trial which would give him an opportunity to grandstand and state the case of the Palestinian terrorists? None of this found an echo in the American Jewish community.

The 1967 experience was one of tremendous fear followed by exaltation. The Yom Kippur experience was traumatic and the American Jewish community is still in a kind of shock. Deep psychological shock often has the effect of suppressing normal evaluative processes and leads to a desire to relieve tension and preserve an illusion of normalcy by a compulsive performance of routine tasks. A stock dramatic illustration of this is the housewife who responds to tragic news by scrubbing the floor. American Jewry, stunned by the failure of Israel to duplicate its 1967 performance and by the subsequent revelations of horrendous losses and less-than-brilliant reactions, responded by losing itself in fund-raising. As of this writing it is still coasting along on the thrust of October, 1973. While the Israelis seemed to have groped their way to a realization that the halcyon days of 1967-73 are over, American Jewry has yet to come to grips with an Israel which was in basic terms defeated and must now seek a compromise peace. In a profound sense, Israel has entered a post-war phase which involves a radically new perception of its relations with its neighbors and with the United States. American Jewry is still caught up in the immediate aftermath of the war and has yet to digest the new reality over there.

The adjustment for American Jewry may be, in a psychological sense, even harder than that of the Israelis. The Israelis, after all, live in the context of that reality and must perforce

adjust to it. For American Jews, however, the reality of Israel was never as important as the image of Israel. In order to prepare for the eventual adjustment, we must consider the "Israel of the mind" which looms so large in the consciousness of American Jewry, and the role which that image plays in our perception of our own Jewish identity.

The "kidnapping" of a Lebanese airliner by Israeli jets just after it took off from Beirut on August 10, 1973 (based on the possibility that an Arab terrorist leader was on board) brought in its wake the predictable public events. The operation was performed efficiently and politely. The passengers were questioned and when no terrorist leaders were found, all of them (including an Iraqi cabinet minister) were sent on their way after refreshments. Then came the almost routine pattern of a UN condemnation and the anti-Israel resolution of the International Civil Aviation Association, all of this accompanied by Israel's protestations that it was acting in self-defense and was forced to take liberties because of the world's cowardly refusal to take firm action against the terrorists and their host countries.

My attention was focused on another, less prominent aspect of the case. I was taken by the difference in reactions to the event in the Israeli and the American Jewish press. The incident kicked off a flurry of controversy in Israel. While it is clear that the action met with the approval of the majority of the Israelis, there was a vocal and significant minority who expressed serious reservations. This criticism in the Israeli press far exceeded anything I can remember. In most of the American Jewish press, however, there was an almost pushbutton reaction to leap to Israel's defense and a conspicuous absence of the probing questioning which characterized the Israeli press reaction. I was intrigued. Why this rather uncritical tendency to defend Israel down the line at a time when many Israelis had serious doubts about the wisdom of the move?

#### ISRAELI CRITICISM OF THE ACTION

Israeli criticism varied from fear of American reaction, through doubts about the political sophistication of the planners, to fundamental criticism about the Israeli establishment's use of force and its legal doctrine.

Israelis with any degree of interest in foreign affairs (a large proportion of the population compared to that of the US) are



painfully aware of Israel's diplomatic isolation and almost total dependence upon the US government for whatever serious outside support it can expect. American Jews, even on relatively well informed levels, are not conscious of the extent to which Israel's base of support in non-involved countries has eroded since 1967. Part of this is due to the Arabs' successful effort to halt and even roll back Israel's program of building up friendships with African regimes. A larger part is simply due to the fact that Israel is no longer the object of world sympathy as she was when she seemed a weak and tenuous nation facing more powerful enemies. As a paramount indigenous military power in the Middle East, ready to use force in a coldly efficient way, and as a rapidly developing and technologically advanced industrial state, Israel cannot expect to be the automatic recipient of idealistic support. Since 1967 Israel has (a) treated the world to a stunning example of conventional military expertise in the Six Day War, (b) successfully re-gearred for a new kind of attrition war, (c) faced down the Soviet Union through its Egyptian proxy, (d) effectively beat down all attempts at subversive warfare and reduced *Fatah* from a more or less straight guerilla outfit to a frustrated and fragmented terror group, and all the while, (e) pulled its economy from pre-industrial recession to industrialized boom. To put it mildly, it is very difficult for other nations to see Israel any longer as a sling-equipped David facing an armored Goliath.

In this context some critics of the government argue that it is foolish to put the United States in a spot where they will have to take an anti-Israel stand, since by doing so the forces anxious for a fundamental change of US policy are strengthened. There is simply no point in antagonizing the US unless some overriding matter of importance demands it. George Habash, say these critics, is not worth it. An extension of this reasoning is the idea that while the US (and others) accept and support Israeli *dominance* in the area, they are not prepared to accept Israeli *domination* of the area, such as is implied by sending Israeli jets into Lebanon to force an airliner into Israel. If Israel goes beyond that which the US is able to accept, that country will be forced into opposition.

On a slightly more sophisticated level, the issue was raised about the Israeli philosophy of the use of force. Since failure is a contingency which must be planned for, why undertake an operation which would so assuredly bring world condemnation



and bring us into conflict with the United States? Has Israel become enamored of the smooth and efficient operation to the extent that its leaders no longer calculate the effects of those little gems of operational perfection? Besides, what would have happened, suggested one writer, if Habash had been on the plane? Once captured he would have been a challenge to every would-be hero of the Palestinian revolution to try and set him free with any method of terrorist blackmail available. However, his trial and incarceration would probably save him from bearing the burden of his movement's ongoing frustrations and failures. It would provide him with an ideal pulpit for world TV and probably make him a hero to the other side.

Again this argument is not new. The retaliatory raid method of combatting Arab terrorism goes back over twenty years and has always been a matter of keen debate in Israel. Its effectiveness has never been a *sine qua non* in military and diplomatic circles. It is possible to argue that the raids always escalated to a full-scale war, which Israel won. The raids led to condemnation and frustration, the wars to real gains (though less than Israel might have hoped for and expected). In this frame of reasoning, Israel would have been better advised to start in with a full-scale war (as she did with Egypt in 1967, having had a peaceful border until Nasser marched his heavy divisions into Sinai). In a certain sense, the retaliatory raid was more a matter of ameliorating *internal* political pressure by "doing something" about Arab terrorism than a calculated attempt to modify Arab behavior.

Israel's victory in 1967 caused a diplomatic upheaval which has been somewhat masked by the Arab rhetoric of non-recognition. Even this rhetoric has been revolutionized by the Arabs' submission to convenience by referring to 'Israel' by name. Until 1967, Israel and her immediate neighbors conducted their business almost solely on the basis of *internal* political needs with little desire or need to balance that against evaluations of how actions would effect the other side. This pattern reached its ultimate point of fecklessness in 1967 when a motley assortment of guerillas under Syrian sponsorship was able to set-off a major Mid-East War. Israel, stung by the *Fatah* harassment on its border with Syria, retaliated strongly with actions and with threats of "more to come if you don't curb your dogs." Syria, more than a little panicked, called on Egypt to help. (The Russians, for reasons still known only to them, added fuel to the fire by telling Egypt that Israel was indeed massing troops

to invade Syria). Nasser, taunted by Syria's intimation of Egyptian perfidy or cowardice, hurried to cover his political flank by mobilizing and threatening Israel. UN Secretary U Thant's precipitate withdrawal of the truce supervision forces left Nasser no choice but to move his troops up to the border. Israel, once mobilized, was compelled by *economic pressures* to achieve a settlement or go to war within a few weeks. So it went the way it went.

Critics notwithstanding, Israeli policy nowadays is keenly oriented toward evaluation of the effects of actions on the political life of its neighbors. Jordan's King Hussein is Israel's "silent ally" in the sense that he and the Israeli government have almost a common policy *vis-à-vis* the Palestinian nationalist movement and the military equations of the Original Mandate territories. Both parties want Palestinian nationalism to remain quiescent and compatible with non-Palestinian (Israeli and Hashemite) control of both banks of the Jordan. Both parties are anxious to stamp out the extremists and both are mutually supporting. Israel in effect guarantees Hussein freedom from direct interference by other Arab states, while Hussein helps guarantee the security of the West Bank by keeping the largely pro-Hashemite ruling elite from supporting overt subversion of Israeli rule. Virtually insoluble outstanding issues (particularly the status of Jerusalem) would seem to preclude any formal recognition for the foreseeable future, but a *de facto* community of interest exists and is served.

Israeli tactics toward Lebanon (including the aircraft kidnapping) are aimed at achieving the same kind of relationship with Lebanon. Israel assumes that the Lebanese ruling groups would like to be rid of the Palestinian extremists but lack the power to accomplish their removal, since Lebanese efforts to get rid of the terrorists are opposed by other Arab states. If Lebanon booted them out they would have to be housed somewhere else! No other Arab state really wants them but none wants to be put in the position of publicly refusing them hospitality. So Israel is trying to create conditions which will encourage the Lebanese government to curb the terrorists, while making life for the organizations impossible. Hopefully, from the Israeli point of view, Lebanon will follow in Jordan's footsteps. World condemnation notwithstanding, supporters of the diversion of the airliner argue that the Arab terror organizations must be having second thoughts about the utility of Beirut as a base. If Israeli intelligence has passenger lists *before* planes take off. . . . ?

There is a third and more fundamental area of criticism which goes beyond questions of short-term political objectives or evaluation of tactics. Is Israel succumbing to a *hubris* of power, carrying over from its pre-1967 past a pattern of defensiveness which could be counter-productive, even dangerous, in the situation of today? A clumsy counter-terrorist *faux pas* (the murder of an apparently innocent Arab immigrant worker in Norway) not only seriously effected relations with one of the more friendly foreign powers (of whom there are few) but also raised serious questions of the morality of the whole campaign. If some Arab is killed in a car explosion you don't know if it is (a) political rivals from his own country, (b) Palestinian terrorists settling a political feud, (c) Israelis getting their man, (d) an Arab terrorist who accidentally set off a bomb he was preparing for someone else, or (e) an IRA man who got on the wrong set.

The legal doctrine of formal indifference to the manner in which a defendant is brought into court was not objectionable when applied to Eichmann. But many Israelis seem to have doubts about the legality and implications of that law as applied to *Fatah* members seized in raids in Lebanon. Membership in *Fatah* and similar groups is a crime under Israeli law. It is legal in Lebanon. Can a person who never committed an overt act against Israel who was seized by Israeli operatives in Lebanon be punished for a membership which was legal in the country from which the person was taken? This is, in effect, the imposition of Israeli police and legal authority over its theoretically sovereign neighbors.

Another issue raised was that Israel, which has condemned sky-jackings as an improper and unacceptable form of warfare, has now adopted that method and has, in effect, legitimized it.

### THE AMERICAN JEWISH REACTION

In contrast to the great debate which the "aircraft-napping" generated in Israel, the American Jewish scene was one of almost automatic and universal defensiveness. Basically two justifications were offered for the action. One view was that Israel is the target of terrorist endeavors. These actions are directly supported by the Arab states who host the terrorists and give them financial support. They are indirectly supported by the other nations who take the easy way out and give terrorists token sentences or respond to various forms of blackmail, a prime example being the

Germans who released the perpetrators of the Munich Massacre.

It was also argued that failure of world bodies to condemn prior seizures of airliners and the asylum granted by Arab countries has in effect legitimized the act and the condemnations are hypocritical.

The arguments have merit and by themselves are not unexpected in this context. What is extraordinary is the virtual absence of any significant element of countervailing argument and the lack of debate on the subject, or of any other subject involving Israel's security.

Take for example the recent US policy decision to sell Phantoms to Saudi Arabia (and Iran), thus breaking Israel's monopoly on this aircraft in the Middle East. Again the reaction was an almost blanket opposition. It was the *Israeli* press which pointed out that the move was directed against possible attempts by other Arab states to disrupt the oil flow through the Persian gulf. In addition, the numbers were relatively small and the transfer of such a sophisticated weapons system to Israel's real foes (Libya, Egypt or Syria) was remote, even assuming that the Saudi Arabian rulers would seriously consider such a move. One would have normally expected the Israelis to take a very narrow view of the situation, while American Jews would have felt it necessary to explain to the Israelis that the move didn't upset the balance of power and that America had other legitimate interests besides Israeli security. Yet I have been present at sessions at which Israelis were telling American Jews to cool their opposition to certain policies and explaining why the US had to adopt such a position and why Israel really understood despite its *pro forma* objections.

It amounts to what is almost a compulsion to justify every Israeli action (or at least to stifle any public doubts), coupled with a tendency to back Israeli objections to American policies to an extent which sometimes embarrasses the Israelis themselves.

#### INSECURITIES AND "THE CAMPAIGN"

One of the reasons for this phenomenon lies in a suppressed fear. For all of our disclaimers, we American Jews are very sensitive to the charge of dual loyalty. During the early stages of the Yishuv and, to a lesser degree, until 1967 support for Israel could be handled on a purely moral level. Israel was small and



weak, the haven of the remnants of the Holocaust. Except for an abstract ideological involvement (keeping the area safe from Communism), the United States had no vital interests to be defended, and hence no reason for not doing the "right" thing by backing Israel. Actually, during that period the US did little beyond extend financial aid and encourage other nations to sell arms to Israel. It was formally "even-handed" in its policy. Pro-Arab exponents were really hard-put to find real cases of a conflict of interest on the part of American Jews which could not be neutralized by counter arguments.

