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ISAIAH

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares (Isaiah 2:4)

SIXTH TRIENNIAL INDEX

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THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

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10	W	Hoshanah Rabba
11	Th	Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17
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19	F	Genesis 6:9-11:32
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11	S	Psalms 116
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14	W	Psalms 119:89-176
15	Th	Psalms 120
16	F	Genesis 25:19-28:9

*   In the Diaspora
**   In Israel on Thursday

EDITORIAL

At a recent meeting of our Quarterly's Editorial Advisory Committee there was a discussion on ways of increasing the number of our subscribers. One of our friends made a comment which raised a number of basic questions related to the Jewish attitude to Bible study. He said that he had come across members of the Jewish community who, when they heard of the Jewish Bible Quarterly, assumed that it was something for the non-Jews, since Jews do not spend too much time in Bible study. Jews concentrate on Talmud; not on Bible.

In all fairness, our colleague's report touched upon a criticism which contains an element of truth. For many centuries, and indeed right up till our own time, Jewish education was based upon the child's knowledge of the Pentateuch — and then he went on to Mishnah and Talmud. The rest of the Bible was hardly ever touched in the traditional school, and any knowledge the Jewish child had of the Bible, outside the Humash, derived from his handling of the Prayer Book, and from references in the Talmud.

Of course, this was not always the case. There were periods in Jewish history when the Bible was at the center of the curriculum for the most outstanding scholars. This happened, for example, in the era of the Karaite rebellion against Rabbinism and the Oral Law, when a need arose for closer attention to the literal meaning of the biblical text in order to counteract the Karaite arguments. Again, from the tenth century and for some considerable time afterwards, a long line of medieval Jewish commentators brought their perceptive insights into the area of Bible study, in all its depth. Commentators such as Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, David Kimhi, Nahmanides, Abrabanel and Sforno are just a few of a great list of distinguished teachers who enriched and even popularized Bible study right up to the 16th century.

But in the later Middle Ages, the situation changed with the enforced ghetto existence of the Jews in many countries of Europe.

Uninfluenced by the Renaissance (except for Italy), the Jews withdrew into their own restricted but intense rabbinic culture where the study of the Talmud and other rabbinic works was virtually the sole intellectual exercise of the yeshivot. That remained the position, at least for the Ashkenazi communities, right up till the nineteenth century and the rise of Bible criticism. Solomon Schechter remarked somewhere that in ignoring Bible studies, it was left to the non-Jewish scholars to write the love letter of the Jews. But there were winds of change with sages like S. D. Luzzatto, Malbim and others who, in more recent years, were followed by teachers such as the Hebrew University professors, Cassutto, M. H. Segal and Yehezkel Kaufmann.

Areas of study are also subject to the influence of historical forces, and if there were special conditions in the past which shifted some emphasis away from Bible studies in the Jewish community, today the position has dramatically changed. Among other things, the rise of modern Israel has created a new interest in the Bible as the charter of the Jewish return and revival in the historical biblical birth place of the Jewish people. With this has come about a sincere search not only for Jewish biblical roots but also – perhaps even more important – for the prophetic biblical values which were Israel's main contribution to civilization. Almost every page of the Bible has something to say to us in this search, and it is perhaps not so strange after all that Bible study groups, new publications and enlarged university and college courses have become more popular today. In this light it is significant that the World Jewish Bible Contest for youth, held in Jerusalem each year, is the main national event of Israel Independence Day. In a profound way, the meaning of the State of Israel is symbolized by the renewed and joyous embrace of the Bible.

CHAIM PEARL
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

THE MEANING OF ABRAHAM'S TEST
A REEXAMINATION OF THE AKEDAH

MOSHE J. YERES

I

The historical, theological and religious origins of the Jewish religion and people stem in no small measure from the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the examples they set. These men of vision and message have always been held as paragons of holiness for the Jew in every age. Yet, as holy as these forebears of our people may have been, there appears to be one important component missing from their lives. For while even a superficial analysis of their lives will clearly note their complete devotion to God, one finds no record of any meaningful relationship between the patriarch and his children. The Bible records no real family discussions; there are simply no tangible interactions between father and son. Even Jacob, who clearly consults with his wives when it comes to take leave of Laban,[1] is unable to forge any real relationship with his sons; indeed it is this lack of filial closeness that is the specific catalyst for the Joseph story and all the travail that follows. Abraham, the first and perhaps the greatest of our patriarchs, is also clearly remiss in this regard. Though Abraham is thankful to God for the birth of his son Isaac, one does not sense any interaction between the two. The Bible records no discussions between young Isaac and his father, and in fact the first recorded interrelationship between Isaac and Abraham is the *Akedah*. They are in different worlds, and any overt love and closeness between them seems non-existent.[2]

1 Genesis 31:4 ff.
2 For example, there is no record in the Bible of Abraham blessing Isaac, as is recorded for the other Patriarchs. The omission is clearly felt in Genesis 25:5: *And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.* The use of the word *va-yiten* (he gave) instead of *va-yevarekh* (he blessed) is indicative of Abraham's lack of demonstrative love for Isaac.

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It is noteworthy that the Bible does not record any overt manifesta-
tion of love by Abraham to any of his sons, neither to Isaac, nor to
Ishmael. Consider the biblical narrative of the eviction of Hagar
and Ishmael. How could it have been so easy for Abraham to have
done this, even with God's supportive command?[3] Better still, why
didn't Abraham try to talk to Ishmael, try to straighten out and deal
with the issues before they came to a head? Why didn't he try to form
a bond of closeness with Ishmael and attempt to exert an influence
over him?

It is true that the folklore of the rabbis tries to fill some of the gaps,
in stories they narrate of Abraham and Ishmael, as well as
Abraham and Isaac. But the important point made here, is that the
Bible itself is significantly silent.

<div align="center">II</div>

It is my conjecture that this lack of closeness between father and
son stands at the crux of the story of the binding of Isaac – the
Akedah – as related in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. I do
not mean to argue that there existed no love at all between Abraham
and his sons Ishmael and Isaac. Abraham's love for his sons is the
subject of an insightful comment of the rabbis when God
commanded Abraham:

> *Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest*, (take)
> *Isaac*. (Genesis 22:2).

The Midrash amplifies their discussion:

> "Which son?" Abraham asked. "Thine only son" replied
> God.
> "But each is the only one of his mother," returned Abraham.
> "Whom thou lovest," God answered. "But I love both" said
> Abraham. "Even Isaac," said God.[4]

The rabbis thus insist that there was love; but it is a distant love,
not clearly and not warmly manifested. On the other hand, the

3 Genesis 21:12-14.
4 *Genesis Rabbah* 55:7, see also *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* chap. 31.

immediacy by which Abraham responds to God's request to sacrifice his son reveals clearly the strange distance that Abraham kept from his son. How could Abraham, if he truly had close feelings for his son, have been so accepting of God's request? Never mind God's promises of *For in Isaac shall seed be called to thee* (21:12); which will go unfulfilled if Isaac is offered for a "burnt offering." How could Abraham agree so readily to sacrifice his own son? And yet, he proceeds to do just that. For immediately the next morning, *Abraham rose up early* (22:3), ready, at the first opportunity to carry out God's command. Of course, it is usually argued that this was the very test, the actual *nissayon* of Abraham: that he followed God's command *without* questioning. But that is exactly our question: how *could* he do it? How could Abraham agree to what can only be described in human terms as a request which goes against the basic bond of parents to their children? And yet Abraham has no difficulty with it.[6]

Recognize for a moment that the Abraham under discussion is the same person whom the rabbis and the biblical narrative itself personify as the *ish ha-hessed*, the biblical personality over-flowing with loving-kindness.[7] This is the same Abraham of the tradition who opens his tent in four directions and invites in all travellers to rest up and refresh themselves. This is the Abraham who pleads with the Almighty to spare the lives of the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Where is his *hessed* and loving-kindness now? Why doesn't he now ask God to spare the life of his own son?

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6 Cf. 1 *Samuel* 14:4 where Saul's initial decision to have Jonathan killed for violating the oath elicits a strong negative response from the people and is averted. Here Saul's decision is not caused by a request from God, rather he felt forced to conform to the effects of *his* oath. This is similar to the incident recorded in *Judges* 11:31-40 where Jephthah sacrifices his daughter. Significantly, the rabbis in the Midrash are very critical of Jephthah's action; see for example *Genesis Rabbah* 60:3, 70:3, *Yalkut Shim'oni Judges* 68, q.v. Babylonian Talmud *Hagiga* 4a. The concept of a father being asked by God to sacrifice his son is further complicated by the Bible's insistent abhorrence of the *Molekh* and child sacrifices of the day.

7 This theme has been developed in detail by the Kabbalists, see for example *Zohar*, *Genesis* 119b.

Why is he so accepting? Abraham's defense of Sodom was based on
a plea for divine mercy.[8] Why does he now not plead with God for the
same mercy for his own son? Surely, he had ample opportunity, for
the journey took three days. And yet, during this period, Abraham
does not talk to God, and does not try at all to save his son.
Something does not appear correct! Something is missing![9]

In truth, one must ask what kind of test God is giving Abraham at
the *Akedah*. What is God trying to prove in making a request that is
completely unfair to a parent? The story of the *Akedah* has been
interpreted countless times in an effort to draw out a relevant lesson
from an otherwise inexplicable story. Such interpretations have
been submitted by all Jewish commentators in every period, as well
as by the rabbis of Talmud and Midrash. In more modern times
Christian thinkers have joined Jewish commentators in their
efforts to examine and explain the story.

III

I would like to present here a hypothesis that is radically different
from the accepted understanding of the *Akedah* story. It appears to
me that the test of the *Akedah* was specifically created by God to
bring Abraham closer to his son, to forge a bond of love between
Abraham and Isaac. For indeed, a most basic question is: what
really is the purpose of any *nissayon* – of God's testing of any
individual, of which the *Akedah* is merely an exceptional example.

8 *Genesis Rabbah* 39:6, 49:9, *Pesikta de-Rabbi Kahana* (ed. Buber) p. 139. In the
last reference Abraham is called the *rahaman she-ba-'avot*.

But cf. Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 89b where Raba is critical of Abraham's si-
lence and mute acceptance of God's promise in Genesis 15:13: "Know of a surety that
thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them . . . four
hundred years." The lack of any entreaty by Abraham here denies him the right to
intercede on behalf of Israel in the time to come. Incidentally, it should be noted that
Raba has in effect issued a negative report on Abraham in what is considered by the
Rabbis as one of his ten trials (see *Abot de-Rabbi Nathan*, A chap. 36, B chap. 36, Mid-
rash *Psalms* to 18:25, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* chap. 28). The implications about
Abraham's dealing with Hagar and Ishmael – also traditionally considered of the
ten trials – can only be hinted at here, see below.

9 Kierkegaard, in *Fear & Trembling*, answers this by positing his concept of a
"teleological suspension of the ethical." But cf. Milton Steinberg, *Anatomy of Faith*,
pp. 146-147.

