

THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY



Vol. XXVIII:1 (109)
January - March 2000

The Book of Zephaniah: Allusions to the Tower of Babel

Archetypes in the Patriarchal Family

The Meaning of צמח ה' in Isaiah 4:2

The Saga of the Ark

King of Princes: An Exegesis of Hosea 8:10

Jacob: Father of a Nation

Archaeology and the Bible

Rahab the Harlot and Other Philosophers of Religion

The Akedah: Machloket L'Shem Shamayim

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THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

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The **Jewish Bible Quarterly** (ISSN 0792-3910) is published in January, April, July and October by the **Jewish Bible Association**, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel, a registered nonprofit association (Israeli Registration No. 58-019-398-5). All subscriptions prepaid for complete volume year only. The subscription price for 2000 (volume 28) is \$24. Our email address: info@jewishbible.org and our Internet website is: www.jewishbible.org Back issues available on microfiche. FAX: +972-2-6216344 (attn: JBQ)

Founded by Dr. Louis Katzoff, Editor 1972 - 1987

Published by the

JEWISH BIBLE ASSOCIATION



In cooperation with
THE DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH ZIONIST EDUCATION
The Jewish Agency for Israel



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JANUARY - MARCH 2000

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH: ALLUSIONS TO THE TOWER OF BABEL	<i>Aron Pinker</i>	3
ARCHETYPES IN THE PATRIARCHAL FAMILY	<i>Moshe Reiss</i>	12
THE MEANING OF <i>TZEMAH HASHEM</i> IN ISAIAH 4:2	<i>J.J.M. Roberts</i>	20
THE SAGA OF THE ARK	<i>Josiah Derby</i>	28
KING OF PRINCES: AN EXEGESIS OF HOSEA 8:10	<i>Herbert Cohn</i>	34
JACOB: FATHER OF A NATION	<i>Shimon Bakon</i>	38
ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE	<i>Joshua J. Adler</i>	45
RAHAB THE HARLOT AND OTHER PHILOSOPHERS OF RELIGION	<i>Berel Dov Lerner</i>	52
THE AKEDAH: <i>MACHLOKET L'SHEM SHAMAYIM</i>	<i>Shubert Spero</i>	56
THE PREFERENCE OF EPHRAIM	<i>Zvi Ron</i>	60
DARSHANUT: NOAH AND HIS FAMILY RELATIONS	<i>Hayim Granot</i>	62
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR		65

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POB 29002
Jerusalem, Israel

LOCATION
Kiryat Moriah
East Talpiot, Jerusalem, Israel
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ARTICLES IN THE *JBQ* ARE INDEXED AND ABSTRACTED BY:
Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete
Old Testament Abstracts
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Index of Articles on Jewish Studies (Rambit)
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THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH: ALLUSIONS TO THE TOWER OF BABEL

ARON PINKER

It has been noted that the Hebrew Bible often employs what Buber calls "leading words" [*Leitworte*], in order to superimpose on the text a superstructure of meanings and nuances that adds new dimensions to the textual content and expressiveness.¹ According to Buber, the term "leading word" designates a word or root which is meaningfully repeated in a text, or a continuum of texts, or a set of texts. This repetition does not necessarily have to be of the same word. It could also be of the same root,² or of semantically equivalent words that are likely to conjure up in the mind of the reader or listener the desired images or connotations. Indeed, the very difference in words would often increase the total dynamic effect of the repetition and the impact of the message.

Buber believed that the employment of leading words has never happened with such a magnificent power as it appears in the stories of the Torah.³ Naturally, leading words would tend to be most effective when there is an obviously discernible structure, a solid artistic form. Then the leading words can be effectively identified as an addition with a meaning, a message that has to be revealed, that goes beyond the artistic form. Thus, the message is not delivered by the story per se but has to forge for itself an expression by means of single words or phrases and their associations.

Buber finds the story of the Tower of Babel to be a typical example of the use of leading words. In his view, the story consists of two parts: The acts of men (Gen. 11:1-4), and the counteracts of God (11:5-9). Seven leading words connect the two parts: "*kol ha'arets*" [כל-הָאָרֶץ -- the whole earth], "*safah*" [שפה -- lip, language],

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"havah" [הבה -- come], "banu" [בנו -- built], "ir umigdal" [עיר ומגדל -- a city and a tower], "shem" [שם -- name], and the root "potz" [פזץ - to scatter]. It is possible to speculate on the intended message of these leading words in the Tower of Babel story, but this is not our objective.