Today American involvement is much more direct and, as our need for Arab oil increases, much more vital to our national interests. The Middle East is no longer a secondary zone of national concern and American Jews are no longer virtually the only organized constituency concerned with American policy there. Now Jews feel called upon to justify their support of Israel in terms of American interests and *this is not always possible*, since American and Israeli interests do not necessarily coincide. American Jews, of course, have their own, specifically Jewish reasons for anxiety about Israel's security. The public assertion of these reasons, when faced with a conflict of national interests, does indeed raise the question of loyalties. For all of our security and rootedness as Americans, we still hesitate to assert publicly that in matters Israeli we put our international ethnic interest ahead of American interests.

We take refuge in a moral position. We are not supporting Israel out of Jewish interest but because Israel is *right*. We are asking our government to put justice, truth and morality above national interest, rather than asking it to sacrifice American interests to Israeli interests. Such a stance, of course, requires that Israel be right, or at least be presented as being right.

Even on a face-to-face level, an American Jew reacts to the kind of criticism common in Israel against government policies with ill-ease verging on annoyance. He often doesn't want his images disturbed. When this criticism is presented on a public level, particularly if the audience suspects that non-Jews or the press are present, discomfort — often acute — can develop. If, as I maintain, the real reason (fear of dual loyalty being exposed) is suppressed, the discomfort can vent itself in selective rejection of the speaker's words or downright hostility. People don't like to be made uncomfortable. The Jewish public doesn't want to come out to hear Israel criticized, least of all by fellow Jews.



Even if what the speaker says is true, he shouldn't wash dirty linen in public.

Community relations are increasingly the province of federation C. R. Committees or Councils. By definition these organizations are out to create "favorable images" of Israel. Concerned as they are with "selling" Israel to the non-Jewish public, they are hardly likely to call any attention to defects in the products. The situation in the national offices of the independent agencies (Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee) is somewhat better, with their high academic and intellectual level and access to information, but one of the main jobs of regional directors is to finesse funds out of local federations, and being known as a critic of Israel is not very helpful in that kind of work.

Federation executives, as a result of the increasing scope of federation activities, find themselves administering a large segment of the community's cultural programming. While some of them have fine intellects and broad knowledge of Israeli affairs, they are selected for their ability to "run the campaign" rather than for their intellectual assets. With the tunnel vision common to most professions they seek out that which they feel their constituency wants, that which makes for successful programs. Criticism of Israel? That's not going to bring out a crowd for our cultural series or generate a good head of steam at the major gifts dinner.

#### GIVE US A POOR, BELEAGUERED ISRAEL

For the above psychological and structural reasons American Jews tend to hold on to the ghost of pre-1967 Israel, a small, relatively underdeveloped nation to all appearances seriously threatened by her hostile neighbors. Even when they visit the new reality, they tend to discount the evidences of Israel's economic and military muscle. Israel, the land of soaring skyscrapers topped only by real estate prices! Israel, the dominant indigenous military power in the Middle East? Israel, facing the all too familiar problems of pollution, ethnic division, and even incipient organized crime (the "Eilat Connection"). Better to get away to the spartan settlements of the Golan Heights, meet Russian arrivals at Lod, explore the exotica of Old Jerusalem. The Old Days live on, at least in a few places. Because the old image is so comfortable (and convenient) we tend to use every

means at our disposal to keep it alive at least in our hearts and minds.

### SO WHAT'S SO BAD?

The purpose of this article is neither apologetic nor critical. It is an attempt to examine and explain the phenomenon of American Jewish defensiveness *vis-à-vis* Israel. I, for one, do not believe that the problem of dual loyalty seriously effects the security of American Jews. Non-Jews simply assume that otherwise sound and variegated Jews are prejudiced when it comes to Israel and leave it at that. This assumption of prejudice is the archstone of American Jewish political influence in America and Israel's best guarantee of continuing US support. This almost monolithic pro-Israel sentiment is countered on the local political scene only by scattered and rather low-intensity pockets of anti-Israel feeling. For the Jew, pro-Israel sentiment is at the core of his political gut, existing independently of, and sometimes in opposition to, his more generalized political preferences. (Young American Jews, who share the rejection of things military current among their peers, unhesitatingly go through a five-day sampler in Israel's pre-military training in a Gadna camp as part of a summer tour. And they wear a uniform while doing it!) For a New Left type or a black militant, anti-Israel feeling is but a small part of his larger "anti-Imperialist" political bag. Hence politicians reason that while an anti-Israel stance will garner little support, a pro-Israel stand is a *sine qua non* for support from America's politically active Jews.

If the dual loyalty issue ever becomes a serious problem, it will only be when American Jewry is in trouble for other reasons and its detractors are seeking a convenient excuse.

The emergence of "The Campaign" as the central feature of American life is also no calamity. If we are ever to have a Golden Age for American Jewry it will depend upon a solid communal infrastructure of schools, lecture circuits and community centers and synagogues. The Campaign rides along on Israel's coattails and constitutes the major vital link with Israel. For all of the high-toned talk about "cultural bridges" and "spiritual input," the bricks and mortar of our relationship is the dependence of our local institutions upon Israel's appeal to the local givers. The campaign organization is the most dynamic and effective Jewish organization on the American scene. It mobilizes some of our

best talents and reaches out its hand (if only palm up) to every Jew it can reach — something few other Jewish organizations can claim. It was the imperatives of UJA which led to the development of a national network of professionally staffed local federations which form the backbone of American Jewry's cultural and political power. Senator Jackson and Representative Vanuk are undoubtedly motivated by a genuine concern for Russian Jews. However, being the astute politicians they are, they can hardly be oblivious to the fact that they are also establishing a well-disposed constituency in every major population center of the United States.

### ISRAEL: THE AMERICAN JEWISH PERCEPTION

For the Israeli, his nation is the reality in which he lives. While more Israelis still hold to idealized projections for their state than is the case among Americans toward their land, the inescapable fact of twenty-five years of statehood is the "normalization of patriotism." Israel is not a symbol of anything to the average Israeli; it is his home turf. This pedestrian identity may be overlaid with Zionist or nationalist ideology, or tinted with various shades of specifically Jewish identity, but it remains simple and unreflective.

For the American who is "Israel-conscious," Israel is never a fact of life, primarily because the American Jew doesn't live there. His physical association is occasional, and his intellectual links are mediated. He visits Israel; he reads about Israel; he hears about Israel. He does not live Israel, except in his mind.

He does use Israel, or at least those aspects and reflections of Israel which serve his personal and Jewish purposes in America. Hence his appropriation of things Israeli is selective and manipulative. He selects and holds in view (or up to public view) those aspects of Israeli life with which he can identify or which he wants others to see as Jewish — those which reflect favorably upon his Jewishness. Hence he creates an Israel which is heroic but just; superlative in war but desiring only peace; needing his donation but robustly independent. Indeed, it comes close to a kind of double-entry psychology as the American Jew cultivates one Israel for internal consumption, and another for public relations purposes. The Israel-For-Us is a society which compensates for all of the weaknesses and failure of American Jewish life, and above all is the only effective balm for the still raw wound

## MORE ISRAELI THAN THE ISRAELIS?

in our psyche created by the Holocaust. The virtual panic which energized American Jews in the fear-fraught days before the Six Day War betrayed a fact we had long kept hidden from ourselves: Israel was our security blanket and we realized its importance only when we faced the prospect of having it taken away. Israel was strong and decisive where we were weak and neurotic. Israel could depend on its youth, while we feared for ours. Israel was solid and permanent while we were being eaten away by assimilation. Israelis would never march like sheep to the gas chambers!

This Israel-For-Us must be defended at all costs. Therefore we must project an image of Israel-For-Them which wards off potential negative feelings on the part of non-Jews. Israel must be proper and just, a righteous nation deserving the support of men of good will everywhere. A person who brings to the public attention less attractive aspects of the Israeli reality threatens our security blanket. If Israel-For-Us is an instrumentality for our Jewish survival in America, then Israel-For-Them is also an instrument, and like all instruments they are shaped according to the purpose. If American Jews seems sometimes to be more Israeli than the Israelis, it is perhaps because we need an idealized Israel more than the Israelis do. For they have the reality while we must make do with the image.

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## *Talmudic Profiles*

### *I. ben Abuyah*

*Deepened memories  
perplex his struggle  
for identity.  
Prophetically clear,  
Euclid began  
with faith,  
while one was lost  
to the world.*

### *II. ben Zoma*

*Deliriously deluded,  
some claim,  
ben Zoma  
stretched his faith  
and the water  
poured forth —  
speculation  
of the absurd.*

### *III. ben Azzai*

*Reminiscent  
of an Egyptian plague,  
the young rav  
died  
in a frightful spasm,  
chanting love songs,  
Joblike.*



### *IV. Akiba Ben Joseph*

*Courage,  
he had taught,  
was the acknowledgment  
of fear,  
unknown.  
Gaining strength  
from the unity  
of our people  
and the oneness  
of our God,  
his flesh  
was combed  
from his body  
with the flaming sparks  
of that same spirit.*

*Kerry Olitzky*

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KERRY OLITZKY is A Senior Philosophy Major at the University of South Florida, Tampa.



# Ibn Ezra on the Ten Commandments

## *Modern Insight*

*Henry Bamberger*

IT MIGHT BE REASONABLE to assume that the best-known passages in the Bible are the best understood. It might be reasonable, but it would not necessarily be correct. For example, few passages in the Bible are referred to more often than the Ten Commandments. Everyone knows them — or at least thinks he knows them. Why, almost every Sunday School student can quote at least an abbreviated version of them. Yet, in fact, the Ten Commandments present a variety of problems. These have, of course, been dealt with again and again by a wide variety of commentators. From what each commentator has to say about these difficulties, we can gain both greater insight into the text of the *Torah* and a great deal of insight into the commentator.

For both of these reasons, it is well worth looking at the commentary on the Ten Commandments of Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164). His commentary, like that of his older contemporary, Rashi (1040–1105) is found in many editions of the Rabbinic Bible, but, unlike Rashi's commentary, it is not available in English translation. Indeed, it is far less frequently studied even by those who read Hebrew.

In many passages, Ibn Ezra's commentary on the *Torah* is cryptic, very difficult, and frequently very technical. However, he deals very clearly with two of the major problems concerning the Ten Commandments in his comments to Exodus 20:1. Let us examine each of them.

The first problem that Ibn Ezra deals with is that of how the commandments are to be divided and numbered. Everyone agrees that in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 we have ten commandments. The number ten is solidly established in all traditions. However, each tradition tends to divide the passages in its own way. Different Christian traditions, for example, offer a variety

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HENRY BAMBERGER is Rabbi of Vassar Temple, Poughkeepsie, New York.

of divisions.<sup>1</sup> Jewish tradition has also recognized the problem. Hebrew Bibles offer two versions of the *tropp*, and the tradition that one version is to be used for public reading and the other for private study does not help us to understand what the division here is to be.

The problem continues in Jewish translations into English. The JPS *Holy Scriptures* of 1917 prints Exodus 20:2, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," as the entire first commandment.<sup>2</sup> The 1962 translation of *The Torah*, however, prints verses 2 and 3 together as a commandment: "I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods beside Me."<sup>3</sup> Each translation divides the verses of Deuteronomy 5 in the same way as in Exodus 20.

Ibn Ezra was aware of the basic variants. The key problem of dividing the commandments is whether or not the first statement, "I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage," is to be considered the first commandment.<sup>4</sup> If it is not, there are two schools of thought regarding division of the remaining verses. One would separate "You shall have no other gods beside me" from "You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image . . ." and consider these two commandments. The other would leave those together as the first commandment and separate the prohibition against coveting into two commandments.

Ibn Ezra considers — and rejects — both of these possibilities. As far as idol worship and other gods are concerned, he asserts that both prohibitions are parts of a single commandment. "You shall have no other gods . . ." deals with one's inner orientation. "You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image . . ." deals with overt action. Neither is complete without the other; therefore each must be part of a single command.

Those who feel that there are two commandments concerning coveting consider "You shall not covet your neighbor's house," to be the ninth commandment, and "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, etc.," to be the tenth. The former would forbid desiring someone else's possessions *per se*, while the latter would deal with desire which might lead to theft. (It is this second usage which must be meant in the passage which promises that no one would covet the property of those who went up to Jerusalem for the Pilgrim Festivals. After all, if no one looked en-

viously on their land, albeit without the intention of stealing it, this would indicate the low quality of real estate in the Holy Land, a concept no twelfth century Jew could even consider.)

Ibn Ezra concedes the validity of the linguistic distinction, but he rejects the conclusion that we have two commandments here. He again finds inner desire and overt action too tightly linked to separate. Further, he asks, why should the coveting of a house be mentioned as a separate commandment to the exclusion of all else?

Moreover, in the version of the Ten Commandments found in Deuteronomy, the order of house and wife is reversed. It is one thing to re-arrange specific items within a single commandment. It is an entirely different matter to change the order of the commandments. Thus, there is only one command against coveting.

Now, having dealt with the other suggestions, Ibn Ezra must establish that "I the Lord am your God" is, indeed, the first Commandment. Before we examine his argumentation on that point, let us note one thing he does *not* do.