After all, surely God knows in advance what the outcome of any test will be. Most classical interpreters have grappled with this question, and relate the purpose of the *nissayon* directly to the person undergoing the test.[10] I would venture to add that at times, the *nissayon* is given by God in order to *effect a change* in the person undergoing the test, and such was the test given to Abraham at the *Akedah*.[11]

God recognized that Abraham was involved in many issues, global and personal; he pleads for the inhabitants of Sodom, he saved Lot, he negotiated with Abimelech, he invites wayfarers and the three angels into his tent, he spreads the word of God to *the souls they had gotten in Haran* (12:5). But yet with all the good that Abraham is doing he is not dealing with his own family; he is not giving time to raising Isaac, he is not forging a bond of closeness with Isaac. He has failed completely with his older son Ishmael, and from the biblical narrative, it appears that he did not even try to heal the family friction between Ishmael and Isaac, between Hagar and Sarah. He attempted no reconciliation.[12] When one carefully

10 See Nahmanides, *Commentary on the Bible*, Genesis 22:1, Don Isaac Abrabanel, *Commentary on the Bible*, Genesis, beginning of chap. 22: "*she-yotsi mah seh-bakao'ah 'el ha-po'al*," similarly in Sforno's Commentary. See also Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed* III:24, R. Judah Loew (Maharal) of Prague, *Derekh Hayyim* 5:3.

11 Accordingly, this may make the very purpose of this *nissayon* different from the other nine trials that Abraham underwent (*Avot* 5:3). Yet in truth, even without the interpretation developed herein, one must note a critical difference between this last *nissayon* and all the others: the very command by God to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is reversed by Him and the test is never carried to its conclusion, cf. supra n. 8.

12 A careful reading of Genesis chap. 21 does not reveal an Abraham reluctant to evict Ishmael, as is often assumed. All that the Bible states is that *the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son*. Nowhere is it indicated that Abraham had hesitation about evicting Ishmael. Rather, he was upset at this juncture now that the friction had come to a head. If anything, perhaps the silence of Scripture until that moment indicates that Abraham was not dealing with it. Chapter 21 is to be seen as merely a continuation of Abraham's inability to deal with Hagar, and now Ishmael, that began in Genesis chapter 16. And in that first encounter, there is no directive at all from God to send Hagar away; it is Abraham who clearly makes the decision. Even in chapter 21, there is no clear directive from God to evict Ishmael and Hagar. All that God states is *harken unto her* [Sarah's] *voice*. What Sarah is saying, and what she may say, and what she can say is not discussed.

examines the biblical record, one will discover God's sympathy with
the plight of Ishmael and his mother, Hagar. Thus we read that *God
heard the voice of the lad* (21:17); and, responding to the weeping of
Hagar an *angel of God called to Hagar . . . and said . . . Fear not,
for God hath heard the voice of the lad* (ibid). I believe that herein lay
the very purpose of *nissayon* of the *Akedah*: the recognition by God
that Abraham needed to be brought closer to his own family, to his
own child; that within his own family Abraham needed desperately
to improve his parental love and concern.

<center>IV</center>

I admit that if this premise is correct, it will surely alter our
interpretation of the theological significance of the *Akedah*; a
careful analysis of the biblical narrative and midrashim in
Genesis 22 appears to lend support to our thesis. The first dialogue
between Abraham and Isaac recorded by the Bible is found in verses
seven and eight of this chapter as the two ascend Mt. Moriah:

> *And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My
> father.' And he said, 'Here am I my son.' And he said:
> 'Behold the fire and the wood . . .' and Abraham said 'God
> will provide . . . for a burnt offering, my son.'*

These verses may contain the first serious exchange between
Abraham and Isaac.[13] Note the terms used: "my father," "my son."
The Bible is recording something that was until then nonexistent!
And the narrative seems to note this clearly when it states twice וילכו
שניהם יחדו *they both walked together* (22:6, 8) father and son. This
was a togetherness newly formed, that did not exist a day before: יחדו
— together, father and son talking, discussing, relating, spending
time with each other. Abraham is finally discovering his son.[14]
This is the test, *this* is the *nissayon*, which brought father and son
together.

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13   Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 56:4, *Tanhuma Va-Yera* 23.
14   *Targum Yerushalmi* (22:8) translates *yahdav* in the sense of "in the same spir-
it," see also *Genesis Rabbah, loc. cit., Tanhuma* Buber 46.

Perhaps this is why God's approach to Abraham for the *Akedah* begins with the long litany of phrases *Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac.* In this initial presentation, God leads Abraham step by step, point by point, in order to make him aware of the need to deal with his son in a relationship of *asher ahavta* and *et yehidkha.* God uses this format in order to get Abraham to raise in his own consciousness the love needed in his relationship with his son and to force him to verbalize that love. The crisis of the *Akedah* brings father and son together. A rabbinic midrash can be read to emphasize the same point. At the peak of the mountain as Abraham binds his son and reaches for the knife, the Midrash vividly tells us:

> "He stretches forth his hand to take the knife while tears stream from his eyes, and these tears, prompted by a father's compassion, fall into Isaac's eyes."[15]

At last, Abraham thinks about what he is bidden to do, and he is overcome with emotion. These are tears of remorse of what he, Abraham, has been missing all these years. He has finally recognized the need for closeness with his son, whom he has just begun to appreciate during the ascent up the mountain. And now, at this very moment of recognition and understanding, he will lose that son; and he is torn at long last between the command of God and his newly-formed closeness to Isaac. These are tears of regret of what should have been all the years of his life and of Isaac's life; and now it is about to be *too late*! The midrash seems to suggest this when it has Abraham's tears falling into Isaac's eyes: pointing to the thought that it is that closeness, the sharing of father and son that this whole epic drama is stressing. And it is then and only then, as Abraham breaks down and recognizes the real purpose of God's *nissayon* that God sends down his angel to call *Abraham, Abraham . . . lay not thy hand upon the lad . . .* (vv. 11, 12). Abraham, you have now passed the test, and there is no further need to continue.

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15 *Genesis Rabbah* 56:8.

V

The lesson to be learned from the *Akedah* story is of immense significance. For it means that even as great a personality as our patriarch Abraham had a problem in not recognizing a lack of a close fatherly relationship to his son. Abraham needed an *Akedah* experience from God to realize his shortcoming in this respect.

To complete the study, I wonder if in the long run Abraham really "passed" the *Akedah* test, if he actually retained that closeness to Isaac epitomized at the peak of Mt. Moriah. For the remainder of the Book of Genesis contains no further discussions between Isaac and Abraham. Perhaps, the closeness of father and son kindled at Mt. Moriah did not continue to develop after all, but rather petered out shortly thereafter. Perhaps for Abraham it was too late for the *nissayon* to effect any real change. Perhaps, in the final analysis, it was too late and too hard for Abraham to change even after understanding the purpose of the *Akedah* test.

THE PROBLEM OF THE LEVIRATE MARRIAGE

JOSIAH DERBY

In Deuteronomy 25:5-10 we read:[1]

> *When brothers dwell together and one of them dies and leaves no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married to a stranger, outside the family. Her husband's brother shall unite with her and take her as his wife, performing the levir's duty. The first son that she bears shall be accounted to the dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out in Israel. But if the man does not want to marry his brother's widow, his brother's widow shall appear before the elders in the gate and declare, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name in Israel for his brother; he will not perform the duty of a levir'. The elders of her town shall then summon him and talk to him. If he insists, saying, 'I do no choose to marry her', his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull the sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and make this declaration: 'Thus shall be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.' And he shall go in Israel by the name of 'The family of the unsandaled one.'*

The marriage of the brother-in-law to the widow under the circumstances described in this text is called *Yibbum*,[2] and in English, *"levirate[3] marriage."*

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1 The Jewish Publication Society translation, 1962.
2 This is derived from *Yavam* which means brother-in-law. However, this word is of uncertain etymology, and is used in the Bible only here and within the context described. The verb form, *Yabbem*, is also used in Gen. 38:8.
3 From the Latin word for brother-in-law: *levir*.

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The thoughtful reader of these verses will pause to reflect upon a number of questions which the text leaves unanswered. First and foremost is the question: did the Torah intend for the text to be taken literally, or was it using a shorthand? Begin with the very first clause: "When brothers dwell together".[4] Is this a pre-condition for the law that follows, and if so, what exactly is that condition? Or, suppose the deceased has several brothers, which of them is involved in this domestic drama? Or suppose the deceased had two wives (which was possible in biblical times and for a long period thereafter), does the *yavam* have to marry both? The phraseology requiring the *yavam* to marry the widow sounds like any other positive commandment in the Torah; how then does it contradict itself by giving him an alternative, even though he disobeys the commandment?

More significantly, according to the translation, the deceased brother "leaves no son". "Son" is the literal translation of the Hebrew word here, *ben*. Suppose he had left daughters? Similarly, the text speaks of *the first son that she bears*. But suppose she bears only daughters? Moreover, the Hebrew uses the word *bekhor* which almost always means "the first born, who is a male." The first son born after daughters is not called a *bekhor*. In our text, does the Torah use *bekhor* with intent?

Just one more question which the text leaves unanswered. In the case when the *yavam* refuses to marry the widow and she performs the prescribed act of "unsandaling",[5] is she then free to marry out of that family? Why, in the case of a bill of divorcement, the Torah specifically states the wife's freedom to remarry[6] but does not specify it here?

We must presume that in ancient Israel the people were well aware of the answers to these and other questions. That is to say, that the Torah did not bother to spell out in detail what the public already

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4   The Hebrew is almost exactly the same as the familiar phrase in Ps. 133:1.

5   In the Hebrew this is known as *halitzah*, meaning the removal of the shoe or sandal.

6   Deut. 24:2.

knew and was practising. But we must also presume that originally
the intention of the Torah was to be understood literally. Only in the
course of time, even as the entire body of Torah law went through a
process of development and change, so did the ambiguities in the law
of *Yibbum* become invested with specifics which, in earlier genera-
tions the law had not specified. Ultimately, by the second century
C.E., these developments in the law, as well as a host of hypothetical
cases, were codified into a corpus of law which became the Tractate
Yevamot[7] in the Mishnah.

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the history and
background of the law of *Yibbum*, nor of the law of "unsandaling"
(*halitzah*), nor to answer the questions raised above.[8] Rather, our
concern here is the meaning of the phrase which, according to the
text, is the entire rationale for the law of *Yibbum*: *his* (the deceased)
name shall not be blotted out in Israel. The same idea is repeated in
our text in a slightly different form: *to establish the name of the*
(deceased) *brother in Israel*. And in a third phraseology: *build up
his brother's house*.

There is only one instance of a levirate marriage mentioned in
the Bible, and one case of a quasi-levirate marriage.

The first is the story of Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah.[9]
When Tamar's husband, Judah's eldest, died childless, Judah gave
her in marriage to his second son so that he would *provide offspring*
for his brother.[10] In the second case,[11] Boaz, a distant kinsman of
Elimelekh whose son, Mahlon, had died childless, acquired the

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7   The widowed sister-in-law is called *yevamah*, which is the feminine form of *ya-
vam*. *Yevamot* is the plural, referring specifically to the widows in this situation.

8   For such a discussion see, for example, Entziklopedia Mikra'it, Vol. III, Col.
446; Westermark, "History of Human Marriage", Vol. III, p.207ff; p.261ff; W. R.
Smith, "Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia", p.122ff.

9   Genesis, Ch. 38.

10   What Judah did could not be construed as an act of *Yibbum*, under the law, and
hence it might not be expected that the child be named Onan. However some scholars
maintain that in an earlier form of the law - as it was practised by some ancient Near
East societies - it was the father of the deceased who was required to marry the widow.

11   Ruth 4:1-10.

right to marry Mahlon's widow, Ruth, there being no closer relative willing to do so. And in doing so he declares that his purpose is *to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate, that the name of the deceased may not disappear from among his kinsmen.*

These various formulations of the rationale behind the levirate marriage would seem to imply that the child born of this union would be given the name of the deceased son. Yet in neither of the two instances in the Bible is this so. When Tamar gave birth to twins (by Judah), one was named Peretz and the other Zerah. And Ruth gave birth to a son who was named Oved, not Mahlon. (Coincidentally or not, in both of these cases the first offspring of the union was a *bekhor*, as the law describes.) How does Boaz square this with his intention to fulfill the law of perpetuating the name of the deceased?