If Buber is correct, then in telling and retelling this story a clear association was instilled in the listener between these words and the story. Thus, when Zephaniah proclaimed his visions, and wanted them to be fully understood, he confidently resorted to the mechanism of leading words that reach out to the primeval state of humanity, the Tower of Babel story.

'For then I will make the people pure of speech, so that they all invoke the Lord by name and serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Cush, My suppliants shall bring offerings to Me in Fair Puzai. In that day, you will no longer be ashamed of all the deeds by which you have defied Me. For then I will remove the proud and exultant within you, and you will be haughty no more on My sacred mount' (3:9-11).

The connection between Zephaniah 3 and Genesis 11 was apparently well recognized. Subsequently, Zephaniah 3 was chosen as the prophetic portion to go with Genesis 11:1 in the triennial cycle of Torah reading.⁵ While the superficial similarities between Zephaniah 3 and Genesis 11 were generally recognized, the depth of these similarities has not been adequately discussed in the literature. In the following, we shall demonstrate that all the leading words identified by Buber occur in Zephaniah's allusion to the Tower of Babel.

1. Zephaniah 3:8 ends with "kol ha'aretz" and the story in Genesis 11 starts with the same words. At that pristine time the people were kol ha'aretz -- all the people. In Zephaniah's time, kol ha'aretz are the amim [עַמִּים -- people]. Zephaniah artfully uses kol ha'aretz at the end of verse 8, but in verse 9 uses "amim" in conjunction with the next leading word "safah." By this device, he clearly ties the present reality of amim with the primeval reality of kol ha'aretz. Once this mechanism is assumed, it gives direction for the search of an acceptable emendation.⁶ In parallel to "kol ha'aretz" we should have "kol amim" instead of "el amim." It is possible, though not absolutely necessary for our thesis, that the "kaf" of "ehpokh" [אֶהְפֹּךְ -

- I shall turn] was originally duplicated and then replaced by an "*aleph*." Thus, the original reading may have been "*kol amim*" instead of the acquired "*el amim*."

Note that "*kol ha'aretz*" is thrice repeated at the end of the Tower of Babel story, albeit not with the same meaning as at the beginning. At the beginning, it refers to all people who are still united, while at the end it refers to the surface of the earth, on which the people are scattered according to their languages. This meaning already comes at the end of the first part of the story, which ends as it began with "*kol ha'aretz*." These repetitions of "*kol ha'aretz*" in such an engaging (and perhaps popular) story as the Tower of Babel probably made "*kol ha'aretz*" almost a code word.

2. Zephaniah, like Genesis 11, uses "*safah*" instead of "*lashon*" [לשון -- tongue, language], though he uses "*lashon*" in verse 13. Driver notes that

... "lip" may in Hebrew stand for "language" (e.g. Gen. 11:1; Isa. 19:18), but it is better to take it here in the literal sense. The "lips" of the nations are unclean, either from their general sinfulness (Isa. 6:5, cf. 7), or, more particularly, from their taking the names of the false gods upon them (Hos. 2:1; Ps. 16:4).⁷

Ball argues for the use of both meanings of *safah* (lip-speech and language) in this passage in Zephaniah.⁸

The united people in Genesis have naturally one language. In Zephaniah's day, the various nations spoke various languages that were not usually understandable to one another. His prophesy thus predicts a day when all will understand each other. Again, the leading word "*safah*" must have strong associations with the Tower of Babel story. In the first part of that story, "*safah*" appears only once; but in the second part it is repeated three times in God's words and another time in the summary given at the end. "*Safah*" is strongly emphasized in the Tower of Babel story. Buber says, "Earth, people of the earth, fate of the nations on earth is the focus of this story; but language is the domain in which all happens."⁹ It would be highly unlikely for Zephaniah to choose "*safah*" when he could have used "*lashon*," unless he wanted it to serve as a leading word for an association with the Tower of Babel story. Indeed, all commentators are automatically triggered by this word to consider associations with Genesis 11.¹⁰