In Hebrew, the word for "Commandment" is *mitzvah*. However, the Ten Commandments are not referred to in Hebrew as the Ten *Mitzvot* but rather the Ten *Dibbrot*, the Ten Words or Ten Utterances. Nothing would have been easier than for Ibn Ezra to suggest that while "I the Lord am your God" is not a *Mitzvah*, a commandment, it is still one of the Ten *Utterances*. However, it seems that he, like most of us, would have considered that only an evasion of the problem. He does not hide behind a turn of phrase.

Instead, he offers a fairly lengthy discourse on the three kind of commandments, those directed to the heart (mind), those directed to the mouth, and those which specify (non-verbal) deeds. In doing so, he seeks to establish that each group is significant in and of itself. He then continues:

Behold, this first utterance is more important than all the other nine which follow it, and it is close in nature to the commandments directed to the heart. The meaning of this utterance is that one must believe without doubt that the Lord alone is God and that there is no other God. . . . This is the core of everything.

Ibn Ezra is at pains to point out that this is not to be understood as meaning that belief is more important than action, or that proper doctrine takes precedence over proper action. His concern is that anyone who rejects the existence of One Who

Commands cannot feel a sense of being commanded, and will therefore see no reason not to transgress. Thus, the commanding of belief in God is necessary if any other commandments are to be effective.

Now let us consider the problem posed by the fact that the wording of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy differs so from that in Exodus. How is this to be understood?

The first step toward understanding is to realize the extent of the problem. Ibn Ezra makes sure that we are aware of the differences. He points out that the first three commandments are identical in the two versions, but then itemizes the variations from that point on. He deals with the different first words of the command concerning the Sabbath as well as the different motivations expressed for the commandment. He points out the different order of the items which one is forbidden to covet in the tenth commandment. He also takes the trouble to point out different phrasing in the reward to be obtained for honoring of parents, as well as the fact that while Exodus states, "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery . . .," Deuteronomy commands, "You shall not murder. And you shall not commit adultery . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Then he continues:

As we looked up these matters in the words of our sages, may their memory be for blessing, what did they say about this? We find that they said: "Remember" and "Observe" were said with a single utterance.<sup>9</sup> But this matter is the hardest of all the difficulties, as I shall explain. But God forbid that I should say that they did not speak correctly, for our knowledge is trivial compared to theirs; it is only that the people of our generation think that their words [should be understood] according to their apparent meanings, and this is not so. . . .

Why does Ibn Ezra find such great difficulty in this? Surely God, unlike mere mortals, is capable of uttering two different words together. However, he points out that human beings cannot comprehend two simultaneous statements, as we discover whenever we try to listen to two people talking at once. He anticipates the modern-sounding answer that the Divine utterance is "wholly other" and inquires, "But if we say the Divine utterance is not like human utterances, how did Israel understand the Divine speech?" And yet, he points out, our revered sages never comment on the fact that the miracle of the human ear hearing and understanding the two words simultaneously would be even greater than the wonder of God's uttering them together!

There are other problems with the teaching that "Remember" and "Observe" were spoken with a single utterance. Surely it would have been clearer, had God wished to say both, to say "Remember and observe the Sabbath." But even if we were to accept the traditional answer, it would solve only a fraction of the problem. Are we to assume that the two explanations of Sabbath observance were uttered together? Are we to assume that the two versions of the tenth commandment were a single utterance? Are we to assume that God said, "You shall not steal," as well as "And you shall not steal" as a single utterance? What about the two Hebrew words for "false" which are used in the two versions of the prohibition of perjury? Certainly the concept of a single utterance breaks down at some point.

The answer, according to Ibn Ezra, is that only Exodus 20 gives us the Ten Commandments as spoken by God and recorded upon the Tablets of the Law. In Deuteronomy, Moses is the speaker, as the context makes clear, and he recast several passages. This is why Exodus 20:1 reads, "God spoke *all* these words . . ." (emphasis added) while Deuteronomy 5:19 begins, "The Lord spoke those words . . ." — but not "all those words."

Once we realize this, we can divide the variant readings into two types. In one case, there is no change in meaning but simply in the word or style chosen. In such an instance we must remember that "words are like bodies, their meanings like souls." In more modern terminology we would say that when meanings are identical, textual variants are unimportant. Thus, an added "and" or a changed word is not to become a matter of concern.<sup>8</sup>

In the fourth and tenth commandments, however, there are more substantial changes. Where Moses varied the content, we must search out his reason.

In Exodus, the reason given for observing the Sabbath is cosmic: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it" (20:11). Moses did not need to repeat this; it is implied in the phrase, "as the Lord your God has commanded you" (Deuteronomy 5:12). (Ibn Ezra might almost have rendered this verse: "Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, cf. Exodus 20:9 ff.") Since Moses does not need to dwell on this point, he takes the opportunity to expound the humanitarian principle which is also to be found in the Day of Rest.

As for "Remember the Sabbath" and "Observe the Sabbath,"



the idea of the latter is really included in the former. *Remember* the Sabbath every day of the week so that when it arrives you will be properly prepared to *observe* it. "When God said 'Remember,' everyone who heard understood that its meaning was 'to observe,' as though both were spoken with one sound." That, of course, is what the Sages meant, according to Ibn Ezra. However, Moses, a mere mortal, could not be sure that people would understand the implications of what he said; therefore, he used the more explicit term, "Observe."

In the same way, the changes in the tenth commandment were motivated by Moses' need for clarity and applicability. God had said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife . . .," in that order, because a mature, stable man first acquires a house and only then seeks a wife and movables. Moses, however, having lived with his people for forty years, stated, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not crave your neighbor's house," because he knew that an impetuous youth first wants a wife and only later worries about a home and possessions.<sup>9</sup>

Many of Ibn Ezra's insights are so modern-sounding that it is both instructive to compare his thinking to that of later scholars and all too easy to draw unwarranted parallels. In this case, we are at once aware of the similarity of his thinking with that of the modern documentary theory. The modern Biblical scholar divides the Pentateuch into separate documents, written at different times, by different authors, whom he designates J, E, P, and D. He distinguishes among the documents in various ways, including analysis of parallel passages according to variations in style and vocabulary and differences of content. When possible, he attempts to establish the relative or absolute age of the documents as well as the *Sitz in leben* of the authors by close scrutiny of the texts.

Much of Ibn Ezra's methodology is similar. He, too, suggests a kind of documentary theory for the Ten Commandments which we might label G for God and M for Moses. He establishes a dating system for them, suggesting that the "M" document is some forty years later than the "G" form, and showing that the later version is heavily dependent upon the earlier. He also establishes a reason for each of those changes which he considers significant.<sup>10</sup>

However, it would be wrong to transform this twelfth century Jew into a Bible critic of the nineteenth or twentieth century.

Ibn Ezra would, no doubt, insist that all of the second version was to be found within the original revelation at Sinai, at least *in potentia*. Surely, there could be no conflict between the two versions, nor could one be "more authentic" than the other. After all, the Deuteronomy passage does not say that "God spoke *all* these words" and thus gives at least a gentle warning to the intelligent reader that here he has a revised version.

Furthermore, the *Torah*, even if not from a "unitary source," was still, to Ibn Ezra, a unitary result. If Moses' rephrasing had not been acceptable to God, it would not have been included in the *Torah*.

Nevertheless, within his own frame of reference, Abraham Ibn Ezra anticipated many of the techniques and even some of the results of much later scholarship. We may well agree with him that "God has given the *Torah* only to men of understanding, and he who has no understanding has no *Torah*."

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of different Christian traditions, see the article, "Ten Commandments," by W. J. Harrelson in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. It is interesting that the *New English Bible* makes no attempt to solve the problem of division; both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 are so printed that they appear to present twelve commandments. The reader who prefers the traditional ten may, presumably, group them as he likes.

<sup>2</sup> In this, JPS followed, among others, RaMBaN. See his commentary *ad loc*.

<sup>3</sup> NJV offers the footnote, "Tradition varies as to the division of the Commandments in vs. 2-14, and as to the numbering of the verses from 13 on."

<sup>4</sup> Biblical quotations are from NJV except as noted.

<sup>5</sup> "And" at the beginning of each of the last four commandments is not found in NJV although the connective "and" is found in the Hebrew.

<sup>6</sup> So e. g. *Mechilta, BaHodesh* 7.

<sup>7</sup> The realization that this was possible for God but not for flesh and blood goes back to the Midrashim. Cf. *Mechilta, BaHodesh* 4, Exodus R. 28:4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Ezra points out that people often quote for content rather than exact wording. He cites, among other examples, Genesis 27, verses 4 and 7 and Exodus 11:5 and 12:29.

<sup>9</sup> It is unlikely that Ibn Ezra meant to suggest that Moses understood human nature better than God does. One cannot escape the feeling, however, that he was suggesting that Moses *thought* that he did.

<sup>10</sup> Leonard S. Kravetz states that Ibn Ezra "sensed that the *Torah* did not represent an unitary source and that he intended to pass such knowledge to some of his readers, to 'the intelligent who will understand.'" See "A Reply to My Critics," *CCAR Journal* (January, 1971), p. 60. It is worth noting that this phrase, *v'ha-maskil yavin*, "The intelligent will understand," does appear in the commentary to the Ten Commandments.

## *Dial Zero for the Name*

*Possessed by the names  
of those fallen in the war  
my wife reads the book  
the government published with  
no faith in life insurance.*

*I do not read it.  
I have paid my premium  
to take my chances.  
Such a list is too grotesque,  
a telephone book to death,  
whose names are nothing  
without a computer code  
to call them back by.  
Actuaries and warlocks  
should program more liveliness  
into the address  
of ghostly communiques.  
What use memory  
when those we recall cannot  
be recalled, but by the names.*

*Richard E. Sherwin*

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RICHARD E. SHERWIN is Chairman of the English Department, Bar Ilan University, Israel.

## Unbinding Isaac

*Norman Mirsky*

WHEN I DISCOVERED that the veterinarian to whom I had been taking my cat was Jewish, I said to him, "You must really love animals to be a vet." He said to me, "Some animals I like — some I don't. Just because you're a rabbi, do you love every Jew?"

Until we become professionals ourselves, we often fail to realize that a professional's identity and his occupational role are not one and the same. Even after we come to understand that rabbis or professors have identities separate from their rabbinical or academic role sets, we find it hard to include other professions in this generalization. Our needs and our expectations are such that we cannot, for instance, allow our surgeons, nurses, and sexual surrogates much distance between the behavior we expect to accompany their professional roles and the actual selves that lurk beneath those symbols of competence, rank and status. To meet our own needs, we join together in our minds their roles and their identities.

It seems to me that much of what our tradition does with Isaac is similar to what we do with members of the professions, even our own. In order to make Abraham the hero of the *Akedah* — or to make God less of a villain — Jewish tradition had to see Isaac as totally nondescript or else turn him into a Jesus voluntarily accepting his fate.

Both the tradition and we ourselves need Isaac as an object in our search to find some meaning in God's mysterious acts, but is it fair on this basis to deprive Isaac of his own subjective response to his experiences? May we not permit Isaac an identity of his own apart from the mythic role our tradition has assigned him? Can we not permit Isaac to speak after his final victimization — after the wife he did not choose has helped the son he did not choose to rob him of his Blessing?

The Blessing which was to be Isaac's only reward as the son of Abraham has been wrested from him, and now he lies sick

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NORMAN MIRSKY is Associate Professor of Human Relations, HUC - JIR.

and blind upon his bed complaining to whoever is the Eliezer of his old age:

"You know what troubles me most about my binding — not that my father almost killed me, not that I was so frightened that I, a thirteen-year-old boy, become incontinent like a baby, not the looks we gave each other when he answered me by saying what neither of us believed, that God would provide the lamb!"

"Those things don't bother me. What bothers me more is that when I realized what was happening, I was fully willing to die — I was so imbued with my father's wishes that if he needed to sacrifice me, I needed to be the victim."

"I couldn't even dream of struggling. Where was the impulse to come from? When the two of us walked together, it was really two of *him* — not father and son, just Abraham present and future."

"And now, dear friend, as I lie here, wondering if your hand is even your hand, I wonder also what I might have been if I had not been the Single One — an Ishmael whom I used to tag after until they drove him away or an Esau whom they wouldn't let me bless. It is too late to change my life — but, dear friend, might I change my fantasies?"

The servant Eliezer might choose to deal with Isaac's complaint in a number of ways. Being a loyal servant of Abraham, maybe he chooses to help Isaac accept what history has ordained for him. Through long hours of intense analysis, Isaac may come to imagine that the servant is Abraham. When this finally happens, there is a good possibility that Isaac will find himself in the same bind. Now, however, he won't complain because he'll have been convinced that what is wrong with him is not that he was willing to die then, but that he is bothered about it now!

Perhaps that is the proper tack to take. History would be on his side, for the fact is that, although Isaac himself appears to have been something of a *schlemiel* — nearly killed by his father, tricked by his wife, cheated by his son — he nevertheless served Judaism well by acting as a transitional figure between Abraham who made the break with the past and Jacob who wrestled with God and Man to become Israel. Isaac was the anti-hero between two heroes, the bridge over which the *B'nei Abraham* passed to become the *B'nei Yisrael*. So though history seems to have gained nothing from Isaac's existence except time, history nevertheless is not unappreciative. It accords Isaac his place among the Patriarchs. His name is mentioned thrice daily right there in the



*Amidah* between his father and his son. Indeed one could be convinced that Isaac had better adjust and slip quietly and passively back into *T'rah* and *t'filah*.