It seems clear that the wording of the purpose of *Yibbum* is not to be taken literally. If so, what does it mean?

The answer to this question will emerge from the answers to two other questions which arise out of the text of the law: a) why should the *yavam* refuse to marry the widow, his sister-in-law in the face of being dubbed with a term of disgrace? and b) why should the widow be anxious to enter into this marriage?

In reply to the first of these two questions, one might argue that he refuses to marry the widow because she is not pleasing to him for one reason or another; she is not pretty, or not a good housewife, or his own wife is strongly against it. But would he really submit himself and perhaps the other members of his family to the consequent opprobium because of such reasons? He could surely find a way to live with what might be unpleasant or even offensive about the sister-in-law. Besides, an additional woman in the house, however incompetent, could be an asset, let alone the children she might add to the household's work force. There must be a more compelling reason for his demurral.

And for the widow, are we to assume that in each and every instance the *yavam* is so desirable that she is upset enough to denounce him when he rejects her? The Torah, apparently, does not

give the least hint that she might be displeased with the possibility of the *yibbum* taking place. We might also ask why the perpetuation of her deceased husband's name should mean so much that she is willing to enter into the *yibbum* under any circumstances.

To be sure, the bearing of children was of crucial importance in ancient society. A childless woman did not have much status, and as a childless wife she was regarded with ridicule and contempt by her peers.[12] But then the childless widow could marry someone other then her *yavam* in order to escape this unhappy condition.

There may have been some mythological or folklorish under-pinning to the urgent desire of replacing the deceased man if only with a vicariously born child.[13] Perhaps it was just as unseemly for a man to die without offspring, and that this social value was strong enough to establish the institution of *yibbum*. However, there is little or no biblical evidence to substantiate these conjectures.

A hint to the answer to our question can be found in the story of Ruth. When Elimelekh, Naomi's husband, died, his property went to his sons. When they died, the property was to go to the next male relative, since they left no sons.[14] Boaz cannot marry Ruth unless he "redeems" this property,[15] but he discovers that there is a man who is the closer relative to Elimelekh. The latter, who remains nameless in the story, must be given first priority in redeeming Elimelekh's (which had become Mahlon's) property. It appears that this man was not aware of the full circumstances, namely that there was a widow involved. Hence, when Boaz offers him the opportunity of

12 For example, I Samuel, Ch. 1.
13 Note that Judah wants his second son to establish "zera" - seed - for his deceased brother, Gen. 38:8.
14 A wife does not inherit from her husband - Mishnah B.B. 8:1.
15 See Note 10. Scholars are unclear as to the implication of the word *go'el* - re-deemer - in this context. If the next of kin is the rightful heir, why should he have to acquire the property? Or, what is meant by "redeeming" it? Nor is it clear what rela-tionship Ruth has to the property. (Orpah, the other brother's widow, was out of the pic-ture because she had returned to her home in Moab.) Some scholars are reluctant to ac-cept the notion that the childless widow was part of the estate that the deceased husband left behind.

"redeeming" the property, he gladly accepts.[16] But when Boaz tells him that Ruth goes with the property, he quickly demurs; *Then I cannot redeem it for myself unless I destroy my own estate.*[17]

Why the sudden change of mind? What does this *go'el* (redeemer, the next of kin), mean when he says that by marrying Ruth he will destroy his own estate?

In a footnote to the verse just quoted the J.P.S. explains that the *go'el* will be spending his own money to buy Elimelekh's estate, thereby reducing the value of his own estate which he would leave to his children. Elimelekh's estate will be inherited by the child that Ruth will bear him. To be sure, this child is also the *go'el*'s child, but in a sense it is foisted upon him and upon his other children whose inheritance would be reduced.

While the situation in ordinary *yibbum* need not be as it is here, we can nevertheless draw the inference that the essential problem in *yibbum* involves money. Let us consider a hypothetical case.

A man has five sons. One of them dies childless leaving a widow. Now suppose there were no law of *yibbum*, then the widow would leave the family to seek a life elsewhere. The father divides his estate among the remaining four sons. But the law of *yibbum* makes sense, and all our questions above are answered, if the child born to the widow by the *yavam* becomes the heir to the deceased son's portion of the estate, thereby reducing the amount the remaining brothers received.[18] Is there any wonder, then, that a surviving brother would rather submit to the ignominy of *halitzah*, and the prospect of being called "the unsandaled one"? Perhaps in poor families the fulfillment of the law of *yibbum* would take place more often, and would be subject to the personal considerations of both the widow and the *yavam* as noted above. But where the stakes are high, the refusal of the *yavam* becomes almost certain.

16 The Hebrew text uses language which implies that the "redeemer" is "buying" the property from Naomi. But this is not consistent with the law in the Mishnah.

17 Ruth 4:6.

18 According to the Mishnah in Yev. 4:7 the yavam, upon marrying the widow, acquires title to the deceased's brother's property. But some scholars believe this was not the case in ancient times. See Entz. Mik. ad loc.

We can now see why the widow is so eager for the law to be implemented. Through *halitzah* she is left out in the cold. It gives her little consolation that the *yavam* is stigmatized. The chief problem for her is that she is dispossessed. But if she is married by the *yavam*, she is assured of a secure future through what the resulting child stands to inherit. Even though the text does not reveal to us what the elders say to the demurring *yavam*,[19] we can read between the lines that they do not want the widow to be deprived of what otherwise would have been hers.

So much for the situation in the biblical period. But in time economic and other social conditions changed and there is no evidence in Jewish literature that *yibbum* was practised to any great extent in the post-biblical period. In spite of the "mound upon mound" of regulations that this law generated, the Talmud seems to discourage *yibbum*. The act of "unsandaling" – *halitzah* – was the general rule, probably beginning with the Second Temple period. Certainly, there has been no *yibbum* among Ashkenazi Jews since the eleventh century when Rabbenu Gershom issued his decree against polygamy. To be sure, there may have been unmarried brothers in the family and thus legally available for *yibbum*, but there are no records of this having taken place. The tradition, rather, reverted back to the law which prohibited a man's marriage to his sister-in-law under any circumstances.[20] The widow must obtain *halitzah* from him in order to be free to remarry.

Somehow Jewish law saw a parallel between the laws of divorce and *halitzah*. It concluded that just as a woman cannot obtain a divorce without the husband's consent, so the widow cannot obtain the freeing act of *halitzah* without the *yavam*'s consent. Both of these conditions have created enormous mischief and suffering for the Jewish woman throughout the ages and today as well.

As for the childless widow, she suffers a double tragedy, to have lost a husband, and to be placed at the mercy of her brothers-in-law.

19 Deut. 25:8.
20 Leviticus 18:16; 20:21.

SCIENCE IN THE BOOK OF JOB

DAVID WOLFERS

While reading a book on modern theories of time, *Time's Arrows* by Richard Morris (Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York *1985*), I came across the following assertion (p. 76):

> Hutton broke with the catastrophists by maintaining that geological changes took place not suddenly and at long intervals but slowly and continuously. Sedimentary rock was still forming, he said, primarily in the oceans. Meanwhile, rock exposed to air and water eroded, producing gravel and soil. Valleys were created by rivers; they had not been formed during periodic deluges. Finally, according to Hutton, internal forces within the earth caused subsistence and uplift. Mountains were created slowly over long periods of time, and just as gradually they wore away.
>
> Hutton is considered to be the founder of modern geology. It is also possible to view him as the man who discovered geological time.

Now James Hutton first presented his *Theory of the Earth* in 1785 C.E., and I should like to set the record straight on the subject of precedence. The Book of Job was written, I believe, in about 690 B.C.E., but even if we take the latest possible date for its composition, say 350 B.C.E., it clearly antedates Hutton by more than two millenia.

The Book of Job happens to contain a short dissertation on geological processes, and how they come about. It is all contained in two verses, 14:18 & 19 which, in the Hebrew, are:

ואולם הר–נופל יבול

וצור יעתק ממקומו

אבנים שחקו מים

תשטף–ספיחיה עפר–ארץ

ותקות אנוש האבדת

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A fair English translation of this is:
But in truth the fallen mountain wears away
And the cliff moves from its place.
The water erodes the stones
And its own springs wash away the dust of the earth.
And You destroy the hope of man.

It is true that this translation differs in two important particulars
from the traditional, as found in say JPS and NJPSV. The former
places the participle נופל in the present tense, yielding the very
strange "mountain falling", and translates ספיחיה (which is liter-
ally "those that come forth spontaneously from her") as "the
overflowings thereof"; while the latter refuses to commit itself on the
first, merely asserting "mountains collapse and crumble", and
renders the second tersely "Torrents wash away earth". But,
however they are read, the verses seem to testify unequivocally to a
view of geological processes as proceeding by the action of slow
erosion over lengthy periods of time. Such a view in its uncanny
sophistication contradicted both the contemporary view of the
ancient world, including that of scientific Greece, that the world was
at any given time just as it always had been, and the view of
European geologists up to the time of Hutton, that the changes with
whose evidence rock, sea-bed and valley were strewn were the result
of sudden catastrophes recurring through a brief geological history.

Sophistication in scientific matters is not one of the recognized
merits of the Hebrew Bible; indeed, it is assumed generally that the
ancient Israelites ignored entirely the natural history aspects of
philosophy, and contributed nothing of value or interest to that
department of human thought. A second example, this time from the
discipline of cosmology, may contribute to a reappraisal of this
common judgment. Readers are referred to "Job: The Third Cycle.
Dissipating a Mirage, Part I"[1] for the context of Chapter 26, but here
we are concerned only with verse 7 in which the placing of the earth
in the heavens is described:

It was he who stretched out Zaphon over chaos   נטה צפון על–תהו

1   D. Wolfers, Dor Le Dor, Summer, 1988.

And suspended the land over the void!   תלה ארץ על—בלימה

At a time when the Greeks were arguing whether the earth was upheld by four elephants and the heavens by Mount Atlas, it seems that one Hebrew at least has a vision of the earth hanging as it does in lonely splendour in space.

It is in the matter of scientific *curiosity*, however, that the anachronistic sophistication of the author of the Book of Job shows itself to greatest advantage, for his speculations on the fundamental mechanisms of the Universe go a long way towards laying out the agenda for the preoccupations of the post-Baconian scientific age. He took no phenomena for granted but injected his own brand of pious wonderment into all that went on around him.

For to the snow He says "Seek the earth!" (37:6), a speculation on the mechanism of gravitation.

And to the rain, "Rain!".   The rain which is His guard of strength.   (37:6), a speculation on the mechanism of precipitation.

Do you know how God instructs them And causes the lightning of His clouds to burst forth? (37:15), a speculation on the mechanism of lightning discharge.

Have you ordained the morning in your days? Did you instruct the dawn in its place? (38:12), a speculation on diurnal revolution.

Have you been down to the whirlpools of the Sea And have you paraded in the recesses of the Deep? (38:16), a speculation on the nature of the sea-bed.

Where is the path where dwells the Light? The darkness, where is its home? That you can conduct it to its perimeter And that you know the directions to its den?   (38:19), a speculation on the reality of unobserved phenomena.

Who dug the channel for the flash-flood? And the pathway for the thunderbolt To bring rain to the land without men, To the desert where no man treads To satisfy the desolate wastes And bring forth the shoots of grass? (38:25-27) Speculation about the paths of least resistance for both water and electricity, combined with speculation about the superabundance of Nature, and even the centrality of human affairs in the Cosmos.