3. The common meaning of "*shekhem*" [שֶׁכֶם] is "shoulder," which leads most commentators to translate *shekhem ehad* [שֶׁכֶם אֶחָד] as "with one accord" or "with one consent," or a similar expression. This concept, "with one accord," is found in three other places in the Masoretic text (1 Kg. 22:13; Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 11:19), but the terms used are "*peh ehad*" [פֶּה אֶחָד -- one mouth] and "*lev ehad*" [לֵב אֶחָד -- one heart]. Had Zephaniah wanted to express just unison of worship he could have used either "*peh ehad*" or "*lev ehad*." He used "*shekhem ehad*" because he saw in it an opportunity for a fourfold link of his prophesy to the Tower of Babel.

a. When "*shekhem*" is taken to mean "shoulder" it brings up the image of the builders of the Tower of Babel working in unison. It is manual work, neither words [*peh*] nor intentions [*lev*]. It echoes the enthusiasm, expressed in the plural language, of the builders of the tower and city in the Tower of Babel story.

b. *Shekhem* stands also for the city of Shechem, a city with a tower. The mention of Shechem created an association with the clever conquest of the city by Abimelech and the fact that Shechem had a tower, the Migdal Shechem. But for Zephaniah the association goes further, to a city with a tower, to the city and Tower of Babel.

c. Ball did a structural analysis of Zephaniah 3:8-13 that shows that "*shekhem ehad*" parallels "*behar kodshi*" [בְּהַר קֹדְשִׁי -- on My holy mountain]. This leads Ball to speculate that "It could be that Zephaniah, in looking forward to the fulfillment of the Deuteronomic hope, was linking and transferring the old amphictyonic center of Shechem with the now established cult center in Zion."¹¹ However, in the context of parallelism with Genesis 11 it would be more congruous to view "*behar kodshi*" as the opposite of the Babylonian ziggurats that were considered to be the equivalents of holy mounds.

d. "*Shekhem*" also means "portion," as in Genesis 48:22, or, by extension, "thing." If such a meaning can be given to "*shekhem*," then "*shekhem ehad*" would parallel "*devarim ahadim*" [דְּבָרִים אֶחָדִים -- the same words] in Genesis 11. This would suggest that Zephaniah opposes elaborate and pompous rites and preaches for a return to the days when people had little and worship was much simpler (see Abarbanel).

We see that Zephaniah makes artful use of the word "*shekhem*" to elicit multiple connotations in the story of the Tower of Babel. When assuming the meaning of

"shoulder" it brings up the image of the builders of the Tower of Babel working in unison. When considered as the name of the city Shechem, it recalls the Tower of Shechem in the clever ruse used by Abimelech to conquer it. When textually analyzed it is parallel to "my holy mountain," a reminder of the ziggurats as equivalents of holy mountains. And when interpreted as "thing" it connotes the simplicities of early rites. Thus, in the single word "*shekhem*" Zephaniah established a fourfold link to the story of the Tower of Babel: United effort, city and tower, tower as holy mound, and plainness [*devarim ahadim*].

4. The leading word "*havah*" appears three times in the Tower of Babel story, but not in Zephaniah. Using "*havah*" in Zephaniah 3:8-11 would have made the connection with Genesis 11 overly simplistic, and that is not the style of Zephaniah. Zephaniah is more sophisticated, or he wrote or spoke to a more sophisticated audience. He uses an implied "*havah*" by stating *So that they all invoke the Lord by name*. He expects the knowledgeable reader to reach out to Deuteronomy 32:3: *For the name of the Lord I proclaim, Give [הבו - havu] glory to our God!* If we are correct, this provides us with an interesting insight into the ancient perceptions of the Tower of Babel story. The first two uses of "*havah*" in Genesis 11 must have impressed the Israelites by their zeal and dedication. They were countered by a celestial "*havah*." Zephaniah in his prophesy completely redirects this enthusiasm and dedication to God.

5. The term "*shem*" in biblical context often means the human prevalence that persists forever after death. That was the perceived goal of the builders of the Tower of Babel. Zephaniah criticizes this aspiration by juxtaposing it to a different use of "*shem*": *So that they all invoke the Lord by name* [*shem*]. Also, *all invoke the Lord by name* expresses an ancient Jewish notion that before the Tower of Babel all of mankind believed in the only true God.