Some of us, in fact, would become angry with Isaac were he to seek a change in his destiny. Some of us would say to him: "You have no right, granted your opportunity on behalf of the Jewish tradition, to seek to assert yourself. Learn to accept your fate! Some people are innovators. Some people are conservators. Each role is important, and when the history books are written, there is room for both. What history has no room for are the unfulfilled fantasies of the role players."

A very good case could be argued for making the pre-complaint Isaac into the patriarch of the rabbinate. The rabbinate can and perhaps should be seen as a passive, conservative profession. Rabbis are to be the mediators between the various wisdoms of the Jews. Granted that a certain something is gained or lost in the translation from the tradition to contemporary life, nevertheless it ought to be the rabbis' concern that the addition and subtraction be kept at a minimum. Indeed, as a teacher of homiletics, I would want it stressed that, when officiating at life-cycle events, the rabbi is to be only the instrument through which the tradition, the family, and the collectivity communicate. A rabbi who acts as though the deceased has died in order to give him an opportunity to display his erudition fails Homiletics 401.

We have noted for many years, through our ongoing studies of Reform and traditional congregations, that the so-called cult of personality is much more dominant in Reform. We speculate that this is because Reform rabbis, having relatively little of the tradition to transmit, have instead presented themselves as though they were Judaism incarnate. We have noted this and have decried it, for we know Judaism is too important to be made to suffer when the rabbi gets a better offer from a bigger temple.

Those who care about Judaism pray for rabbis who know and can transmit, rabbis who are Isaacs ready to be sacrificed, if only by subduing their egos, for the sake of the tradition and the future of Jewish learning.

However, as much as we might want to tell Isaac to quit complaining, and as much as we might want to congratulate the psychiatrist who can get Isaac to step passively back into his mythic role, our consciences will not let us. For we know that, cogent as it is, the argument for passive transitional figures does

not ring true. From the purely humanistic point of view it does not ring true because to rob a person of his right to individuality for the sake of any institution, no matter how exalted, necessarily makes us feel guilty. While it may make no difference to history whether Neil Armstrong would really have rather been a poet, it would make a difference to Neil Armstrong, no-matter how well he did his job as a non-poet. Somehow we would feel bad to think of him risking his life, stuffed in a little capsule, simply because nature had seemingly endowed him with a perfect disposition for space travel. And we are equally disappointed in — and not a little guilty about — the system that produced Neil Armstrong if, as a newspaper has reported, it is true that he has never read a novel or a poem and is incapable of discussing an idea.

Something, if only a naive belief in the right of each man to fulfill his potential or a more sophisticated but equally unprovable belief that each man ought to be free of the feeling that he dare not act on his own — *something* makes us hope that Isaac did not experience his life the way we have imagined him articulating it to Eliezer. For just as we feel that something is wrong if there is too much of a discrepancy between a man's role and his identity, so we feel more than a bit sorry for the man who has so identified with his occupational role that he seems to have no other identity. Initially we are angry when we call up an old classmate and his wife — whom we knew when — says, "I'll see if *the rabbi* can talk to you now." Then we feel sad, for we suspect that the man and his wife must feel that beneath the title there is no person. His sense of worth is so connected to what he thinks it is you value in him that he contracts himself, he diminishes himself, to fit inside the limits of his occupational role.

It is the apparent opposite of what happens to stigmatized individuals. If a person happens to be lame, he is often perceived as being a limp with a man attached. Through achievement, he may manage so to distinguish himself that his stigma is overlooked. Yet often the stigmatized individual finds a certain comfort in knowing that he has an identity, albeit a negative one. Hiding behind a set role, or worse, becoming the role to the exclusion of one's selfhood, is really a sort of self-stigmatization.

But it is not merely out of pity for the individual who loses his identity to his role that we address ourselves to the problem of over-identification with roles. Nor is it, as one might suspect, out of a fear that over-identification with symbols of rank and status might lead to a slavish submission to authority structure.

*This* has already happened. What, then, is the ultimate objection to resolving dilemmas of identity through over-identification with roles? I would offer this answer: Not only does such a resolution rob the individual of his individuality; it deprives society of its only source of change — the person who is uncomfortable with himself or with his surroundings.

An over-identification with a role solves the tension between self and society in a way as detrimental to society as to the person. The reason is that freedom to act depends upon a human being's ability to trust the correctness of his own interpretation of his subjective response. Most individuals will not act on their impulses or intuitions in the social realm unless they are certain that they reflect some group consensus. Since occupational role behavior is by definition playing a part that has been written by others, a person who becomes inseparable from his role becomes totally separated, totally alienated, from his subjective experiences.

Organized religion is dependent upon two separate phenomena, a stable, self-perpetuating role structure and individual religious experiences. Where the former is concerned, religion does not differ from any bureaucratic organization. It is only through the latter that religion distinguishes itself from any other institutional structure. At the present time, the main reason Judaism seems to be in crisis is that its organizational aspect shows itself much stronger than the capacity of its members for deriving or recognizing religious experiences.

The problem facing Reform rabbis is not, as Charles Liebman claimed some years ago, that the Hebrew Union College has no notion of what the Jewish community is all about.\* *Thank God if that is true* — who wants rabbis leaving the College programmed? The major problem is that somehow few of us feel secure enough either as learned Jews or as adequate human beings to be open to our personal insights into religious truths. Lacking the capacity to trust our own experiences and lacking the comprehensive knowledge to be efficient transmitters of the rabbinic tradition, we turn to the stale security of role-taking and overlearn a script for a tired play.

We need to be able to ad-lib without fear of making a *faux pas*. We need to know our parts so well and ourselves so well that, when we improvise, it improves the drama as much as it satisfies the actor.

Once, Judaism was surfeited with improvisations good and bad, with prophets true and false; then, somehow, it fell into the

capable but throttling hands of efficient but uncreative directors. The time has come to free the actors or else the audience will drift away.

Isaac must be allowed to weep and curse, to struggle, to fear, to laugh.

The biblical text neglects to mention whether Abraham ever bothered to unbind Isaac. All we're told is that "Abraham returned to his servants and they arose and went to Beersheba."

Perhaps Isaac was left bound on the rock. Perhaps God meant him to untie himself. Or perhaps he waits for us to set him free.

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\* See Charles S. Liebman, "The Training of American Rabbis," in *American Jewish Year Book*, LXIX (1968), 108.

## Responsum

### *Father's Name Forgotten*

*Solomon B. Freehof*

#### *Question:*

A man wishes to memorialize his parents and grandparents. On the memorial plaque in the synagogue the names are given in Hebrew fashion; thus, for example, Mordecai ben Isaac. Unfortunately, no one remembers the Hebrew name of his grandfather's father. Can the Halachic tradition guide us in finding a way to record this name in traditional fashion? (*Asked by Rabbi Saul M. Diamant, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada*)

#### *Responsum:*

The question that is asked here has many reverberations in the Halachic literature. The legal tradition insists upon documents carrying a man's name together with his father's name. Of course, our present type of *family* name as identification is only a century and a half old. Jewish tradition ignores this modern type of family name and insists upon the old method of naming the man by giving his name and his father's name.

This traditional method of naming is of primary importance in certain official documents, especially in the documents for marriage and divorce, *Kesubos* and *Gittin*. The greatest importance of all is placed upon the exact naming in a *Get* because, due to a faulty identification of the man or woman, there could be a remarriage in adultery and illegitimate children. Therefore, in the laws of *Gittin* there is a great amount of discussion of the proper and exact traditional naming of the man, of the woman, and even the witnesses (see *Even Hoezer*, especially from #129).

Even after modern family names became the rule, it was always possible to carry out the traditional insistence upon using

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SOLOMON B. FREEHOF is Rabbi Emeritus of Rodef Shalom Congregation, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



the father's name in legal documents. This was because when a person is called up to the *Torah*, he is always called up by his traditional name (his own name and his father's) and so the man's traditional name is known to him and also, presumably, known to the community in which he lives.

But this traditional method of naming has run into new difficulties in recent generations. First of all, even in certain Orthodox congregations, people are now no longer called up by name to the *Torah*, but are merely told beforehand when they are to come up. In fact, as early as a century and a quarter ago, Jacob Ettlinger, Rabbi of Hamburg, protests against the growing custom in Germany of calling people to the *Torah* without using their name and their Hebrew patronymic (see *Diagan Zion*, II, 172). Furthermore, there are thousands of Jewish men in every part of the world who have never been called up to the *Torah* at all and so have never heard their Hebrew name. There are thousands of Jewish men who were never even given a Hebrew name, or if they had been given a Hebrew name at their circumcision, never learned to know it. So the question which is now raised in this enquiry goes beyond the special case mentioned. We are dealing with a widespread situation. It is now a general problem as to how the Hebrew documents can be properly written nowadays, when such a large proportion of modern Jewish men do not know, or have never had, a Hebrew name.

Actually this question had come up centuries ago, not of course because of the special modern situation, but because of special circumstances under which even in those days when Hebrew names were universally used by Jews, a Jewish name in certain special cases was nevertheless totally unknown. For example, if a man is converted to Judaism, how could he be called by a Hebrew patronymic? His father was a Gentile. Or if a person were a foundling and no one knew his origin, how could one write his name in a Hebrew document? In these special cases, the *Shulchan Aruch* answers as follows: A proselyte is called "a son of Abraham" because Abraham our father was considered the father of all proselytes. See Asher ben Yehiel, *Responsa* 15:4 and Eren *Hozer* 129:20. Some say, also, that foundlings should also be named by Abraham as father, but this is disputed (Cf. Isserles, *Orak Hayyim* 109:2).

In modern times the question of using the father's name has come up quite often, for example, Oseley in his tragic response from the Kovne ghetto during Nazi times (*M'Ma'amakin*, Vol.

III, #11) discusses how an adopted child should be called to the Torah, whether by his father's name or his adopted name. So also, Moses Feinstein in "*Igros Moshe*," *Even Haezer* 99. In *M'Ma'ama-kim*, the name of the father is still known. In "*Igros Moshe*," the name is no longer known. In this latter case, Moses Feinstein makes a cumbersome answer, namely, that the actual document should read: "So and so, the son of one whose name is forgotten and is called after So and so, who raised him." But, he adds, in order not to embarrass the persons involved when he is called up to the Torah, he should simply be called up by the name of him who raised him. The same question is dealt with fully by Gedaliah Felder in his "*Yesodey Yesharim*," Vol. II, pp. 158 ff.

It must be understood, however, that the problem of giving a father's name for a memorial tablet is not a legal requirement. A memorial tablet, a plaque or board is in no real sense a legal document such as a *Kerebit* or *Get*. Therefore, if there is a desire to use a father's name, there are a number of possibilities available.

1. If the family is a family of Cohanim, he can be called, assuming, for example, that his name is Judah, "Judah the Cohen," or, in its well-known abbreviation, "*Kohen Tzadek*," i. e., K-Z (i. e., the well-known name of "*Katz*"). Or if the family is a Levitical family, his name can be "*Judah Segan Leviah*," i. e., S-G-L (the origin of the name "*Segal*").

2. If the family is neither Cohen nor Levite, the man may be named after his mother (if his mother's name happens to be known). The Talmud (*Sukkah* 49b) mentions that in spells and incantations uttered in a man's behalf, his name is given with his mother's name. In fact it is still a modern custom when special prayers are uttered for a man (say in time of sickness) he is named in the prayer, not after his father, but after his mother. This practice is explained by the verse in Psalm 116:16, in which the psalmist prays for help and says: "I am Thy servant, the son of Thy handmaid," (i. e., "I am my mother's son").

3. If the family is neither priest nor Levite, nor is the mother's name known, there is still a third possibility. It has long been the custom in Jewish families to name a child after a deceased grandparent. Since, therefore, the son's name is known, we may assume that there is a fair possibility that he was named after his father's father. Of course, this is not sure; it may be that he was named after his mother's father. However, it is a fair presumption. Thus, my name is Zalmon Dov Ben Yitachok Zvi, and my father's name

is Yitzchok Zvi ben Zalmon Dov. This may be counted as a fair probability.

4. If in this family the name "Abraham" appears frequently, then the name may be selected as the grandfather's patronymic, since there are cases in the law where this is the patronymic of choice.

5. There is still another possibility. Although the name of the grandfather's father is not known, it is not impossible that his grandfather or his great-grandfather is known by name. This could be if, for example, this ancestor were the author of a book. If this grandfather, whose father's name is unknown, has a grandfather or a great-grandfather or even a great-great-grandfather whose name happens to be known (either as an author or for some other chance reason) then this man may be named after this ancestor, since the rule is clear in the Talmud (*Yeramos* 62b) that grandchildren are legally equivalent to children; and the later commentaries say that this applies up to four generations. See all references given in *Gedaliah Felder*, Vol. II, p. 185.

To sum up: Although great emphasis is placed in the law on the father's name, this strictness applies only to legal documents, not to memorial tablets. Therefore there is considerable leeway, and any one of the above suggestions may well be adopted if appropriate.

# Meyer Levin's Obsession

## *Censoring Our Jewishness*

Abraham J. Klausner

MEYER LEVIN's recently published *Obsession* calls for more than the usual review accorded books of Jewish content or interest since it deals with the censorship of Jewishness, a theme rarely touched upon in contemporary literature. Levin's point of departure is the Anne Frank story, which for him was the voice of the holocaust and which he sought to popularize and adapt for the theater. His adaptation was rejected. A substitute script, similar to the Levin adaptation with an essential Jewish element excised, was accepted for the Pulitzer Prize production of the Anne Frank story.