From whose womb emerged the ice? And the hoar-frost of Heaven, who begot it? (38:29), speculation about the states of matter.

Can you fasten the links of the Pleiades Or loosen the belt of Orion? Can you lead forth Venus in due time? And can you guide the Bear with her litter? (38:31-32), a speculation about the differing significance of the fixed stars and the planets.

And the vessels of heaven, who makes them copulate, To pour the dust into a mould That the particles cleave together? (38:37, 38), a speculation on reproductive physiology.

Do you know the season of birth of the mountain-goats? Have you marked the calving of the deer? Can you count the months that they fulfill? And do you know the times when they bring forth? (39:1, 2), a speculation on the life cycles of inaccessible species.

He (the horse) *paws in the valley and exults in strength And goes forth to greet the battle. He laughs at fear and is never affrighted And he does not turn back from the sword.* (39:21, 22), a speculation on comparative animal psychology.

His (the vulture's) *fledgelings suckle blood; And wherever the slain are, there is he.* (39:30), a reflection on ecology.

The majority of these questions are to be found in the Lord's first speech to Job, and there is little doubt that their primary purpose is to expose the abysmal ignorance of mankind of all theoretical aspects of Creation. Is it possible also to detect a faint hint, that it might be well for man to set about attempting to remedy this ignorance?

No matter how exceptional a particular man is, it remains a truism that his intellectual preoccupations, and his ideas, be they never so advanced over those of his contemporaries, will yet embody and reflect, even as they transcend it, the outlook of his age and his country. The evidence of the scientific outlook of the author of the Book of Job opens for us a window on an aspect of Judean culture not visible from any other vantage point.

All biblical citations in English are from the author's own translation.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED

STEVE SATTLER

There are three stories in the Bible that illustrate the destruction of the wicked. Two are in Genesis and one is in Judges.

The first is in Genesis 6:5. This section deals with Noah. God sees the corruption and violence on earth, decrees the destruction of mankind, tests Noah with the construction of the ark and subsequently saves Noah who is righteous.

The second is in Genesis 18:20. God sees that the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, their sin is very heavy and decrees their destruction. He is implored by Abraham to change His decree. God tests the city and finally saves Lot, his family and then destroys all the valley.

The third is in Judges 19:21. We read the story of a levite of Ephraim who, returning from his father-in-law's house in Bethlehem, decides not to stay overnight in Jebus (Jerusalem) because it is alien. He arrives in Gibeah of Benjamin, is offered hospitality but is terribly abused by the townsmen.

Each of these three events has common elements. First of all, God is a constant partner in each event. Man has sinned and will be punished. In the case of Noah the trail of events is at its simplest. God sees man's sin, announces to the righteous Noah His decision and instructions about the ark. Noah does as God commands. The destruction occurs and afterwards Noah tests the post-destruction environment. But first he thanks God with a sacrifice, God is satisfied and blesses Noah, who establishes a new line of mankind.

Secondly, in each of these three events there is also a post-destruction substory based on sexual abuse. Noah, the farmer, gets drunk over his produce. He falls from his high moral standard and

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is saved by two of his sons. Furthermore a curse is involved and a blessing are included with God being invoked.

In the second story Abraham and Lot are the main characters, and the development of the events is similar to the Noah story. There is much wickedness and sin in Sodom and Gomorrah. God announces His intention to destroy the wicked but chooses to consult with Abraham first. At this stage a new element is introduced into our illustrations. Abraham chooses to intercede on behalf of mankind and attempts to change God's decision.

The story continues with Lot performing an Abraham-type of hospitality and then is tested by having to choose between his (wicked) neighbors and his guests. Lot passes the test and he and his immediate family are rescued and the valley is destroyed. In the aftermath of the destruction both Abraham and Lot are silent. There are no altars, sacrifices or prayers.

In the post-destruction story Lot's daughters conspire to continue the family, although their heinous actions match the depravities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Missing from this story is God's promise of a covenant or man's thanks, although the God/Abraham/Lot interaction is of a higher level than the God/Noah incident. Abraham, the first Jew, is inspired with a passion for justice and appeals to the God of justice to change His will. However, in spite of Abraham's intercession, the destruction occurs, and only Lot and his group are saved. One can understand why Lot cannot thank God for saving him for he suffers. But why is Abraham silent?

The God/Abraham interaction creates one of the fundamental pillars of Judaism; a Jew can pray to God and expect Him to hear and respond. This may be another reason why Abraham is the first Jew. He established a dialogue with God.

Whereas the Noah illustration has the whole world as a stage, and the Abraham incident is a purely local situation, the third episode is on the tribal level.

The basic elements are there. A wickedness occurs in the Benjamite city of Gibeah. A Levite of Ephraim announces this outrage in

a very original manner to the rest of the nation and all the Israelites gather before the Lord in Mizpah, where the evil deed is described in detail. Commands, pledges and plans are made by the tribes of Israel to punish those who were responsible or condoned the outrage.

As in the God/Abraham interaction, the pre-destruction negotiations fail, and the destruction follows. On the third attempt the town of Gibeah is put to the sword and burnt. Later that day the rest of the tribe of Benjamin is severely battered and many towns are burned. Justice has been served.

In the post-destruction phase, the men of Israel gather to bemoan their rashness in cutting off the tribe of Benjamin from Israel, and they pray to God with the offering of sacrifices. Finally a double solution is found to keep the Benjamites part of Israel and a viable tribe. This solution has a built-in set of peace terms for the renegade tribe and, as in the Noah story, a way has been found to continue the tribal line.

The Levite episode has several elements contained in the two previous stories. The act of wickedness in Gibeah is very similar to the Lot/Sodom incident. The tribes of Israel are tested for their determination to seek justice; just as Abraham is the hero of justice.

We see how the three illustrations allow us to follow the development of man's moral and intellectual standards. First, as in Noah, a simple thesis is presented to man by God; next, with Abraham-Lot, the thesis is expanded by incorporating a dialogue with God based on justice. Finally, in the third illustration man is moved to act in God's manner to protect the standards of justice and morality that he has learned from God.

As a post-script the story of Jonah can be mentioned. It also deals with punishment for sin. It follows the established formula but differs in certain fundamentals. Man finally begins to understand that he can change his ways, repent and be saved. A destruction is avoided; man can repent.

THE PUNISHMENT OF ACHAN
THE POETIC JUSTICE OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

YAAKOV THOMPSON

The conquest of Canaan, as reported in the book of Joshua, was an enterprise that called for radical measures. The enemy was to be destroyed. The report of the devastation of Jericho indicates that only Rahab and her family were to be spared. Further, Joshua 6:19 records that all valuables were to be handed over to "the treasury of the Lord." The taking of Jericho is the first time that the *Herem* rules of Deuteronomy[1] are put to the test. Likewise, it is the first time that the Israelites are put to the test. Can they carry out this *Herem* warfare? Can they resist the temptation to take booty for themselves? The report of the taking of Jericho seems to answer these questions with a clear affirmative. Jericho is destroyed in exactly the way in which God had commanded – verses 6:24-25 note the destruction of the town and the depositing of the booty within the "Treasury of the Lord." All seems well, and the Israelites are confident as they plan the next encounter with the enemy.

The success that the Israelites enjoyed quickly comes to an end. The capture of Jericho is followed by the defeat of the Israelite forces at Ai. What are, seemingly, heavy losses are sustained[2] and the

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1 It is clear that the term *Herem* underwent several transformations in usage. At one time it may mean "That which is consecrated to God," at another it may be used to indicate that which is to be totally destroyed as a part of the effort to remove the Canaanites or their culture/religion forms from Israelite territory. For a synopsis of the evolution of this term and its multilayered usages one should see "Herem" Encyclopedia Judaica, 8:346-50. This institution had a long and complicated history in the ancient Near East. See, for example, Malamat, A. "The Ban in Mari and in the Bible," in Biblical Essays: Proceedings of the Ninth Meeting of Die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika, (1966) pp. 44 ff.

2 While the casualties are listed at thirty-six, it seems that this constituted a heavy loss to the Israelites. The exact meaning of this number in relation to the total army remains unclear.

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Israelites now face the loss of God's support. The ill-fated events of
chapter 7 revolve around the actions of Achan, his transgression of
the *Herem* rules, and his subsequent punishment. It is to these
details that we now turn.

The narrative of Joshua 7 is quite clear. Achan took booty for
himself and because of this God considers the people guilty of
covenant infraction. While the idea of corporate guilt comes to the
fore, it is quickly replaced by the sentence brought upon Achan. He,
his family, and his possessions are to be destroyed and, thereby,
removed from the community. Once the source of guilt is removed
God will again bestow His favor upon the conquest effort. While the
events of chapter 7 seem neatly selfcontained, there are important
verbal and thematic ties with the preceding chapter. It should also be
noted that there is a sense of irony here as well – Achan, the one
man unable to observe the *Herem* rules, now becomes a *Herem*-
object himself. It seems that God's justice is, in this case, poetic
justice.

A recent commentary on the book of Joshua considers the Achan
episode of chapter 7 to be the result of a complicated and polemical
editorial process:

> " . . . The Achan story was thus very important to Deut. 1, in
> the Josianic heyday, for whom Joshua was a primary
> model. In other words, it appears that memories of (1) a
> contaminating *herem*-violation at Jericho and (2) Achan's
> theft of *salal*, "booty" (the latter given a Jericho setting),
> have been combined by a historian in such a way as to
> protect Joshua from any charge of poor military judgment
> in the debacle of the first battle for The Ruin."[3]

This argument does offer an interesting explanation of the
narrative, its relationship to the Jericho narrative, and the defeat
suffered at Ai. The authors also correctly note that this story, at least
tangentially, shares a common agenda with many other etiological

3   Boling, Robert and Wright, G. Ernest. Joshua, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 6, Garden
City, 1982, p. 230.

notes within the book.[4] Despite these points however there are other issues to be considered. Let us look again at the text.

The story of Achan follows the first experience of *Herem* warfare, something which was new and demanding. It is unlike what the Israelites had experienced up to this point and it calls for a great deal of self-restraint viz., to surrender captured booty which, according to the rules of warfare, belonged to those who fought for it.

The thematic connections of the Achan episode and the taking of Jericho are strong – both stories are connected to the *Herem* institution. The failure at Ai is already foreshadowed before the walls of Jericho: *You must beware of that which is proscribed* (ha-Herem) – *if you take anything from that which is proscribed you will cause the camp of Israel to be proscribed* (taharimu); *you will bring calamity* (a'khartem) *upon it* (Joshua 6:18).

The people are told in ironic terms – if you transgress the *Herem* you yourselves will become *Herem*. It is a stern warning but one that goes unheeded for we find the repetition of the same words before Achan's identity becomes known: *The children of Israel are unable to stand before their enemies . . . because they have become banned (Herem) themselves, I will no longer be with you if you do not destroy that with is banned (Herem) among you.* (7:12) When Joshua confronts Achan the language he uses is familiar. *What calamity have you brought upon us (a'hartanu)? The Lord will bring calamity (ya'karkha) upon you today.* (7:25) What follows is the fulfillment of the *Herem* rule upon Achan. He, his family, and all that he has are consumed in flames and buried under rocks. We are reminded that the sight of the calamity caused by Achan was and is now known as "calamity valley."