6. The term "*nafotz*," as in "*misham hefitzam*," can be elicited from "*bat putzai*." The meaning of "*bat putzai*" has been enigmatic for a long time. This crux was translated as "Fair Puzai," in dispersion, names of tribes, or simply omitted or left untranslated. Recently, Pinker and Zalcman¹² made an argument for the reading "*atarai be-tof we-tsi*" meaning *My supplicants with timbrel, by ship*. It is likely that this original reading was intentionally altered to yield a better alignment with the leading words in the Tower of Babel story. Thus, instead of *My supplicants with*

timbrel, by ship it was changed to the *descendants of My dispersed*, reversing the Tower of Babel dispersion to a future holy ingathering on *My sacred mount*. Cassuto, too, sees in "*atarai bat putzai*" a hint of the dispersion of nations in antiquity.¹³

7. The leading word "*banu*" is not used in Zephaniah, yet it occurs three times in the Tower of Babel story. This emphasis on man building the tower is viewed by Cassuto as a satirical element in the Tower of Babel story: "The effort is that of mortals, only He, the Lord of the universe is eternal."¹⁴ If we imbue this idea with some concreteness, we may say that a mound built by mortals is a transient creation, while *My sacred mount*, a mound created by God, is permanent. Thus, when Zephaniah says *you will be haughty no more on My sacred mount*, his listeners quickly formed the juxtaposition to "*asher banu bnei ha'adam*."

Why did Zephaniah invest so much effort in superimposing an association with Genesis on his prophesy? One approach would be to view Zephaniah's effort as an eschatology, in accord with Gunkel who considered the eschatological as essentially the same as the primeval age. Eschatology is nothing but the projection into the end of times of the ideal primeval age. The two ages, the eschatological and the primeval, are a symbiotic pair in the sense that one is the replica of the other. As Ball puts it:

With Zephaniah's close relationship to both Genesis 1 and 11 we seem to have arrived at an understanding of the Day of [the Lord] which does have a cosmogonical sense and force. Nothing less than a new creation could restore the covenant relationship.¹⁵

In Cassuto's opinion, *all* of Zephaniah's prophecy is eschatological.¹⁶ In the beginning, humanity was pure, humble, and had the right faith. Then the Tower of Babel happened, and humanity embarked on the wrong path. But, in the days to come they will return the pristine state that preceded their moral or religious breakdown in building the Tower of Babel.

While the eschatological nature of Zephaniah's prophecy cannot be ruled out, such an approach would void it of significant temporal *in situ* relevance. If we date Zephaniah to the period of King Josiah's rule (640-609 BCE), we are at a loss to provide a strong motive for couching the references to the Tower of Babel in such vague terms or allusions. At the time of Josiah, Babylon was just starting to

emerge as a major power. Any political sensitivities that Zephaniah might have had would have been related to Egypt or Assyria. But, if the prophecy was made during the Babylonian Exile (or adapted there) the need for it makes good sense and the literary device of veiled language and allusions rather than plain talk appears to be very prudent.

It is very likely that many of the Judean captives who were led into exile (587 BCE) had been put to forced labor in the construction of the ziggurat called Etemenanki, the Tower of Babel. Inscriptions recording the achievements of Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 BCE) state: "All the peoples of many nations I constructed to work on the building of Etemenanki." Because this was at the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, the pool of captives was not so extensive as to rule out use of the Judeans.¹⁷

The Judeans laboring on the rebuilding of Etemenanki was, probably, depressed by the loss of their land and the hardship of their tasks. But it is also very likely that these Judeans had been awed by the monumental building. Prophets had to step in and provide a biblical perspective as well as spiritual consolation. The story of the Tower of Babel had to be used, but it could not have been used in plain language without offending the Babylonian captors. Some subterfuge was in order. The device that was used had two components: the superscription of the prophecy, and use of key leading words. The prophecy was made to appear as having been made in the days of Josiah,¹⁸ and easily recognizable lead words from the famous Tower of Babel story were used to create a veiled allusion to Etemenanki.¹⁹

Some support for this view can be found in the use of "*safah brura*." If "all the peoples of many nations" were working on the rebuilding of Etemenanki, then it would not surprise us that the Judeans had communication problems with the babel of languages used by their co-workers. These misunderstandings may have led to frustration, penalties, and punishments. Additionally, the phrase *You will be haughty no more on My sacred mount* appears to be sending two messages: (1) Building an edifice such as Etemenanki is an expression of haughtiness that will meet the same fate as the original Tower (which was probably the standard Jewish view²⁰); (2) Etemenanki is man-made, it does not have the permanence of a mount

(*My sacred mount*). If we are right in our conjecture, then this argument strengthens Ben Zvi's dating of Zephaniah to post-monarchic times.²¹

Thus, it is possible that the original prophesy was eschatological, fitting the religiously uplifting period of Josiah's rule. Later, in Babylonian Exile, it was found to be very suitable to meet an urgent need. For the later purpose, perhaps some masterful modifications were made using the well-established tool of *Leitworte*.