In her "Diary," young Anne, hidden from the Nazi onslaught in the Het Achterhuis of an office building on the Prinsengracht, in Amsterdam, sensing the tenuousness of her concealment and her eventual imprisonment and perhaps destruction, writes:

Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up till now? It is God who has made us as we are, but it will be God too who will raise us up again. If we bear all this suffering and if there are still Jews left, when it is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all people learn good, and for that reason and that reason alone, we have to suffer now. We cannot become just Netherlands, or just English, or just representatives of any other country for that matter, we will always remain Jews, but we want to, too.

In the play, Anne's struggle with her Jewishness, her God, and her destiny is reduced to these words:

We're not the only people who have had to suffer. There have always been people who have had to. . . . Sometimes one race, sometimes another.

In a self-analytic approach to his obsession, which is the redemption of the Jewish element in the diary, Levin contends

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ABRAHAM J. KLAUSNER is Rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, Yonkers, New York.

that the compulsion for censoring Jewishness is Stalinist or Marxist oriented. In a description of his travels in the Soviet Union, particularly his visit to Kiev, he recounts his experiences at Babi Yar, an experience that has now been shared by many visitors to the Soviet Union. There is no memorial at the site which would record the fact that there, thousands upon thousands of Jews were massacred by the invading Nazis. When in my visit to the Soviet Union, I inquired as to the place where the Jewish citizens of Kiev were destroyed, I was informed that there was no such place. I persisted in my quest, eventually to be informed that there was Babi Yar, where thousands upon thousands of Russians were destroyed by the enemy. "Were they not Jews?" I insisted. The Jew obviously was being submerged in the broader concept of citizen and humanity.

In Saul Padover's comprehensive study of Karl Marx, *Karl Marx on Religion: Christianity and Judaism and Jews* (McGraw Hill), he highlights the antipathy Marx felt towards the Jew and the intensity with which he philosophized for the political annihilation of the Jewishness of the Jew. This attitude towards the Jew has persisted in all the years of the revolution, reaching, as it is now being revealed, holocaust proportions during the reign of Stalin. Though the censorship of Jewishness is a thrust in Communist ideology, it is by no means limited to Communism, nor can it be said to be particularly Marxist.

In the City of Munich, in the days following the end of the war, I heard as I went about gathering the remnants of concentration camp victims that a facility had been set aside for the elderly German Jews, who had been successfully hidden away during the Nazi years.

I sought out the building located at 65 Kolbacher Strasse. The number remains vivid in my memory because of the excitement with which I went to meet the German Jews who remained in Germany and survived the Holocaust. As I approached the building, standing amid the ruins of the city, I observed a military designation glued to the building, indicating that its purposes were under military protection. I asked, upon entering the building, obviously with some excitement in my bearing, "Where are the Jews, the survivors?" The gentleman who had come forward to meet me received my question with extraordinary calmness and answered, saying that the building was not a Jewish installation. But the military designation, I thought, what would it be doing on this particular facility if there were no Jews present? I turned



to leave and then abruptly turned back to the gentleman who was still standing in the lobby and asked him, "Among the survivors now in this building, are there any who are not Jews?" He answered, again calmly and graciously, "No, there is none who is not Jewish."

One evening, returning to the Dachau Camp, a group of Jews huddled at the gate stopped and informed me that some twelve hundred of them, who had been herded up from the South and were now encamped on the outskirts of the city, were ordered to prepare to be taken from their camp and moved eastward. What had actually been happening was that General George Patton, Commander of the Third Army, was moving up from the South and as he moved, he sought to evacuate all the survivors from his area. The survivors, on the other hand, were in search of a place where they could establish, at least for the moment, an address from which they could search out their being, and to which news might be brought of the nature of their survival. Furthermore, any move in the Eastern direction meant, for the Jew, repatriation to Russian-dominated areas, something he had good reason to fear.

I instructed the delegation to return to their camp and inform their people that they were not to allow themselves to be moved. Late that evening, I visited the camp and informed the army officer in charge of my instruction to the Jews in the camp and suggested that he not make an issue of it, but simply report the matter to his superiors. This he did. Eventually, when the Jews refused to be moved, I was commanded to appear before the G-5 Section of Army in order to justify my action. I sought to communicate to the officers present both the needs and the fears of the Jews in the camp. The ranking officer cut me short with a statement that there were no Jews in the camp. To underscore this "fact," he directed my attention to a scoreboard on the wall, recording the population of the camp according to national groupings, giving the numbers originally in the camp and the numbers repatriated. There was no listing for Jews.

Suddenly the scene became quite absurd for me. My responses became humorous for me and perhaps ludicrous for my interrogators. "Right," I said, "there are no Jews in the camp! Then what is all this fuss about, sending sixty-two trucks to pick up non-existent Jews!" No Jews died at Babi Yar. The pitiful handful of elderly survivors in Munich were not Jews, and among the survivors at Camp Freising, the Jews again had been censored

out of existence — all of them submerged, or lost, in the sea of humanity.

The censorship of the Jew goes beyond these particular experiences to the guts of our own existence. Some years ago, I met with Herman Shumlin, the Broadway producer and director, who was then planning to mount Hochhuth's play, "The Deputy," in which Pope Pius XII is indicted for complicity in the destruction of the Jewish community of Italy. He told me then that he was finding it quite difficult to obtain a theater for the play. There was a building, however, that was marked for demolition. There was a theater in the building. It was a few blocks beyond the traditional theater area of Broadway, but he thought he could make do with it. He met with the owners, two brothers, and convinced them that it would be profitable for them if they would allow the use of the theater while negotiations were taking place for the eventual destruction of the building. One of the brothers found the offer attractive and agreed to make the theater available to Shumlin. Shortly thereafter, he was informed that the facility would not be made available to him. Upon inquiry, he found that one of the large law firms, whose partners were active in the American-Jewish leadership establishment, had called upon its client, the younger brother, and indicated to him that it would be in his interest and the interest of the Jewish community if the facility were not made available for that particular play.

The American-Jewish Committee's study of textbooks demonstrated that the Jew is persistently "read out of history." Though there are some vague references to the ancient Hebrews, history for the American child begins with the Greeks and the Romans. Nothing much seems to have happened prior to their advent. On the university level, similarly, there has been a censorship of the Jewish thread that weaves through history. This is particularly observable in the humanities, where the *gestalt*, or behavioral pattern of the Jews, is censored out of cultural development. Aware of this condition, Hillel, and individuals interested in establishing Jewish chairs at various universities, have sought through these extracurricular programs to bring the Jew back into the stream of history.

Censorship is also evident in the persistent attempt to structure a formal theology of Judaism and in the introduction of particularism and universalism, as categories dealing with that which is particularly Jewish, and such Jewishness which is capable of

universal acceptance. The greater stress, especially among Reform theologians, has been on universalism. The prophets have played a dominant role in the teachings of Reform Judaism since they, as spokesmen of the faith, have stressed the "universality" of human objective and behavior. There is, however, no distinction between the particular and the universal. Such a distinction is an affront not only to Judaism, but to the very concept of human behavior. Behavior is total and cannot be divided into such categories.

Phylacteries may be "particular" in contrast with Amos' plumb line of justice. This supposes, however, that the wearing of phylacteries is in no way related to the concept of justice, that the ritual ends with its wrappings. If, for the wearer of the phylacteries, there is a compulsion for justice, where does the particular end and the universal begin? The distinction is inauthentic except that it allowed for a censoring of aspects of Jewishness which were not attractive to, nor appreciated by the theologians of Judaism.

Levin speaks of himself as the "literary bridge" between contemporary Israel and the American Jewish scene. Not unlike the American experience of which he is highly critical, the peoples of Israel are likewise intent upon censoring the Jewishness of the Jew. The Canaanite movement is certainly not pervasive but is symptomatic of the tendency of Israel's social and political leadership. If symbolism and art form express the feelings, attachments and points of reference of a people, then it can be said that Israel prefers relating itself to contemporary social and political developments rather than to the historically Jewish. Dizengoff and Jabotinsky are of greater significance to the "remembrances" of the people than are Amos and Isaiah.

So pervasive is the tendency to submerge the Jew and his Jewishness in the total culture that it may be suggested that this is of the nature of the Jew — that he sees himself merely as a defined instrument for expressing that which is human and universal at the same time that we recognize that the Jewishness of the Jew has a way of erupting and commanding the concerns of the Jew.

## *No To Eden*

Eden was a garden all right  
but none of my feelings had emerged yet  
so it was like a book I was too young for.  
There was no question of pleasure:  
I even remember it as painful.

It was not the fruit of a tree that changed me then,  
or rather it was all the fruits and flowers.  
It was no snake alone,  
but all the creatures were pointing in that direction:

I just never dreamed that it applied to me too.  
But buds form and open in us like eyes  
and suddenly different behavior is possible.  
Why didn't that ever occur to me before, I thought,  
and got up and walked away.

Everybody is like that, aren't they?  
Even if we face failure and pain, we go;  
we'd go in spite of everything.  
The garden is stifling, that paradise,  
and we go forth with vague heroic ideas  
of fighting battles and winning the world.

We discover of course that we had it all wrong,  
that life is very long as it races by,  
that everything we vowed we'd never do, we do.  
We have grown in the seven directions of the soul  
and none of it is to be judged.

How simple life was before in the garden limits:  
We sat in the sun and felt good,  
it rained and we cried,  
but we didn't have any choice in the matter.  
Now we ache to see naked people,  
on cold days sit in a hot bath for hours.  
Can we raise the unlikely question,  
Would I go back if I could?  
Still I answer, No, to Eden.

*Edward Field*

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EDWARD FIELD's poems have appeared in the *American Poetry Review* as well as this *Journal*.

# American Jews and Exogamy

## *Two Sets of Influences*

*Allen S. Maller*

THE AMERICAN JEW is subject to two sets of cultural and structural influences, the American and the Jewish.<sup>1</sup> Influences may be either parallel, accommodating or conflicting. An example of parallel influence is the traditional Jewish emphasis on education, which parallels the contemporary American attitude. An example of accommodation is the way in which Jews in the United States have established dozens of independent and competing Jewish organizations, whereas in Europe there were usually only one or two. A clear example of conflict in values is found in the area of criteria for mate-selection. American society strongly emphasizes personal self-fulfillment and individual judgment. This, coupled with the belief in romantic love, influences young people to select a marriage partner on private and personal goals alone.<sup>2</sup>

However, the racist tradition in American society excludes blacks from the area of acceptable choice for white Americans. Both the emphasis on individualism and the racist tradition are stronger for American Protestants than for Catholics or Jews. A Gallup poll published in September of 1970 reported that 56 percent of Southern whites and 30 percent of non-Southern whites approve of state laws that make it a crime for a white person and a Negro to marry; the poll also found that Catholics and Jews were much more liberal in advocating the legality of interracial marriages than were Protestants.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church and the Synagogue are both more strongly opposed to interfaith marriages than are the great majority of the Protestant denominations.<sup>3</sup> Catholics do, in fact, frequently marry out, but they usually do so according to the rules of the Catholic Church, that is, with an agreement to raise the children as Catholics.<sup>4</sup> Jews rarely marry out, and when they do so, most of the children are not raised as

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ALLEN S. MALLER is Rabbi of Temple Akiba, Culver City, California.



Jews. It is probably due to the different consequences of interfaith marriage in terms of minority group survival that Catholics are more willing to marry out than are Jews, although both groups are very resistant to converting to the religion of their mate.

A study of 3,189 students at eighteen colleges and universities by Judson Landis found that eighty-two percent of Catholics, sixty-five percent of Protestants, and fifty-nine percent of Jews would marry someone outside their own religion.<sup>5</sup> However, only fifteen percent of the Catholics and fourteen percent of the Jews, compared to thirty-five percent of the Protestants, would be willing to change to the faith of their spouse. Of the three groups, Jews show the strongest opposition to interfaith marriages, while being the most accepting of interracial marriages. A Gallup poll in November, 1968, reported that seventy-two percent of American Christians disapprove of marriage between a white and a non-white, while only twenty-one percent disapprove of marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew. The opposition to interracial marriage is, therefore, more than three times as prevalent as the opposition to interfaith marriage in the United States.

Since an American Jew is subject to two sets of conflicting value systems concerning the kind of people ineligible as potential mates, it might be surmised that the more Jewish an American Jew is, the more likely he would be to prefer to marry a Jew, even if that Jew is black, while the more American an American Jew is, the more likely he should be to prefer a white Christian to a black Jew. In order to test this hypothesis, a questionnaire was distributed in the spring of 1972 to two groups of UCLA students. One group of twenty-five were members of a class in Jewish studies. The second group was a random selection of twenty-six Jewish students on campus. Since the purpose of this study was to test internal differences within the Jewish community, the proportion of "very Jewish" Jews (mainly from the class) is higher than would be representative of the Jewish students at UCLA. The class consisted of ten males and fifteen females, while the random group consisted of fourteen males and twelve females. The students were fairly evenly distributed throughout the four years of college, and the random group included five graduate students. In terms of Jewish education and religious denomination, the random group was representative of Jewish students at UCLA.