Having noted the similarity and repetitive use of common word roots (H.R.M. and H.R.) in both chapters 6 and 7 we are in a position to question the claim that the Achan narrative reflects a multi-layered effort to distance Joshua from responsibility for the initial

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4 ibid., p. 229.

failure at Ai.   What befalls the community at Ai had been
foreshadowed.   Both the crime and the punishments were detailed.
When the infraction of the *Herem* actually occurs the action to be
taken is already known.   Moreover a significant new lesson con-
cerning the *Herem* rules is learned albeit in an ironic manner —
those who fail to observe the *Herem* rules and thus bring guilt upon
the people, are themselves to be considered like *Herem* objects.

While the history of the text of Joshua and the influence of
Deuteronomy is a complicated one and does offer much that aids our
understanding of the book, in this case we must argue for the merits
of an analysis that considers the literary and thematic affinities
between chapters 6 and 7.   Such a reading does not call for nor
require recourse to a later editorial process.   Rather, and this is the
position that we take, the episodes at Jericho and at Ai form a
narrative continuity, a continuity that shares surface themes as
well as sub-surface themes.   Among the latter we find the tension
concerning the ability of the people to live up to the demands of the
Herem rules.   In these terms the impact of the *Herem* rules is made.
Observance insures the kind of success experienced at Jericho,
while failure will lead to the defeat experienced at Ai.

Against this background we may conclude that the story of Achan
is integral to the beginning of the conquest — it is the first time that
the people come face to face with the implication of the *Herem* as it
concerns their enemies.   Additionally, it is the first time that the
people learn, through example, what the infraction of the *Herem*
would bring upon both the community and the guilty individuals.

BIBLICAL INFLUENCE ON SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

HERBERT RAND

Scholars have identified and counted over one thousand allusions and direct quotations from the Bible in the tragedies and comedies of William Shakespeare. The bard of Avon was heir to pre-Elizabethan drama which included not only the classical plays of ancient Greek and Roman authors but also morality and miracle plays and dramatic versions of Bible narratives.

Towards the end of the 16th century, the English translation known as the Geneva Bible (1560) was the most widely read book in England. It was in all likelihood the family Bible used by Shakespeare which supplied the basis for his ideology, and his plays reflected that ideology against the background of the politics, religion, and social conditions of his times.

The bard never hesitated to use quotation and near-quotes from the Bible. In Hamlet, Act 2 Sc. 2, he wrote:

"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! . . . In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!"

How like Psalm 8:5, 6, which reads:

> What is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the sons of man that Thou thinkest of him? Yet, Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

The gulf separating man from angel is his mortality. The final journey of "this quintessence of dust" is that "country from whose borne no traveler returns", – a borrowing from, *man goeth to his long home* (Eccl. 12:5). In Genesis 3:19, the end of man is described as *dust to dust*: Hamlet expands that thought when he exclaims:

"Imperial Caesar dead and turned to clay, might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

Shakespeare believed that Providence intervenes in human affairs and that even the king will be held accountable to a Higher

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Authority. He has Hamlet say:

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will." His words reflect Eccl. 12:14 which reads:

> *God will bring every work into judgment concerning every*
> *hidden thing, whether it be good or evil.*

Shakespeare expected his audience to understand and appreciate his biblical similes. For example, Hamlet shows the queen a picture of both her deceased first husband and his brother, now her second husband. He points to one and then to the other and exclaims: "This *was* your husband. Look you now what follows; There *is* your husband, like a mildewed ear blasting his wholesome brother." The simile is based on Pharaoh's dream of the dried-up ear of corn devouring the fat healthy ear, as related in the Book of Exodus.

In a soliloquy in which his conscience is awakened, the king identifies himself with Cain. "Oh my offence is rank, it smells to Heaven. It has the primal elder curse upon it, a brother's murder."

It is not within the scope of this article to identify all of the biblical references in Shakespeare's works but rather to demonstrate that the plot of Hamlet is comparable in many ways to the story of King David, Bath-sheba, Uriah and the prophet Nathan from the Book of II Samuel, chapters 11 and 12. It will be seen that there is a considerable degree of correspondence between the two narratives.

SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THE KINGDOM

The king of Denmark had died suddenly leaving a widow, Queen Gertrude, and their son, Prince Hamlet. Within too short a time, the Queen married her late husband's brother, Claudius, who was then elected by the people to succeed to the throne. During a night watch at the castle, the ghost of his dead father appears and reveals to Hamlet how Claudius had poisoned him and calls on Hamlet to avenge the murder. Under both biblical and the canon law then in effect, the marriage between Claudius and Gertrude was incestuous. There "was something rotten in Denmark."

Back in ancient Israel, David the king had an affair with Bath-sheba while her husband was at the front in an ongoing military campaign. David arranged to have Uriah killed in a skirmish and then took the widow as his wife. Such conduct on David's part was a heinous sin, and Uriah had left no son to avenge his murder. Something was rotten in David's kingdom.

The role of the prophet Nathan may be compared with that of Hamlet; each of them had to "test the conscience of the king." Nathan solved the problem of confrontation by presenting a parable to David in the form of a complaint seeking condemnation of a fictitious malefactor. The king took the bait: he denounced the guilty and announced, *the man who did this deserves to die.* Nathan responded: *You are the man!*

Hamlet, on the other hand, arranged with a group of actors to present a play before Claudius and the court in which the characters would portray a scene duplicating the murder by poison of the late king.

RECIPE FOR MADNESS: A VACILLATING AVENGER

On his father's death, Hamlet expected to be the dominant male in the royal family. Instead, the Danes elected his uncle, Claudius, as their king. Even his mother seemed to reject him when she married his uncle. Hamlet's attempt to transfer his affections to Ophelia was blocked when, obedient to her father's wishes, she rejected the prince's letters and refused to see him. Hamlet's expectations had been rudely shattered by reality. Furthermore, Hamlet had reason to fear for his life if the king were to become suspicious of him.

Then there was the ever-lurking doubt in Hamlet's mind: was the ghost really the spirit of his father or merely an evil spirit spreading a slanderous tale? Even assuming the truth of the ghost's accusation, Hamlet felt unequal to the task of laying violent hands on the king or even of direct denunciation. His initial reaction to the revelation was to exclaim: "O my prophetic soul." When he recalled

the oath he had taken to avenge his father's murder, he cried, "O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right!" Although the situation called for a courageous move, Hamlet's self-searching reaction was to ask: "Am I a coward?" In his soliloquy "to be or not to be", he even considered suicide as an alternative but lost his nerve. Like Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah and Jonah to whom death seemed at times preferable to the prophetic role, Hamlet preferred death to the burden of carrying out his ghost-imposed assignment.

When reality became too strong for him to bear, he lapsed into madness. Whether feigned or a psychosis, his insanity was a descent into a protective cocoon from which he would not emerge until almost the end of the play when, in his dying moments, he forced Claudius to gulp the poisoned drink from which the Queen had already taken a fatal swallow — a drink which the King had prepared for Hamlet.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Hamlet's play within a play served the same purpose as Nathan's parable — to stir the conscience of the king to remorse and possible repentance. Both situations involved exposure of a secret murder followed by an appropriate form of punishment. Nathan's accusation was coupled with the prophecy that *the sword will never depart from your house*. But David offered no excuses for his conduct: he confessed, *I have sinned against the Lord*. Therefore, his own life was spared but he suffered the death of the infant child of his adulterous union with Bath-sheba, the rape of his daughter, Tamar, by one of her brothers, and the deaths of two of his sons, Absalom and Amnon.

In contrast with David's remorse, Claudius was unrepentant. He gained the crown by murder and was unwilling to forego the prize. With "bosom black as death" he could not repent nor offer words of prayer with any sincerity. His punishment, therefore, matched

Nathan's original unmitigated oracle that *the sword shall never depart from your house.*

Since Claudius had poisoned his brother, it was meet that he die by poison prepared by his own hand. He was joined in death by his queen. With the death of Hamlet, a vacillating, self-doubting, "pigeon-livered" prince, the Danish dynasty came to an end and passed to a foreign power.

The plot of Shakespeare's Hamlet, like the narrative of David and Bath-sheba, illustrates the biblical precept that God brings hidden things to judgment and may shape the punishment to fit the crime.

WE ENCOURAGE OUR READERS TO SUBMIT ARTICLES ON BIBLICAL THEMES

MANUSCRIPTS should be submitted to the Editor, the J.B.Q., P.O.B. 7024, Jerusalem, Israel. The manuscript should be typed on one side of the page only, double-spaced, with at least a one-inch margin all around, and be no longer than 12 pages.

To standardize spelling, the American usage will be employed. Quotations from the Bible should follow one of the Jewish Publication Society's translations, unless a special point is being made by the author for the purpose of his article.

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

א and ע	assumes the sound of its accompanying vowel = e.g., Amen, Alenu, Olam, Eretz.
ח	= H e.g., Hodesh.
כ and ק	= K e.g., Ketuvim, Kadosh.
כ	= Kh e.g., Melekh.
צ	= Tz e.g., Tzaddik.
..	= E e.g., Ben.

Standard transliteration of biblical names remains unchanged.

REPLY TO "AHASUERUS IS THE VILLAIN"

RUSSEL K. EDWARDS

I read "Ahasuerus is the Villain" by Marshall Portnoy — written in a lighthearted and humorous style — in your Spring issue, with some amusement. However, while being both entertained by and interested in the author's description of King Ahasuerus, and also agreeing with some of his witty criticisms of the Persian monarch, I feel that I must take issue with Mr. Portnoy's portrayal of Mordecai the Jew, whom he casts, as do most of our people, in a shining heroic role as the defender of his race and the architect of victory.

A close examination of the text shows that this is not the case. Indeed, the very opposite is true. The real story starts in Ch. 3 of the Book of Esther (the Megillah) when, having disposed of the problem of Vashti and promptly suppressed the incipient Persian Empire's Women's Lib, and elevated Esther to regal status, the king promoted Haman to be his chief minister. The monarch then further commanded that all the king's servants that were in the king's gate should bow down and prostrate themselves before Haman כי־כן צוה–לו המלך (3:2). Although the expression used in the royal decree was כרעים ומשתחוים, i.e. the same term that is used in the liturgy of Yom Kippur, describing the prostrations of the people before their divine Maker, during the *Avodah* service, yet in the royal command to bow to Haman there is not in the text any suggestion of the act being of a religious nature, or in praise, worship or adoration of any deity whatever. (Compare the Roman demand to bring the Legion's Eagles into the Temple, or the decree of Antiochus Epiphanes).

The king had commanded that honor be given to his prime minister, as is common practice in most countries of the world. In

Dr. R. K. Edwards has practiced medicine as a general practitioner in Jerusalem since his aliya in August 1981. He comes from a strongly orthodox family in the northern English town, Newcastle-on-Tyne where, in his parents' home, he developed his great love for Jewish history and Bible studies.

this instruction there was no attack upon the Jewish religion, or Jewish belief, worship, ethics, theology or practice. It was a *political* command to all the king's subjects alike to show respect to his chief minister and to honor him in accordance with the royal decree. In no way were Jews individually or collectively singled out for treatment different from that of their fellow citizens.

Then we are told immediately following this order that Mordecai לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה – he did not bow down and he did not prostrate himself. He openly rejected and disobeyed a royal command of a purely civic nature and devoid of all religious significance.

I maintain very strongly that this refusal, by a king's subject, placed not only *that* subject at risk (as Mr. Portnoy implies on p. 188) but that this act of open opposition and flagrant defiance of the king also endangered the lives of Mordecai's fellow Jews and risked the possible future proscription of the Jewish faith.

Furthermore, by sitting in the king's gate (2:19, 21), a place of public interest and presumably the gate of the palace, Mordecai ensured that his act of rebellion received the fullest possible publicity. Indeed, the influential king's servants who were at the king's gate (and not the common passers-by) said to Mordecai: מדוע אתה עובר את מצות המלך? – Why do you transgress the king's command? (3:3) – a perfectly fair and reasonable question to which Mordecai, in his intellectual arrogance, did not bother to reply.

But the king's servants persisted in questioning him daily – without eliciting a response (3:4). Consequently, after they had on several occasions without success tried to save Mordecai from his flagrant repetitive folly, they reported to Haman what had transpired, in order to see whether *Mordecai's words would stand* (3:4) (against the royal decree). Because with arrogance and foolhardy pride, Mordecai, having abandoned all prudence, and commonsense as well, had told them that he was a Jew, and had therefore alerted them to his racial origin.

Now why did he tell them? Was it necessary? Did they ask him? To volunteer this information under those circumstances of opposi-

tion was the height of political madness. Could he not have foreseen
the inevitable consequences of his opposition to the king, and
especially when allied to the fact that the rebel was a Jew? He clearly
did not or could not. And by this gratuitous piece of information,
freely volunteered, he effectively turned and pointed the weapon of
revenge which was being manufactured in the palace not only
against himself, *but against his brother Jews as well.*

The Megillah then tells us (3:5) that Haman himself saw that
Mordecai did not bow down to him nor prostrate himself, and he was
filled with furious hate and anger against this rebellious Jew.
Mordecai's persistent acts of rebellion in the presence of the chief
minister, with the obvious consequences for himself and his co-
religionists, can only be described as acts of recklessness carried to
the point of frank lunacy. Mordecai had set out on his one-man
campaign of civil disobedience to prove, presumably, that he alone
was different from all the king's other subjects, and that the king's
command did not affect *him*. By so doing, as well through his
unsolicited declaration to the king's servants concerning his
Jewish race, he dragged in his innocent fellow Jews by association,
to be subject to unmerited punishment. Interestingly enough, he had
previously ordered Esther to suppress the fact of *her* Jewish origin.
He, however, failed to heed his own advice.

In consequence of all this, the enraged Haman, venomously,
maliciously and with terrible cruelty, sought to destroy *all* the Jews
throughout the whole kingdom because he felt it "contemptible in his
eyes to lay hands on Mordecai alone" (3:6). Indeed, if Mordecai had
deliberately set out to irritate and insult the king's chief minister
and to stir his passion for terrible vengeance, he had certainly
succeeded. This was all his brother Jews needed – to have a cruel
enemy intent on destroying them gratuitously thrust upon their
backs. And that, in fact, was just what they got.

Mordecai's insurrection, rebellion and obtuse refusal to obey a
political command issued in the name of the king, and his
flaunting its committal in the king's gate so as to attract maximal

publicity for it, was an act of monumental political stupidity. Mr. Portnoy describes the perpetrator of this folly in these terms, "he is at once compassionate, caring, shrewd and subtle, with the gift of impeccable political timing." How Mr. Portnoy can eulogize this madness in such idyllic laudatory terms mystifies and puzzles me!

If it is argued that some unstated reason best known to himself – a high religious belief or purpose, or some great monotheistic ideal – prompted and perpetuated his foolish behavior, why did Mordecai, described as possessing "impeccable political timing", not move his seat of observation from the public glare at the king's gate to another gate, less conspicuous and not in the line and view of direct traffic by the king's ministers? There he could have sat all day and night and not broken the king's law.

It is another interesting question whether Mordecai would have refused also to do homage to the king himself, his monarch, as he refused to act to Haman. Unfortunately, the Megillah does not tell us. It was only Haman that the king had instructed should be the recipient of this public acknowledgment. No one else had to be given similar public respect. Therefore, by sitting elsewhere, Mordecai would have saved his people the risk of genocide. At the same time he would have satisfied any moral qualms he may have harbored as to the propriety of obeying the king's command. But he did not do this. He continued on his path of well-publicized insurrection which led directly to the planning of massacre in accordance with this Persian Wansee Conference, which was toasted for a successful conclusion in the royal palace (3:11). No time was lost. Firm instructions were immediately sent out to the 127 provinces (3:12, 13) to commit genocide of the Jews on the thirteenth day of Adar.

I maintain that this planned destruction of the Jews was a direct result of the monumental stupidity and political madness shown by a Jewish leader, bereft of every form of political sagacity and unable to foresee the logical consequences of his egotistical behavior.

When he hears that the king has delivered the Jews into the hands of Haman, and their death-warrants have been sealed, Mordecai

rends his garments and cries out in the middle of the town (4:1).
This ineffectual (and probably provocative) public demonstration of
hopeless ineptitude Mr. Portnoy calls "a great public relations
coup."

In what?

What did this achieve, other than to alert the Jews (if they were not
alerted already) to what was going to happen? And was this the best
way to do it? How this public demonstration of grief, which probably
did not affect or interest the Persians one iota, and certainly would
be completely disregarded by the king and his ministers – as
indeed it was – can be described as "a great public relations coup", I
am at a loss to understand.

If Mordecai wanted to help his people following *his* creation of the
disaster, and *his* architecture of the impending genocide, why did he
not seek an audience directly with the king, or through messengers,
or even through Esther, to offer the king twenty thousand talents of
silver for the lives of his co-religionists, i.e. *twice the amount that
Haman had offered the king*? Knowing the avarice of the king, that
would probably have been more effective than anything else which
this "compassionate, caring, shrewd, subtle" Jew "with the gift of
impeccable political timing" could possibly have done.

Eventually he tells Esther in strident language that she must
appeal to the king, although she has told Mordecai that it could mean
her death to approach the king unbidden. But this does not prevent
him from castigating her and lecturing her on a very high moral
plane "Do not imagine that you alone among all the Jews will
escape with your life, because you are in the king's palace." Never
once, by word or deed, had Esther suggested that she might be
absolved from the fate of her people. This sanctimonious speech and
heavy-handed warning to Esther is rich in irony, coming from the
man whose reckless behavior had brought disaster on the Jews. In
effect, it is Esther who offers her life on behalf of her people with those
three immortal words as to her probable fate on approaching the king
unbidden.   They are much more dramatic in the Ashkenazi

pronunciation than the Sephardi:

וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי : vecha'asher ov<u>a</u>deti – ov<u>o</u>deti :

And if I perish, I perish (4:16)

— three noble words indeed, describing Esther's willingness to sacrifice herself for her brother Jews, which will live for ever in the Hebrew language.

Mr. Portnoy then goes on to describe Queen Esther as having a great gift of charm, as well as a passivity of character which almost matches the king. He later describes her as "sweet but silly Esther" when she tries to send Mordecai fresh clothes while he is continuing to create an exhibition of himself in the king's gate. I am sorry that Mr. Portnoy has denigrated the *real* regal figure in this story, and damned her with very faint praise. Sweet she certainly was, but passive? and silly? Never!

To my mind this simple Jewish girl who risked her life on behalf of her people, who achieved the highest position in a land of 127 provinces, *and never forgot that she was a Jewess*, and who brought to the attention of the king the names of his intending murderers – but gave the full credit of the disclosure to her uncle Mordecai and did not claim it in her own name (2:22) – this great heroine of Israel will stand erect in the history of the Jews as a monumental figure of self-sacrifice and devotion to less fortunate brethren in their time of distress. *Her* name, and not that of her uncle who brought all this catastrophe upon the Jews, will shine forever in the annals of Jewish history as a beacon of courage, patriotism, fortitude and self-sacrifice. Esther, this wonderful Jewish girl, by her noble courage proved her intense love and compassion for her people, and earned for herself a place of the highest honor, nobility, love and eternal gratitude in the hearts of her adoring and grateful people.

BOOK REVIEWS

LEXIKON DER BIBLISCHEN PERSONEN, by Martin Bocian, Stuttgart, Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1989. pp. 510.

SOL LIPTZIN

The *Lexikon* embraces in a single volume approximately two hundred biblical characters who had a significant impact upon the human imagination down the millennia. The arrangement is alphabetical, from Aaron and Abel to Zechariah and Zephaniah. Each character is presented at first as he appears in the Bible. There then follows its development in Jewish tradition and folklore, in Christianity and in Islam, and concludes with its treatment in literature, music and art.

For such a *Lexikon* to be adequate, many volumes would have been needed with the collaboration of many scholars. Merely to deal with a single aspect – the influence of the Bible upon English literature – has occupied dozens of scholars under the leadership of the University of Ottawa throughout the 1980's; and the project has not yet been completed. Nevertheless, the publication of the present German *Lexikon* is to be welcomed as a preliminary introduction to an inexhaustible treasure of biblical knowledge. To accumulate and to sift through the vast material of a hundred generations in diverse tongues and different media would be an herculean undertaking.

W. O. Sypherd spent a lifetime ferreting out what had been published about a single figure, Jephthah's Daughter, and up to 1948 had accumulated a bibliography of hundreds of literary versions. To deal adequately with more major figures such as Adam, Moses or David would have required lifetimes. More recently, in 1989, J.

Sol Liptzin, Emeritus Professor of Comparative Literature at the City University of New York, is the author of eighteen volumes on world literature, including Germany's Stepchildren, The Jew in American Literature, A History of Yiddish Literature, and most recently, Biblical Themes in World Literature.

C. Peters published a study on Enoch, the father of Methuselah, and showed how a single biblical sentence about him developed into a complex tradition that enriched Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and diverse peoples as far apart as Ethiopia, Russia and China.

The *Lexikon* culls its material to a large extent from other multivolumed reference works such as *Encyclopedia Judaica*, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, and Christian biblical and theological encyclopedias which appeared primarily in German. It is regrettable that hardly any mention is made of the rich treatment of biblical characters in modern Hebrew and Yiddish literatures. The volume would also have gained immeasurably if it had included even a single bibliographic reference at the end of those articles treating characters which have already been studied in great detail by scholars of literature, music and art. Perhaps this can be done in a later edition since the handbook will find many readers in the coming decades.

Mac BIBLE VERSION 2.0

DAVID FAIMAN

WHAT IS IT?

As its weird name probably suggests, "Mac Bible" (marketed by Zondervan Electronic Publishing) is a software package for use on Apple Macintosh personal computers. It consists of a program module (on a single 3 1/2" diskette) which is used in conjunction with one or more sets of diskettes containing the Bible. A number of versions are avilable. The texts I was sent for review were the entire Hebrew Bible on six diskettes (in the version known as *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* — complete with vowels and catillation signs), and the *King James* English translation (OT and NT) on four diskettes. Two other English translations are advertised as being available, as is a New Testament text in Greek. I was also sent a "fonts" diskette containing software that enables a laser printer to make high quality reproductions of the Hebrew characters.

WHAT CAN IT DO?

(1) You can enter a word and after, literally, a few seconds, every verse which contains that word (either in the entire Bible or in any section of it which you care to specify) will be displayed on the screen. If more than a single screenful is needed, the verses queue up out of sight, and all you need do is scroll through them at your leisure. If you wish to examine the context of one of these verses, you simply "double click" on it with your "mouse" and the verse will appear within the context of its normal biblical neighbors.

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(2) You can enter a reference, for example, Est. 9:13-24, and the cited passage appears on the screen. Once again, if it is too long to see at a single glance, you will need to scroll through it in order to read it from the screen.