The basic question asked was, "Would you rather marry a

black Jew or a white Christian?" At first, four alternatives were given:

	<i>Black Jew</i>	<i>White Christian</i>	<i>Either</i>	<i>Neither</i>
Class	7	5	5	8
Random	2	8	10	6

The students were then asked, "If you had to make a choice, which would it be?" Of the fourteen who had previously answered "Neither," nine chose Black Jew, four chose White Christian, and one still refused to make a choice. The two-to-one preference for Black Jews over White Christians held for both the class and the random group. Of the fifteen who answered that they would marry either because it didn't matter, two-thirds chose White Christians, while one-fifth chose Black Jews. Both the class and the random group chose White Christians to the same degree, but the class members who didn't choose White Christians, chose Black Jews, while some of the random group didn't answer. After the forced choice question, the total stood as follows:

	<i>Black Jew</i>	<i>White Christian</i>
Class	13	9
Random	7	17

Bearing in mind that the class contained an above-average number of "very Jewish" Jews and that, therefore, all the following figures are not representative of Jewish students at UCLA, the two groups will be combined so that we may examine the internal differences among these fifty-one Jewish students in terms of four independent variables. The first is sex. Many studies have shown that Jewish males are twice as exogamous as Jewish females. However, in black-white marriages, it is the girl who is usually white, and in the urban areas, disproportionately Jewish. We would, thus, expect more Jewish girls than Jewish boys will prefer Black Jews to White Christians. This proved to be true. Males preferred White Christians by two-to-one, while females were split almost fifty-fifty.

A second factor which should influence the choice of marriage partners is Jewish education. Of the males, eighty-five percent were Bar Mitzvah. This corresponds to the national average. Of the females, twenty-five percent were Bat Mitzvah. This is somewhat above average. Only one-quarter of the boys and one-third of the girls were confirmed (graduation from Jewish school, usually in the tenth grade). When the students were divided between those who had continued their Jewish education until

confirmation, and those who had dropped out after Bar Mitzvah or even earlier, we find that fifty percent of the confirmants prefer Black Jews to White Christians, compared to forty percent of the non-confirmants. This is a slightly smaller differential than we found previously using sex as a variable.

Of course, it is possible that the choice between a Black Jew and a White Christian is made according to very pragmatic grounds that have nothing to do with either Jewish or American cultural values. In answering a theoretical question, a student might select the marriage combination which he believes has the theoretical best chance of success. All the respondents were asked whether they thought a black-white marriage, or a Jewish-Christian marriage, had a higher divorce rate. Fifty percent picked one and fifty percent the other. Further, half of those who thought that the black-white marriage had the higher divorce rate picked a Black Jew over a White Christian, while half of those who thought that the Jewish-Christian marriage had the higher divorce rate, picked a White Christian. Thus, it would seem that the pragmatic consideration of divorce rates did not exert any independent influence, although it may have served some students as a rational reason justifying a choice made on other grounds.

The most potent predictor of Jewish exogamy turned out to be self-identification. Respondents were asked, "Do you consider yourself to be: a super Jew; very Jewish; average Jewish; somewhat Jewish; not very Jewish at all." Four percent were super Jews, thirty-eight percent were very Jewish, thirty-four percent were average Jewish, eighteen percent were somewhat Jewish, and six percent were not very Jewish at all. Combining the two top categories into one, and the three bottom categories, we find that the very Jewish students prefer Black Jews over White Christians by a ratio of three-to-one, while the average and below average Jewish students prefer White Christians by a ratio of three-to-one. When the answers are analyzed by both sex and self-identification, it turns out that the sex difference was caused by the greater proportion of Jewish females who are in the very Jewish category, while the self-identification answers have the same proportion of males and females in each category. Thus, self-identification is the most significant independent variable in predicting the exogamy pattern of an American Jew.

The respondents were also asked which choice they thought their parents would prefer that they make. Of those students

who selected White Christians, one-hundred percent believed that their parents would have preferred the same choice. Of those students who chose Black Jews, a slight majority believed that their parents would have preferred Black Jews also. There was no sex difference in either group.

It would thus seem that an American Jew, when forced to choose between a Jewish attitude and an American attitude towards exogamy, is much more likely to choose the Jewish attitude if he feels himself to be very Jewish. Self-identification turns out to be a better predictor than parental attitude, Jewish education, pragmatic considerations, or sex. Of course, the variable is not simply a one-way influence. The fact that the student consciously prefers Jews to Gentiles as marriage partners is part of the reason that the student feels himself to be more Jewish than the average student. The reverse is also true. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that one of the reasons that Jews may be more liberal than Christians in their attitude toward interracial marriage is the Jewish tendency to oppose marriage with any Gentile, be he black or white.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles S. Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Milton L. Barron, "Intergroup Aspects of Choosing a Mate," *The Blending American: Patterns of Inter-marriage*, ed. Milton L. Barron (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Glick, "Inter-marriage and Fertility Patterns Among Persons in Major Religious Groups," *Eugenics Quarterly*, No. 7 (March, 1960), pp. 31-38.

<sup>4</sup> Sydney Croog and James Teele, "Religious Identity and Church Attendance of Sons of Religious Inter-marriages," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (February, 1967), pp. 93-103.

<sup>5</sup> Judson and Mary Landis, *Building a Successful Marriage* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: 1968), pp. 189-90.

## Book Reviews

*The Concept of Worship.* By Ninian Smart. London: Macmillan, 1972.

FOR MANY YEARS, departments of religion in the English speaking world were more appropriately called departments of theology or, to be more accurate, departments of Christian Theology. Such departments centered around the study of classical issues in Christian religious thought. Often they had some faculty members whose field of specialization was in non-Christian religions, but generally the courses taught by these scholars were understood in general to be handmaidens of, or auxiliaries to, the study of Christianity. However, in recent years this orientation has radically changed in two major respects. One change is that the central focus on theology has been abandoned for an orientation to religion in which religious study concentrates as much on disciplines such as history, psychology, sociology and literature as it does on philosophical theology. And a second, equally important change is that, increasingly, the study of Christianity is not the sole focus of such religious study. For example, the study of Judaism in such departments is expanding beyond the orientation to "Old Testament" studies that previously were the primary interest of university scholars in Judaism. Consequently, the larger academic programs in religion in the United States have Judaica scholars in area studies such as rabbinics and medieval Jewish philosophy as well as modern European, American and Israeli intellectual history, in addition to Hebrew scriptures. Similarly, other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Taoism and Shintoism are taught for their own intrinsic value rather than, when they were taught at all, as foils to Christianity.

This current trend has occurred primarily in the United States, particularly at state universities, whereas the British counterparts of departments of religion have continued to have the traditional orientation to Christian theology. An important exception to this rule is the University of Lancaster where Professor Ninian Smart has inaugurated a department of religious studies on the so-called "American" model. For England, this is a radical change from conventional programs in theology.



Ninian Smart is a philosophical theologian of unquestionable mastery of the techniques of contemporary philosophical analysis; his knowledge of Asian religions is almost as comprehensive as his knowledge of Christianity. His professional competence in more than one major religion in more than one major civilization as well as his skill as a philosopher has enabled him to write a number of highly original works on religious thought that should be of interest to the readers of this journal, such as *Reason and Faith* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958) and *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* (Allen & Unwin, 1964). This book, *The Concept of Worship* was prepared for W. D. Hudson's series, "New Studies in the Philosophy of Religion."<sup>1</sup> The topic of this book should be of particular interest to Reform rabbis at this time of major scrutiny of the content and style of communal and private worship in our movement.

Smart's central thesis is that what can conventionally be called "worship" has the deity as its object, internally depends on intentions and beliefs, and externally has to do with ritual, which in turn involves an overt act.<sup>2</sup> In other words, while the term "worship" may metaphorically or analogically be applied to other phenomena, only what fits the following four criteria can literally and properly be called "worship":

1. Worship is an overt activity, such as bowing down, which is relational, i. e. the agent of the activity in virtue of the activity relates to something other than himself. Thus while it is an act of worship when "Henry bows down before the image of God," it is not worship when it is merely the case that "Henry bends his body in front of the image of God." For the latter case to be the same as the former, the "bending" must be connected with the image in the presence (which is what "before" means) of the image, with the image as the focus of the activity. By analogy, "twenty-two grown men chasing a piece of leather around a field" is not the same thing as playing football. For that "piece of leather" to be a football it must serve as the focus of that activity which can be called "chasing around" only if it is seen as purposeless.<sup>3</sup>

2. The object of focus of the worship is seen to be superior to the worshipper or worshippers. This superiority is a prime qualifying characteristic that distinguishes deities as purportedly existing entities from other purportedly existing entities.

3. The ritual, i. e. the overt activity, must be intentional with

respect to both giving and expressing the superiority of the focus over the agent or agents of worship. An analogue of this characteristic of worship in a different situation would be the act of swearing allegiance to a king. This single act formally grants to the ruler superiority over those who swear allegiance while at the same time it expresses that superiority. Smart's example of this characteristic is worshippers proclaiming the *kedusha*.

4. The focus of the worship is, in Smart's words, "transcendent" and "unseen," by which he means that where a physical object serves as the focus of worship, the physical object is not the real focus; rather that object represents or pictures the deity which is not itself a physical object.

In addition to these four characteristics Smart notes two others, but they seem to me to be superfluous. One is that the ritual "performatively sustains or is part of the power of the Focus" and the other is that the object of worship is perceived as "awe-inspiring,"<sup>4</sup> but these characteristics seem to me to be contained or implicit in the third characteristic listed above.<sup>5</sup>

Given the above criteria, Smart proceeds to note that the following phenomena that sometimes are called "worship" in fact are not worship: the veneration of saints, ancestor cults, ceremonies whose foci are anti-gods such as devil cults and meditation. Saints are venerated for their good deeds and these deeds are seen to be expressions or manifestations of God, so that if this veneration is to be called "worship" it is the worship of God with the saints serving as divine images rather than the worship of the saints themselves.<sup>6</sup> Ancestor cults are not properly worship because they do not fulfill the second criterion, since a venerated ancestor need not be superior to those who venerate him. Similarly, rites performed before entities such as the devil are not worship, because such entities are not superior in any sense except that of brute force to the worshippers. Furthermore to the extent that one performs rites whose focus is an anti-god it is in order to avoid the evil consequences that come from contact with such a being. But worship involves a turning towards rather than a turning away from the focus. Hence, whereas in worship the agents "bless and magnify" the focus, in anti-deity rites the agents in effect "curse and minimize" him.

It can also be noted that praise and worship are not the same thing. It is possible for someone to praise someone else through a third party. But even granted the legitimacy of venerating

saints, God cannot be worshipped through a third party. In addition, one can praise an equal or an inferior, but one can only worship a superior being. Note further that to say that the focus of worship is superior to his worshippers is not to say that God is a perfect being. For reasons that Smart discusses in connection with Findlay's ontological disproof of the existence of God,<sup>7</sup> Smart rejects the idea that God is a perfect being. But he adds against Findlay that he would "prefer to worship the most perfect being thinkable, that is one with all sorts of excellences and no self-contradictions — that is an excellently contingent being."<sup>8</sup>

The case against meditation as worship is more complicated than the other cases considered. For the sake of simplification Smart limits his analysis and therefore his conclusions to a single set of forms of meditation, namely those of Theravada Buddhism. He argues that this kind of meditation is not worship for two reasons. One, it may but need not involve ritual. Two, it involves no focal object. *Prima facie*, the focal object in an act of ritual such as placing flowers before a statue of the Buddha is the Buddha. But in fact this is not the case. What the Buddha is cannot be said to be in any significant sense existent. (Smart says that he is not "numinous" or "out there.") In what Smart calls Buddhist "metaphysics," an individual is seen to consist of "congeries of short-lived events of different types. When these are, so to say, dispersed, there is no individual to refer to, either as existing or as not existing."<sup>9</sup> Any individual who can be called a "Buddha" has his individuality "dispersed through his having attained *nirvana*," so that if he is in fact a Buddha then he is not there to serve as a focus for worship. Nor will it do to say that *nirvana* itself is the focus, since *nirvana* is a "state" and not "an entity or a being." What makes the situation even less likely to count as worship is that this state "leads to the disappearance of the individual."<sup>10</sup> So there can be no focal object in such meditation. On the contrary the goal of yoga systems such as Theravadinyoga is for the meditator to free himself from any kind of object. Thus whereas in worship the object of intention is God, in Theravadinyoga the meditator empties his mind of all objects, including God. And whereas in worship the goal is to come close to God, again in Theravadinyoga the goal is to be removed from all objects, including God.

There are several implications to Smart's analysis that are worthy of note. A) Given criterion #1 that worship is an overt

activity which is relational, it could not be argued, as many liberal religious Jewish thinkers have tried to do, that one prays not to an external being but in order to better himself. B) Given criterion #2 that the object or focus of worship is seen to be superior to the worshippers, then it could not be argued, as many Jewish religious humanists have tried to do, that the object of worship is mankind. C) Given criterion #3 it cannot be argued, as some Jewish philosophers and theologians have tried to do, that God is totally indefinable or inexpressible. If this were the case it would make no sense to use the term "God" at all<sup>11</sup> and there would certainly be no way that the individual worshipper could intend to express the superiority of God over himself.