(3) You can "paste" any such text into your favorite word processing program on the Apple Macintosh, and even if the latter 'knows no Hebrew', provided you have installed the Hebrew font supplied with Mac Bible, the quotation will appear correctly, and in a form which enables you to edit it if necessary. For example: this review is being written with a word processor known as "WORD 3.0". I shall now call up Mac Bible and insert a biblical quotation in Hebrew:

וְיֹתֵר מֵהֵמָּה בְּנִי הִזָּהֵר
עֲשׂוֹת סְפָרִים הַרְבֵּה אֵין קֵץ
וְלַהַג הַרְבֵּה יְגִעַת בָּשָׂר:

You can also print it in Mac Bible's "Jerusalem font" if you prefer:

וְיֹתֵר מֵהֵמָּה בְּנִי הִזָּהֵר
עֲשׂוֹת סְפָרִים הַרְבֵּה אֵין קֵץ
וְלַהַג הַרְבֵּה יְגִעַת בָּשָׂר:

Incidentally, the reader should not be impressed at *my* biblical knowledge: I do not carry such references around in my head! I inserted the word ספרימ (sic) into the Mac Bible search facility and I was offered 3 pages of references. I quickly located the one I was looking for and here it is!

(4) You can enter a word or phrase and request the program to count the number of times it occurs, either in the entire Bible or in any requested part thereof.

(5) You can request a number of logical operations to be performed
as part of the search operation. For example, you can ask the pro-
gram to find all verses containing the combinations; Moses-and-
Aaron, Moses-but-not-Aaron, Moses-Aaron-and-Hur, Moses-
Aaron-but-not-Hur, etc., etc. Indeed the types of logical searches
that Mac Bible can do is so large, that space does not permit me to
elaborate further.

HOW EASY IS IT TO USE?

This is always the most difficult kind of question to answer
because it is so personal. So let me state that I am someone who does
not like to read computer manuals, and someone who does not know
very much about computers. I get along reasonably well with this
word processor because a kind secretary showed me how to use it,
permitted me to bother her every few minutes for the first hour, then
about once a day for the following week. I know there are many
clever things that this word processor can do but I shall probably
never discover what they are. If that admission finds a sympathetic
eye then read on!

Since Mac Bible is a software package that nobody I know of could
tell me anything about, I simply had to read the manual. And what a
pleasant surprise. It is brief and clearly written! In a matter of
minutes I had the diskettes installed and running, performed a few
word searches, was thrilled at the results, and then sat back and
read through the manual. I discovered that Mac Bible can do more
things than I could possibly find space to write about here, but
equally important: I can do them all!

HOW ACCURATE IS IT?

Perhaps the most awe-inspiring feature of the Hebrew text of Mac
Bible is the realization that someone had to type it in — complete with
all vowels and cantillation signs. The accompanying literature
states that "The machine-readable text of BHS was produced

initially under the direction of H. van Dyke Parunak and R. Whitaker and revised in a final form (1985-86) by the Westminster Seminary team directed by A. Groves in collaboration with E. Tov."

The question naturally arises as to how reliable this kind of text may be expected to be. I therefore printed out the equivalent of an entire page of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and carefully compared the computer version with the corresponding page from the volume in our local library, paying particular attention to the vocalization and vowelling. Choosing Esther 9:13-24, I counted 120 words in all. Among them the Mac Bible text exhibited *not a single error*. I also printed out Num. 33:5-49 (replacing the *tetragram-maton* in v. 38 with the symbol 'ד before printing – an extremely useful feature of Mac Bible, not mentioned in the instruction manual, that saves one from having to create a Geniza for computer waste paper!). In this case the number of words was 300. Again *not a single error* was found. Finally I tried a page of Aramaic: Dan. 5:1-11. This time 199 words and again *not a single error*. In some ways one almost regrets not having found even one small error, for if there had been one error among these 600 words one could have expected, say, about 25 errors in the book of בראשית. But I can repeat: There were no errors among the above samples so one can confidently expect the 85 pages of בראשית to contain fewer than 25 errors, and perhaps none at all.

CONCLUSION

In writing this review I am trying to control my enthusiasm for Mac Bible by maintaining a sense of objectivity. But I would be hard-pressed to find any faults. The Hebrew keyboard lay-out provides for all conceivable Hebrew dots and squiggles, and several others with which the footnotes of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (but mercifully not the Mac Bible version!) abound. A paper keyboard 'map' is supplied, but one can learn the location of the consonants (i.e. all that one requires for search purposes) in a minute or two:

most following the corresponding Latin character keys – a=א, b=ב, g=ג, etc. [A far more sensible arrangement than that followed by Israeli typewriters and computers!]. If I must be picky I would take the keyboard designers to task for hiding the character ז in a place that is nearly impossible to guess! [ן ,ם ,ף and ץ are easy, but I won't spoil the reader's fun by telling how!]. One more potential snare involves transferring Hebrew text to an English (i.e. left-to-right) word processing program and then trying to edit it. If you are not careful you can easily end up by printing the second half of a sentence before the first! And lastly, while on the subject of peculiarities, I found that when I printed the letter ף using the "Jerusalem font" rather than the standard "Super Hebrew font", it comes out with a dot in it (dagesh, mapiq?) which, strange to say, does not appear on the screen: ףּ. See what I mean? To summarize in one sentence: Mac Bible is surely every Bible researcher's dream come true – an invaluable tool and a pleasure to use.

AFTERTHOUGHT

I have devoted so much space to the Hebrew Bible that I nearly forgot the *King James* version! Search for "Shake" and "spear" among the Psalms. Both words occur in Ps. 42, respectively 42 words from the start and 42 words from the end. If you have a taste for numerical coincidences, try guessing who was 42 years old when the finishing touches were being put on this translation in 1610, and who may have been one of the panel responsible for the Book's outstanding English!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Robert Ratner's article on the "Garments of Skin" provided by God for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21 (Winter '89 edition), raises as many questions as it brilliantly analyzes and answers. I have been interested in this narrative for some time, and would like to add the following observations:

1. What was the actual Sin involved? Did it lie in Eve's believing the Serpent rather than God (3:3-5)? If so, it is reduced to a mere argument over authority. Could it not be seen, instead, as a *denial* of God – for both Man and Woman had been created (according to the first version of the Creation story, in 1:27) in the image of God. Since the first thing Adam and Eve do, once *the eyes of both of them were opened* (3:7) is to cover themselves (with leaves), it could be argued that they are covering up the Image of God; that they are expressing dissatisfaction with the way they had been created. Had they considered that they were created perfectly, they would have had no need to feel shame at their nakedness, to change or cover themselves. According to this understanding, (and I would love to try explaining this to a Christian "puritan" who believes that God made trousers for the natives) the "Original Sin" would be the invention of clothing!

2. In the second version of the Creation story, once Man has seen Woman for the first time, he calls her *Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh*. In verse 21 God has taken a bone from Man and added flesh, and in the apparent interpolation of verse 24 the implication is that conjugal love takes the form almost of two cells combining into one. There is no mention of skin. Yet – skin forms the barrier between two such creatures, and forms the superficial image by which we judge each other so often – on the grounds of pigmentation, facial features, skin condition and so forth. Could one feasibly understand this narrative to imply that the author's image is of an

original state of non-covering with skin? That, in short, the "garments of skin" of 3:21 are not "tunics" or "garments" (as "K'tonot" are usually translated) but actual human skins? This would form the barrier between humans as between humans and God – not clothing, but a new additional layer over their essential humanity.

3. Disregarding the above, and accepting for now the general interpretation that God made clothing from animal skins, the question arises, "What animal?" The tree from which they pluck leaves is described (3:7) as a *t'eynah*, a fig tree, and according to Midrash Tanchumah and the Talmud (Sanhedrin 70b) this was the tree from which they had eaten the forbidden fruit – an interesting interpretation. But at least this is an attempt to explain why the type of tree is named. Why is the species of animal not named?

As Ratner elucidates, the difference between the two sets of garments is that leaves can be plucked without destroying the tree which provides them – but skins can only be taken from creatures who have themselves died to make them available for such use. One therefore allows the donor to continue living – the other requires death. Although death is threatened as a consequence for disobedience (2:17, 3:4), the actual punishments inflicted on the Serpent, the Woman and the Man (3:14-19) involve terms such as *all the days of your life* or *when you are giving birth*, and the first creature actually to die seems to be the one that God sacrifices, from amongst what he has just created, in order to provide cover for the Man and Woman he has also created – an apparent contradiction of any notion of God's foreknowledge or forward planning.

However, there is only one creature I can think of that makes a skin available without itself having to die in the process; that creature is, of course, the snake . . .

Rabbi Walter Rothschild
Leeds, England

Sir,

In his interesting article "Excavating The Cardo and The Ophel", Rabbi Abraham Ruderman acknowledges as its basis an article by Rivka Conen "Keeping Jerusalem's Past Alive" which he states is in *Biblical Archeology Review*, July-August 1980. The latter is a fascinating article but your readers looking for it will find it in B.A.R. July-August 1981 not 1980. I hope this saves other readers the time I spent in finding it!

I find your journal of great interest.

Aubrey A. Gordon
Sunderland, England

Sir,

I was most interested in the article contained in Vol. XVIII, No. 3 (71) SPRING 1990 (p. 176) and entitled *The Red Heifer Mystery* and authored by Ernest Neufeld. You may recall my article on the same subject and entitled *Mystery of the Red Heifer* published in the Summer 1987 issue of Dor Le Dor (vol. XV, No. 4, p. 267). My view of the *Mystery* assumes a scientific approach that indicates that the Hebrews of the past were aware of many technical methods for purifying water and that many of the negative as well the positive commandments had technical and scientific bases.

Although my approach differs from Ernest Neufeld, I congratulate him on his excellent article.

Robert Kunin
Trenton, New Jersey

Sir,

I was intrigued by Rabbi Robert J. Ratner's extraction of so much meaning from the few words "garments of skin" (Vol. XVIII, No. 2, p. 74, 1989/90). I would like to supplement his commentary with the following midrashic-like notion.

One of the purposes of the Eden story is to relate the origin of the status of God, humans and animals. This is done using two characteristics — knowledgeability and mortality. As Ratner points out, the use of animal skins for human garments (Gen. 3:21) discloses that animals died in Eden (they were *mortal*). According to Gen. 3:7, the first evidence of knowledgeability is an awareness and ashamedness of nakedness. Nowhere in the story do animals clothe themselves; they have no shame for their nakedness (they are therefore *unknowledgeable*). God's status is defined in vv. 22-24. Here God is concerned that ". . . man will become like one of us . . ." — will have knowledge and immortality. Thus we can summarize: *God is knowledgeable and immortal; animals are unknowledgeable (dumb) and mortal.*

The human status is in between that of God and animals, that is, humans resemble God in one characteristic but animals in the other. Originally, God's plan was to make humans unknowledgeable (animal-like) and immortal (God-like) — they were forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge but not of the tree of life (2:9, 16-17) — but they rebelled against the animal-like status. First, Adam did not find a mate from among the animals (2:20) and second, they ate the forbidden fruit and gained (God-like) knowledgeability (3:22). If, in addition, they had then eaten of the tree of life they would also have become immortal (God-like) and thus be God-like in both characteristics. To prevent this, God banned them from the garden and the tree of life (from immortality) (3:24). Thus, *humans*, whom God originally intended to be unknowledgeable (dumb like animals) and immortal, instead, ended up in the reverse status, *knowledgeable but mortal.*

Would it have been better for humans if God's original plan had prevailed? Would an immortal dumb-animal existence be preferable to our mortal but knowledgeable life? Could Judaism have evolved without knowledge? If the answer is "no" then our concept of Eve should be revised — we should be grateful to her for having eaten the forbidden fruit, and thereby moving humankind away from an animal-like existence. Thus, while from God's perspective, Eve was a sinner, from ours she should be considered one of mankind's greatest benefactors.

Julius B. Moster
Los Angeles

DIASPORA WINNERS

From left to right: Danny Silverstein, Shmuel Niselow, Doron Friedlander, and Yaakov Werblowsky.

DID THE ISRAELITES CONQUER JERICHO

ABRAHAM RUDERMAN

Nelson Glueck, the late president of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and renowned archeologist, used to say: "If it is written in the Bible it probably happened." Recent excavations at Jericho appear to support the biblical account of the fall of the walls of Jericho before the army of Joshua. Dr. Bryant G. Wood, an archeologist from the University of Toronto, states in a recent edition of the *Biblical Archeological Review*: "When we compare the archeological evidence at Jericho with the biblical narrative describing the Israelites destruction of Jericho, we find a quite remarkable agreement." Wood bases his evidence on a study of ceramic fragments, royal scarabs, carbon 14 dating and some ruins which all point to the year 1400 B.C.E. when Joshua is supposed to have destroyed the city. This finding differs from the view of other scholars that the city was destroyed 150 years earlier and didn't exist at the time of Joshua's conquest. Kathleen Kenyon, the British archeologist who excavated Jericho in the 1950's, undoubtedly dug in the poor part of the city where she failed to find the expensive ceramics which proved that the city existed around 1400 B.C.E. Wood found many charred fragments dated by carbon 14 to 1410 B.C.E. He also found large quantities of grain suggesting that the city fell after the spring harvest. This was the time of the year, according to the Bible, when the city fell.

The first major excavation at Jericho was conducted by an Austro-German expedition led by Sellin and Watzinger in 1907 and 1911. Since pottery chronology had not yet been developed, the date of

Rabbi Abraham Ruderman was ordained at the Jewish Inst. of Religion, served as a chaplain during WW II, and was spiritual leader of congregations in Poughkeepsie, Elmont, Hazelton, and South Africa. He came on Aliya in 1976 and has been the editor of the weekly Bulletin of the Jerusalem Rotary.

Jericho's destruction was off the mark. Nevertheless, they did succeed in tracing the retaining wall around three quarters of the tell. They concluded that there was no settlement in Jericho at the time of Joshua. John Garstang, a British archeologist, questioning these results, proceeded to gather evidence of his own. He dug from 1930-36 and published his report after the war. Based on pottery and scarabs found in nearby tombs he concluded that Jericho was destroyed about 1400 B.C.E. as described in the Bible. The walls fell because of an earthquake and the city was destroyed by fire.

Garstang's conclusion precipitated much controversy. Kathleen Kenyon was consulted about Sellin and Watzinger's conclusion, arrived at twenty five years earlier, that Jericho was destroyed in the mid 16th century. As a result Kenyon continued her excavations from 1952 to 1958, utilising new techniques entailing analysis of soil and debris layers. Kenyon confirmed that the life of Jericho ended about 1550 B.C.E. and by the time of Joshua there was no Jericho to conquer. This finding conflicted with the biblical account and thus disproved it. The biblical account was written off as so much folklore and religious rhetoric.

Wood contends that Kenyon erred in arriving at the date 1550 B.C.E. as the time of the destruction of Jericho for this reason. She based her conclusion on a limited dig in a poor area of Jericho where Cypriot pottery was missing. It was missing because Jericho was off the trade route of such communities as Megiddo which was accustomed to import Cypriot pottery. Wood holds that Kenyon was wrong in estimating a date by the absence of such pottery, rather than judge a place by the domestic pottery which archeologists found in abundance. Kenyon concluded that Jericho was destroyed by the Egyptians in their war against the Hyksos. This too, was unlikely since many jars of grain were found in the burnt-out ruins, which would indicate an invasion after the harvest. We know, however, that Egypt was accustomed to invade before a harvest when food supplies would be at their lowest level and defeat was assured. The Egyptians would use the produce in the fields to feed their armies.

This was not the case at Jericho. Wood draws the following inference from the presence of large stores of grain in the excavation. It was customary for successful attackers to plunder valuable stores of grain once they captured a city. In the case of Jericho the Israelites were commanded: *Keep yourselves from the things devoted to the Lord for destruction.* (Joshua 6:17) This explains why so much grain was left to burn after the Israelites set the city to the torch. Wood cites the following evidence for setting the date of the destruction of Jericho at 1400 B.C.E. 1. The pottery found at the site was typical of that period. 2. The stratographic considerations are cited in much detail. 3. Scarab data. Scarabs are small Egyptian amulets, shaped like a beetle with an inscription at the bottom. Those found at the Jericho site date from 18th century B.C.E. to the end of the 15th century B.C.E. testifying that the cemetery where the scarabs were found was in continuous use until the destruction of Jericho in 1400 B.C.E. 4. A carbon 14 test of a piece of charcoal found in the destruction was dated to 1410 B.C.E. plus or minus 40 years. All this evidence would indicate that Jericho was destroyed about 1400 B.C.E., conforming to the biblical chronology and not 1550 B.C.E. as maintained by Kenyon.

If indeed, it can be scientifically proven that the agent of Jericho's destruction in 1400 B.C.E. was Joshua, then Wood's findings fly in the face of the prevailing view among scholars that the Exodus took place in 1250 B.C.E. In fact, such findings would be in accord with two definite statements in the Bible which would place the Exodus at about 1450!

Jephthah, in his diplomatic exchanges with king of Ammon, who wants a return of certain territories, claims: *While Israel dwelt in Heshbon . . . three hundred years; wherefore did ye not recover them within that time* (Jud. 11:26). Assuming that Jephthah was appointed Judge at about 1100 B.C.E. (approximately 100 years prior to David), the conquest of Sichon, king of Heshbon, would have then taken place at about 1400 B.C.E. (approximately forty years after the Exodus.)

SPOTLIGHT ON THE WINNERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR YOUTH

SUSAN TOURKIN-KOMET

In this years's twenty-seventh annual Bible Contest for Youth, 42 contestants from all over the globe participated, representing 20 different countries. Just as there have been new contestants in recent years from behind the "Iron Curtain" — Hungary and Yugoslavia — so there were representatives from other nations who now joined the agenda — from Bulgaria, Morocco, and Turkey.

Due to the unquestioned superiority in performance of the Israeli participants, two parallel contests have been instituted in recent years: one contest for the Diaspora, and the other contest, the final one, for Diaspora and Israeli participants together. The top winners in the contest, televised in the final round at the Jerusalem Theater, were Michal Weingort, and Shahar Hazan who tied for first-place. Michal is Swiss-born, made Aliyah when she was eight, and attends the Horev High School (for girls) in Jerusalem. Shahar is from Haifa where he attends the Yavneh Yeshivah there.

In the Diaspora Contest, the top-winner was Danny Silverstein, age 16, from Brooklyn, N.Y., a student at the Yeshivah of Flatbush High School. His special interests are playing the piano, singing, listening to music, and acting. He plans to live in Israel. The second-place was taken by Yaakov Werblowsky, age 16, from Teaneck, N.J. He attends the Yeshiva University High School in New York. Yaakov's interests include sports and spending much of his free time learning Torah. He hopes to come back to Israel to study in a yeshivah. The third-place was won by Doron Friedlander, of Lyndhurst, Johannesburg, South Africa. Doron

Susan Tourkin-Komet is the academic secretary of the J.B.Q. She holds a B.A. from Case-Western Reserve Univ. in Cleveland, Ohio and a Degree in Social Work from the Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem. In 1988 and 1989 she spent time in Budapest, Hungary and met with Bible Contest participants there.

attends Yeshiva College of Glenhazel and was a contestant in the International Bible Contest here in Jerusalem two years ago. Doron has a unique hobby, "the Bible Quiz," to quote him. He hopes to return to Israel after completing higher levels of his schooling.

Tying for fourth place were Yosef Dadon of Morocco and Shmuel Niselow of South Africa. (Yosef had already returned to Morocco at the time of the reception at the President's Mansion, and therefore was not interviewed in person.) Shmuel Niselow also attends the Yeshiva College of Glenhazel and lives in Bellevue, Johannesburg. Shmuel's special interest lies in the area of Holocaust research. He intends to study law. He too plans to come to study in a yeshivah in Israel, after high school.

Each year, the President of Israel, Chaim Herzog, focuses special attention on some of the teenagers at the reception. This year the President chose to "interview" the first-time representative from Turkey, Moshe Parsi, who is from a Turkish Jewish family which has been in Turkey for some 500 years since the Spanish Inquisition. Moshe spoke in English with an almost-perfect American accent, as he goes to a Turkish public school which is taught in English. Moshe plans to study electronics and computers.

The theme of this year's contest was the 100th anniversary year of the revival of the modern Hebrew language.

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Continued from p. 54   A. RUDERMAN

In I Kings 6:1 it is clearly stated that *in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel . . . that he began to build the house of the Lord.* Some calculations will again reveal that according to this reckoning the Exodus took place approximately 1450! Solomon was crowned king in 970 B.C.E. Add 480 years and we get 1450!
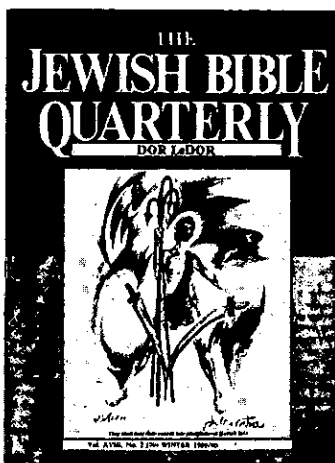
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		November-December 1990			**December 1990-January 1991**
17	שבת	Haftarah: I Samuel 20:18-42	16	S	Psalms 148
18	S	Psalms 121-122	17	M	Psalms 149-150
19	M	Psalms 123-124	18	T	Proverbs 1
20	T	Psalms 125-126	19	W	Proverbs 2
21	W	Psalms 127-128	20	Th	Proverbs 3
22	Th	Psalms 129	21	F	Genesis 44:18-47:27
23	F	Genesis 28:10-32:3	22	שבת	Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:15-28
24	שבת	Haftarah: Hosea 12:13-14:10	23	S	Proverbs 4
		Hosea 11:7-12:12(S)	24	M	Proverbs 5
25	S	Psalms 130-131	25	T	Proverbs 6
26	M	Psalms 132	26	W	Proverbs 7
27	T	Psalms 133-134	27	Th	Proverbs 8
28	W	Psalms 135	28	F	Genesis 47:28-50
29	Th	Psalms 136	29	שבת	Haftarah: I Kings 2:1-12
30	F	Genesis 32:4-36	30	S	Proverbs 9
DEC.			31	M	Proverbs 10
1	שבת	Haftarah: Hosea 11:7-12:12 (A)	JAN.		
		Obadia (S)	1	T	Proverbs 11
2	S	Psalms 137	2	W	Proverbs 12
3	M	Psalms 138	3	Th	Proverbs 13
4	T	Psalms 139	4	F	Exodus 1-6:1
5	W	Psalms 140-141	5	שבת	Haftarah: Isaiah 27:6-28
6	Th	Psalms 142	6	S	Proverbs 14
7	F	Genesis 37-40	7	M	Proverbs 15
8	שבת	Haftarah: Amos 2:1-3:8	8	T	Proverbs 16
9	S	Psalms 143	9	W	Proverbs 17
10	M	Psalms 144	10	Th	Proverbs 18
11	T	Psalms 145	11	F	Exodus 6:2-29:35
12	W	Psalms 146	12	שבת	Haftarah: Ezekiel 28:25-29:21
13	Th	Psalms 147	13	S	Proverbs 19
14	F	Genesis 41-44:17	14	M	Proverbs 20
15	שבת	Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7	15	T	Proverbs 21

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