D) Given all four criteria, several things follow about the nature of the deity who can be the focus of worship. From criteria #2 and #3 it follows that such a being while not necessarily perfect must be better than anything else. But Smart goes on to say that such a being could no more be omnipresent than He could be perfect. If God is omnipresent then no place could be said to be better than any other place for worship. Yet in any act of worship the place of the focus is necessarily assumed to be better than other places at which there is no focus. Rather we must say if we are to affirm worship that God is "multipresent," i. e., while God is not present everywhere to the same extent, God may be present anywhere and He is present in many, but not all, places. Hence, Smart reasons, while we may affirm consistently that God is generally immanent, it would be illogical to affirm that he is particularly immanent.<sup>12</sup> In this way Smart provides us with categories for not only analyzing how the God of Israel can be worshipped, but how it is particularly appropriate to characterize God with clauses such as "... of Israel" or "... of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" rather than always as "... of all mankind" or "... of the universe."

E) Furthermore, given criterion #4 that the focus of worship is transcendent, it does not follow that any two things that are transcendent are identical; it may only mean that there are two things that share this characteristic in common. Smart makes this point in opposition to Cantwell Smith who has argued<sup>13</sup> that "people of different faiths, such as the Christian, Muslim and Vaishnavite, in fact worship the same God."<sup>14</sup> According to Smart, Smith's sole basis for the identity claim is the shared property of transcendence, but it cannot merely be assumed that there can be one and only one transcendent being. Granting the



veracity of these different religious traditions, it must be noted that they involve different myths and practices, so that while it is not impossible that a single deity dictates or promotes variations in worship that depend on the differences between the respective worshippers in the different traditions, it ought not merely to be assumed that worshippers in different traditions are in fact worshipping the same God whom we worship, even if we all call that entity by the same name and we all attribute to our focal objects the characteristic of transcendence.

F) Finally, a consequence of Smart's analysis of Theravada Buddhism suggests that we should be somewhat cautious as rabbis in encouraging the adoption of forms of meditation in Jewish worship. For most of us, the reason we practise and promote worship is to bring ourselves and others into closer relationship to the God of our fathers. As Reform Jews it seems to me that it is appropriate to use any moral means to foster that end. But the technique of meditation may be counterproductive. Certainly given Smart's analysis of Theravadinyoga, the discipline if successful should lead the agent further from rather than closer to God. Whether or not the practise can be used for purposes other than the purposes of Theravada Buddhism, and whether or not there are other forms of Buddhism free from these Jewishly disastrous consequences, Smart does not say and I do not know. But certainly Smart's analysis is sufficient basis to urge caution in our use of Asian models in our legitimate endeavor to promote increased success in worship for ourselves and our fellow Jews.

I have limited my remarks in this review to a summary of most of the essential points that Professor Smart has had to make about worship and to the implications for Judaism of those remarks. I have excluded most of his discussion of God's existence in the brief second part of the book. Also I have not noted any reservations that I have with Professor Smart's arguments. At this point let me mention two objections.

The term "superior" with respect to the focus of deity is used in different ways throughout the book. It would have been useful if Professor Smart had spent more time clarifying his use of this term. For example, it would seem that it could be said that devil cults are worship when the worshippers believe that moral perfection is less valuable than perfection with respect to power and that the goal of ritual is to derive some power from the ritual focus. Such practises might not be called "good wor-



ship," but nonetheless they would seem to me to be worship. In other words, *prima facie* I can see no reason why it is not possible to worship an entity with superior power irrespective of the moral virtue of that entity. But for Smart moral virtue is not an independent question. A being lacking in moral perfections could not on Smart's analysis be judged to be an object of worship. Given Smart's account, one can distinguish between correct and incorrect worship, i. e., worship that does or does not promote its good ends, but there is no admissible distinction between good or evil worship, i. e., worship whose end is either good or bad. Smart's final arbitrator for such distinctions is conventional usage, and it would seem to me that the arbitrator admits both sets of distinctions.

Secondly, given Smart's set of criteria I see no difference between worship and prayer. But it seems to me that whereas all prayer is worship it is not the case that all worship is prayer. It seems that worship that is not prayer is that phenomena that meet the first three criteria listed by Smart but not the fourth. Hence again on the basis of ordinary usage it seems appropriate to say that nature worshippers do worship although they do not pray. In this case the implication would be that the goal of Jewish practice is prayer rather than mere worship and that what Smart is really talking about is prayer.

Both of these criticisms are about details. They do not affect the central claims or themes of the book. In general, there is no question in my mind of the value of this book for any one who thinks seriously about problems of theology. Although the book could be improved with tighter organization, the ideas that Professor Smart presents are exciting as well as, in my judgment, correct, and his analysis of his ideas is both clear and coherent.

Norbert Samuelson

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NORBERT SAMUELSON is a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal* and Director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, Charlottesville, Virginia.

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<sup>1</sup> Reviewed in connection with *The Concept of Miracle* by Richard Swinburne in the *CCAR Journal* (Summer, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> N. Smart, *The Concept of Worship* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Note that I have not listed the distinguishing features of worship in exactly the same way that Smart does. See pages 26, 27 and 44 of his book.

Smart's #1 and my #1 are the same. My #2 corresponds to the first half of his #4. My #3 is Smart's #2 and #6. And my #4 is Smart's #5.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> "Can God's Existence Be Disproved?", *Mind*, LVII (1948); reprinted in A. G. Flew and A. MacIntyre (eds.), *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (S.C.M. Press, 1955).

<sup>3</sup> Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> In *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New English Library, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

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*Moral — Wozu? Ein Symposium. (Morals — To What End? A Symposium.)* Edited by Rolf Italiaander. Munchen: Delp Publishing House, 1972. 286 pages.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, Rolf Italiaander and one of his friends found themselves involved in a discussion on the spiritual problems of our time. Talking about the various religious and political movements of today and yesterday, they noticed that, curiously enough, each new movement in the history of man seems to call also for a new set of moral rules, for a new system of ethics. Considering this fact the question arose: What is the role of ethics, the end, the goal, the mission of morals in human life? And so the idea of Italiaander's anthology was born.

Rolf Italiaander, world traveller and author of many books on ethnology and religion, got in touch with a number of scholars and asked them to describe for him the task and the meaning of morals in the views of life prevailing in various religious denominations and political movements. The book now before us contains essays on the importance of morals in Old Egypt, in the customs of primitive tribes, in the teachings of Buddha, in Judaism, in Islam, and in Christianity. It has contributions on the Greek philosophers, on the doctrines of Luther and Calvin, on the teachings of Communism in Russia and in China — essays concerning the ethical views of the peace movement in our time, on the theories of the English and American philosophers of language, and on the ideas of the *Sokagakkais* in today's Japan.

It may seem strange and regrettable that, in this comprehen-

## BOOK REVIEWS

sive anthology of all the many schools of ethics in the history of philosophy, only the Greeks and the contemporary philosophers of language are discussed and evaluated. Why is there no chapter on Epictetus, on Spinoza, on Locke, on Lessing and Mendelssohn; no chapter on Rousseau, on Kant and Goethe, on Bentham; no chapter on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche? If the book had intended to give an account only of the great religious and political movements, it would have been understandable that it did not include the philosophers at all. But I cannot see any reason for including the Greek philosophers and the modern language philosophers and omitting all other schools of philosophy. But the book, as it is, still contains a great number of very interesting contributions and gives more than enough food for thought for everyone interested in religion and ethics.

I found especially worth reading the essay of Helmut Gollwitzer on Luther's ethics and the article of the editor himself on the *Sokagakkais*, a reform movement based on Buddhist teachings in modern Japan. Reading the essay of Israeli author Pnina Nevé, "The Significance of the Morals of Judaism for the World," one becomes newly aware of the many important ideas which the ethics of mankind owes to the teachings of Judaism.

Morals — to what end? But is this a question rightly to be asked by a thoughtful observer of human life? Are morals really something that he supposes to have an "end," an end *beyond* itself? Trying to find the "end" of morals — would this not be similar to asking, what is Good really good for? Is not the Good truly good only if it represents something actually good in *itself*? Are morals and ethics understandable for us only if we start looking around to find an "end," a goal outside of themselves? Morals understood in this way are really not morals anymore. Morals understood in this way may represent a set of conventional rules, a system of imperatives for human behavior: given in the interest of a ruling class, or given in the interest of the well-being and the advantage of the majority of a people. But rules of this kind are not really rules of ethics; they are just hiding behind the name of ethics. And it is easily understandable that some of the contributors to Italiaander's anthology declare that the religion which they try to outline for us leads far above and beyond its morals. It leads indeed far above such conventional rules and imperatives which only masquerade under the name of morals, but really do not form the morals of the religion in question. Rightly understood, the higher religious concepts,

motives, feelings and thoughts which, in the opinion of these writers, make the true heart of their religion, are not at all, as they tell us, something high above morals and ethics, but rather belong to the innermost nucleus of religious ethics in each and every denomination.

An even more difficult problem confronts the reader in the introductory essay of the book, "What Really Are Morals?", contributed by Heinz Eduard Tödt. There are, so Tödt writes, morals which consider as highly ethical what in other systems of morals is considered as the height of evil. And Tödt obviously feels truly terrified by this antagonism of ethical evaluations. But do we really have here an insurmountable antagonism in ethics? Or is this antagonism perhaps only a contradiction of outer appearances? There are certainly various evaluations, commands and imperatives contradicting each other in different systems of morals. But these contradictions have their reasons in the differences of the modes of living in various societies in various stages of development. For certain primitive tribes, a complete lack of pity for the weak, and severity and strength were necessary for the survival and the welfare of the whole tribe; while in later centuries, in other circumstances of life, opposite attitudes would be best — compassion for the weak, the feeble and the sick, and the mutual help of all for all would be urgently needed for the well-being of the whole society. In both cases, it is the welfare of the whole which is asked for, which is commanded and praised as ethical. The antagonism of the ethical judgments belongs to the surface, not to the core of the moral imperative.

But surely, there *are*, there *do* exist certain differences of ethical judgment which do *not* belong to the surface, to the outer appearances only. There are differences which mark in a certain way the progress of ethics in the history of mankind.

In the beginning of human ethics it is but the welfare, the well-being of the own tribe, the own people, the own nation which counts in morals. It makes, perhaps, just one of the most significant contributions of Judaism to the ethics of mankind that here it is not the tribesman, not the "neighbor" anymore who is presented to us as the subject of our ethical obligations, responsibilities and imperatives. The teachings of Judaism make it clear to us that the "stranger in your gates" is worthy of our consideration in no less degree than the man belonging to our own people, that in fact every man as such demands our com-

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passion, our help, our love. It was not exclusively in the precepts of Judaism that this change took place. But it is one of the most basic and important injunctions of the Rabbis of old that true ethics always has to do with man as such.

From here, there is only one step further to the recognition of all living beings as the legitimate subjects of ethical command — only one step further to an ethic of reverence for *all* life, as it is, perhaps, in our days best expressed in the ethics of Albert Schweitzer: "A man," we are told now, "is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellowmen, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help." In the last essay of Italiaaander's anthology, Grover Foley leads us in this direction when he tries to outline for us "*eine Ethik des Ueberlebens*," an ethic of survival. He finds the foundations for such an ethic of survival for man today in Kant's concept of "Duty," in the "Altruism" of Erich Fromm, and in Schweitzer's doctrine of "Reverence for Life."

*Hans Margolius*

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HANS MARGOLIUS has taught at the University of Miami and is the author of a number of philosophic works.

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אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

# CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

790 MADISON AVENUE • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 • (212) AG 9-2811

May 13, 1974

Dr. Daniel J. Silver  
The Temple  
University Circle at Silver Park  
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

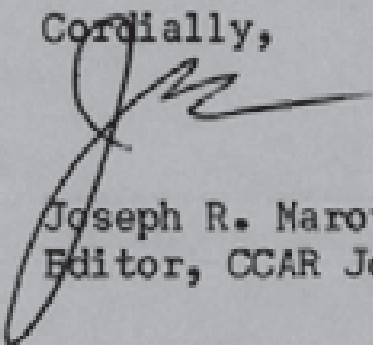
Dear Dan:

The only question I had about your article on law and order was something at the very end which sounded more homiletical than an article. However, the area in question is so small that I changed my mind about sending it back to you.

In any event, your article about Jonah interests me very much. I wish you would turn it into an article and send it to me, whether or not it would be ready for Yom Kippur this year. As you well know, one needs to plan far ahead and if you do it now you will get it out of the way and I will have it.

With warmest regards, I am

Cordially,

  
Joseph R. Marot  
Editor, CCAR Journal

jrm:mb

Temple Israel of Greater Miami  
M. P. O. Box 1191  
Miami, Florida 33101

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Ex-officio

June 6, 1974

Rabbi Joseph R. Narot  
Temple Israel of Greater Miami  
M. P. O. Box 1191  
Miami, Florida 33101

Dear Joe:

Here is the piece on Jonah which I promised you.  
I hope you find it interesting.

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp

Encl.

## And Jonah Tested The Lord

Daniel Jeremy Silver

The synagogue can award no greater honor than maftir Jonah. The story of the wrong-way prophet was chosen for reading on Yom Kippur because it emphasizes the wide range of God's mercy, suggesting that the repentant sinner can depend on God's concern. The gates of repentance are wide open.

The more I reflect on Jonah the more I am convinced that its original story concerned the nature of God rather than the theme of forgiveness. Conventional interpretations tend to develop from the parable of the gourd with which the book concludes. The gourd episode turns the book into a rebuke of Jonah and, by inference, suggests that the book is a spirited example of prophetic universalism and a rebuke to a narrower spirit, personified by Jonah, which limited God's concern to Judeans. I am convinced that the gourd passage is an add-on.

Although Jonah is a slender volume, the four chapters comprise only forty-eight verses, it is not a seamless literary creation. The psalm Jonah offers to the Lord while in the belly of the great fish, "Thou didst bring me up alive from the pit" (2:6) is a hymn of gratitude for deliverance gained, not a plea for deliverance desperately needed, and obviously an insertion.

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At this point the gourd is incongruously introduced. Since Jonah has ~~already~~ a shed "as a shadow over his head," he would have no need for further protection from the sun - particularly the uncertain shade of a gourd plant. The gourd is not needed to shade Jonah, but so that on its withering God can point out to Jonah the sympathetic concerns which move Him to be merciful. This parable clearly defines a God in whom the quality of mercy outweighs His need to be God, in the sense of speaking only what will be - words that are dependably effective and beyond cancellation.

The parable is high-minded and not antithetical to the spirit of the basic story, but also not fully congruent to it. It describes a God who forgives the penitent city even after He has spoken its sentence of doom. In His desire to be merciful the God of the parable will allow history to follow a course <sup>o</sup>ther than the one He has ~~originally~~ announced. This raises serious doubt to the reliability of God's words. What happens to faith in God's dependability when, as in this case, a specific promise is not fulfilled?

If the parable of the gourd had not been introduced and the book had ended with 4:5, the story of Jonah would end on a note of suspense. Jonah sits down to see what will happen in the city. He waits. What is he waiting for?

Obviously he doubts that God truly intends to forgive Nineveh. The brief oracle which Jonah had brought, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown" (3:4), had pronounced flat out the city's doom. It had not included an escape clause beginning, 'Unless the city repent.' The Jonah who sits and waits under his shed does not believe that God's words are ever devoid of consequence, idle. Why not? On what could his doubts be based? Perhaps he doubted the sincerity and reach of Nineveh's repentance. In Jonah's day repentance was not a category of a humanist ethic, but a religious category which certainly included a requirement to abandon idolatry. It was hard to imagine the great cult center of Nineveh dedicated to Ishtar abandoning its ziggurat and its gods. A more likely reason for Jonah's doubts develops from his piety, his assumption that the words of God, once spoken, will have consequence and are never cancelled - an original and fundamental assumption of the prophetic movement. "It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Is. 55:11).

If Balaam had cursed Israel, Israel would have stood accursed. When Jeremiah spoke of the impending destruction of the Temple, its doom was sealed and Jerusalemites understandably, if inappropriately, held the prophet guilty of an act tantamount to treason. The authority of prophecy depended on this assumption of its immutability. What was God if His word was not certain and portentous? It was not that anyone wanted the words of doom to be irrevocable; but the promise of national deliverance depended equally on the immutability of God's word. If, in order to make room for divine forgiveness, the prophetic message was accepted as conditional an unfortunate and inevitable side effect was to raise doubts about



the reliability of God's national and messianic promises. Might these, too, not be cancelled?

The assumption of the unconditional nature of the prophetic word had been generally accepted and had provided prophecy its authority. This assumption came under increasing challenge, a fact which certainly contributed mightily to cessation of the prophetic movement. Classic prophecy tried to assert the older claims of the dependability of God's word and the conditionality of the covenant. Jonah brought an old-fashioned, unconditional oracle: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4). When the newer breed of prophets like Amos prophesied the doom of Israel, God's word often included an escape <sup>clause;</sup> ~~gate~~: "Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be (ulai) that the Lord of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (5:15).

As covenant thinking took hold the religious spirit accepted conditional forms and much was made of the possibility of repentance. Folk began to lose their fear of the prophetic oracle and some small measure of their faith in God's omnipotence. When Jeremiah was tried for having spoken the words which doomed the Temple, his defenders cited evidence of other prophets who had spoken words of doom which had not occurred and won his acquittal. More and more the words of the prophets lost the flat out finality of the early oracles. Quite often there is a qualifying clause, "But even in those days I will not make a full end of you" (Jer. 5:18), "I will not bear a grudge forever" (Jer. 3:12). The paradox of classic Judean prophecy is that it becomes existentially significant precisely at a

time when the best minds of Israel were outgrowing the assumptions on which the original authority of the prophetic movement was based, precisely when prophecy began to change into sermonics. Prophecy ceased in Israel because it was sabotaged by the appeal of the doctrine of repentance. In time the conflict between repentance and prophecy was solved by imaginative compromise. Both were upheld by the simple device of redefining prophecy as apocalypse. In the here and now repentance played the dominant role and thought was centered on the moral equations of the covenant; but for the long term covenant thought was abandoned for apocalypse, God's revelation of his special and immutable plan for the nation and mankind.

Jonah believed in a God who acts like a god should and who speaks with the consequential force one expects of God's words. He cannot believe that God's words are not reliable, that Nineveh will not be destroyed. He has no alternative but to sit and wait and put God to the test.

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"This O Lord is what I feared when I was in my own country and to forestall it I tried to escape to Tarshish. I knew that Thou art God, gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and ever constant and always willing to repent of the disaster" (V'nicham al ha-ra'ah).

Jonah here uses and amends the doxological formula of Exodus 34:6 which must quite early have become liturgically conventional. The God of the Exodus formula is reliable. He forgives, but His words always have consequence.

"The Lord! The Lord! A God compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of fathers upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations."

The text is obviously inflated and is certainly not a haphazard or accidental accumulation of attributes. The attribute of reliability seems deliberately introduced. In all probability a serious division of opinion existed in post-exilic Judea over the nature of God and that debate focused on this formula. Other variations exist which differ substantially only in the matter of the reliability of God's announced decisions.

Numbers 14:18 "The Lord! Slow to anger and abounding in kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression, yet not remitting all punishment. . . ."

Joel 2:13-14 "Turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and compassionate, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy, and repents Him of the evil. . . ."

Nahum 1:3 "The Lord is long-suffering and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty. . . ."

(cf also Ps. 103:8, 145:8, Neh. 9:16)



Our fathers had a problem. They yearned desperately for the reality of repentance. At the same time their national hopes rested on the reliability of God's revealed promises. Faith was bittahon, the ability to depend on God. How can one depend on a God who changes His word? Repentance is a hopeful theme for the individual; but the Babylonian exiles, the Persian diaspora, and the Judeans who squatted in an unwalled and defenseless Jerusalem needed confidence in a God whose promise of restoration was dependable.

The original Jonah, I believe, argued for a God whose word, once spoken, was unconditional, for a God who spoke words which must happen, if not immediately, then soon. He had been weaned on the God of Exodus 34:6 who does not remit all punishment. He was a deeply religious conservative who could not imagine a God who speaks of events that do not happen. He had heard and taken to heart God's revelation: "The word is gone forth from My mouth in righteousness; and shall not come back," (Is. 45:23); "for I, the Lord, your God, change not" (Malachi 3:1); "God is not man to be capricious nor human to change His mind. Would He speak and not act? Promise and not fulfill?" (Num. 33:19). He knew and accepted the test the Torah proposes to unmask a false prophet: "Should you ask yourselves, How can we know that the oracle was not spoken by the Lord?" - if the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the oracle does not come true, that oracle was not spoken by the Lord; the prophet has uttered it presumptuously; do not stand in dread of him" (Deut. 18:21-2).

Jonah is a post-exilic story based almost certainly on a popular tradition about a pre-exilic Navi who had brought an oracle of doom against Assyrian Nineveh. This brief statement provided the kernel for a sophisticated fiction which dramatized the issue of the reliability of God's word. There is some external evidence that Jonah's prophecy became something of a cause celebre in post-exilic theological circles. The apocalyptic book of Tobit concludes with a romantic death bed scene in which that pious worthy summons his son for certain final instructions. Tobit's death bed words are a surprise: "Take your sons, behold, go to Media, for I fully believe what Jonah the prophet said about Nineveh, that it will be overthrown." "My son, leave Nineveh because what the prophet Jonah said will truly happen" (14:3y).

I accept the reading of the Vaticanus and Alexandrinus texts of Tobit against the Sinaiticus in which Nahum is substituted for Jonah as the prophet sent to Nineveh. Nahum had preached against Nineveh (#3); but in the first century when chapter 14 of Tobit seems to have been written, centuries after the fall of Nineveh, Tobit's deathbed advice would represent an idle invention unless one assumes, as we must, a serious theological purpose. The context suggests that this scene was invented to underscore the reliability of prophecy. Tobit instructs and then continues: "I hold true the word of God against Nineveh. . . that all these things shall come to pass. . . Indeed, the things which the prophets of Israel spoke, whom God sent, all shall happen; and nothing shall fail of all their words; and all things shall come to pass in their appointed time. . . not a word of the prophecies shall fail" (Tobit 14:13-4). Tobit suggests that Jonah's vigil will not be disappointed. Nineveh will be destroyed. He does so almost certainly to encourage the beleaguered of his days to trust the prophetic promises of redemption.



As repentance sabotaged prophecy; the prophet's rule becomes increasingly impossible. Jeremiah cursed the day he was born. Jonah openly rebelled. Others whose spirits might have made them sensitive to the word recognized that preaching had taken over from prophecy. It became clear to all but the diehard that the Jonah who sits and waits for God to be God will have a long wait. His vigil suggests why prophecy ceased in Israel. The God who is always willing to repent of the disaster has ceased to be the God whose powerful word describes the fate of nations and never returns empty. God revealed Himself as a preacher instead of a prophet and Israel begins to produce its long line of teachers.



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**Autumn 1974**

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# And Jonah Tested the Lord

*God As A Preacher*

*Daniel Jeremy Silver*

THE SYNAGOGUE CAN award no greater honor than *maftir* Jonah. The story of the wrong-way prophet was chosen for reading on *Yom Kippur* because it emphasizes the wide range of God's mercy, suggesting that the repentant sinner can depend on God's concern. The gates of repentance are wide open.

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DANIEL JEREMY SILVER is Rabbi of The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio.

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- Nahum 1:3      The Lord is long-suffering and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty . . . (cf. also Psalms 103:8, 145:8, Nehemiah 9:16)

Our fathers had a problem. They yearned desperately for the reality of repentance. At the same time their national hopes rested on the reliability of God's revealed promises. Faith was *bittahon*, the ability to depend on God. How can one depend on a God who changes His word? Repentance is a hopeful theme for the individual; but the Babylonian exiles, the Persian diaspora, and the Judeans who squatted in an unwalled and defenseless Jerusalem needed confidence in a God whose promise of restoration was dependable.

The original Jonah, I believe, argued for a God whose word, once spoken, was unconditional, for a God who spoke words which must happen, if not immediately, then soon. He had been weaned on the God of Exodus 34:6 who does not remit all punishment. He was a deeply religious conservative who could not imagine a God who speaks of events that do not happen. He had heard and taken to heart God's revelation: "The word is gone forth from My mouth in righteousness; and shall not come back," (Isaiah 45:23); "for I, the Lord, your God, change not" (Malachi 3:1); "God is not man to be capricious nor human to change His mind. Would He speak and not act? Promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 33:19). He knew and accepted the test the *Torah* proposes to unmask a false prophet: "Should you ask yourselves, How can we know that the oracle was not spoken by the Lord? — if the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the oracle does not come true, that oracle was not spoken by the Lord; the prophet has uttered it presumptuously; do not stand in dread of him" (Deuteronomy 18:21-2).

Jonah is a post-exilic story based almost certainly on a popular tradition about a pre-exilic *navi* who had brought an oracle of doom against Assyrian Nineveh. This brief statement provided the kernel for a sophisticated fiction which dramatized the issue of the reliability of God's word. There is some external evidence that Jonah's prophecy became something of a *cause celebre* in post-exilic theological circles. The apocalyptic Book of Tobit concludes with a romantic deathbed scene in which that pious worthy summons his son for certain final instructions. Tobit's deathbed

words are a surprise: "Take your sons, behold, go to Media, for I fully believe what Jonah the prophet said about Nineveh, that it will be overthrown." "My son, leave Nineveh because what the prophet Jonah said will truly happen" (14:3y).

I accept the reading of the Vaticanus and Alexandrinus texts of Tobit against the Sinaiticus in which Nahum is substituted for Jonah as the prophet sent to Nineveh. Nahum had preached against Nineveh (4:3); but in the first century when chapter 14 of Tobit seems to have been written, centuries after the fall of Nineveh, Tobit's deathbed advice would represent an idle invention unless one assumes, as we must, a serious theological purpose. The context suggests that this scene was invented to underscore the reliability of prophecy. Tobit instructs and then continues: "I hold true the word of God against Nineveh . . . that all these things shall come to pass. . . . Indeed, the things which the prophets of Israel spoke, whom God sent, *all* shall happen; and nothing shall fail of all their words; and all things shall come to pass in their appointed time . . . *not a word of the prophecies* shall fail" (Tobit 14:13-4). Tobit suggests that Jonah's vigil will not be disappointed. Nineveh will be destroyed. He does so almost certainly to encourage the beleaguered of his days to trust the prophetic promises of redemption.

As repentance sabotaged prophecy, the prophet's rule becomes increasingly impossible. Jeremiah cursed the day he was born. Jonah openly rebelled. Others whose spirits might have made them sensitive to the word recognized that preaching had taken over from prophecy. It became clear to all but the diehard that the Jonah who sits and waits for God to be God will have a long wait. His vigil suggests why prophecy ceased in Israel. The God who is always willing to repent of the disaster has ceased to be the God whose powerful word describes the fate of nations and never returns empty. God revealed Himself as a preacher instead of a prophet and Israel began to produce its long line of teachers.