NOTES

1. M. Weiss, "BeSod Siach HaMikra," in M. Buber, *Darko Shel Mikra* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1978) p. 24.
2. Buber, p.284.
3. Buber, p. 285.
4. A. Berlin, *The Anchor Bible: Zephaniah*, (NY: Doubleday, 1994) p. 13. Berlin notes that "themes from the early chapters of Genesis appear in all three chapters of Zephaniah."
5. E. Ben-Zvi, *A Historical-critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* [*Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alt-testamentliche Wissenschaft*], vol. 198, (Walter de Gruyter, 1991) pp. 24-25.
6. Most of the commentators have problems with the phrase "ehepokh el amim" in Zephaniah 3:9. The solutions offered are usually considerably more complicated than changing an "aleph" into a "kaf" as we suggest. For instance Ball (see note 8) translates: 'Because then I shall restore to the peoples a pure speech' (p. 235). However, "ehepokh" does not have the meaning of "restore," or "make" as the JPS uses it. A very clever translation is provided by Berlin, 'After that I will turn over to peoples pure speech' (p. 126). It is an almost verbatim translation of the Hebrew, except that it would make "ehepokh" mean "give" which is hard to justify. The Septuagint changes "brura" [ברורה -- pure] to "be-dora" and reads: "Then I will turn to the peoples in a tongue of the generation . . ." Even the Mu-rabba'at text that reads "el ha'amim" does not resolve the difficulty.
7. S.R. Driver, *The Minor Prophets: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, The New-Century Bible* (NY: Henry Frowde, 1906) p. 135.
8. I.J. Ball, *A Rhetorical Study of Zephaniah* (Berkeley, CA: Bibal Press, 1988) p. 236. Ball notes that verses 3:9-10 in Zephaniah appear to have some relationship to Genesis 11:1-9. "In this case we have a reversal of the account in Genesis, just as Zephaniah 1:2-3 was a reversal of the creation story in Genesis. Seven words in Zephaniah 3:9 are also found in Genesis 11:1-9 (*anym, safa, kara, kulam, beshem, adony, ehad*)."
9. Buber, pp. 286-287
10. E. G. Kraeling, "The Earliest Hebrew Flood Story," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 66 (1947) p. 280. The connection between the Tower of Babel and the tower of Shechem has been noted by Kraeling. He believes that the Tower of Babel is not a temple-tower, but just a *migdal* as in Shechem (though it is not at all clear that the *migdal* in Shechem had only a pure secular purpose). In his words:

"The tower is not a temple-tower (though the theophany, so basic for the very nature of Babylonian temples, is present in 11:5, but perverted in malam partem) but a migdal belonging to the city, an impregnable fortress, like Shechem's migdal."

11. Ball, p. 243.

12. A. Pinker and L. Zalcman, "Beating the Drum in Fair Puzai," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (forthcoming).

13. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Part II (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986) p. 158.

14. Cassuto, p. 167.

15. Ball, p. 238.

16. Cassuto, p. 158.

17. It appears that when Nabopolassar describes the work on Etemenanki he does not refer specifically to forced labor from other countries as does Nebuchadnezzar. He says, "As for Nebuchadnezzar my firstborn, the beloved of my heart, I made him bear the mortar, the offerings of wine and oil, in company with my subjects." Quoted in Andre Parrot, "The Tower of Babel," in *Studies in Biblical Archaeology* No. 2 (NY: Philosophical Library, 1955) p. 19.

18. Note the unusual length of the genealogy; as if the "over-kill" had to compensate for the fiction.

19. That this veil was pretty effective can be illustrated by the fact that even some biblical scholars have failed to notice the allusion to the Tower of Babel in Zephaniah. For instance, Andre Parrot writes, "Let me point out at once that no further mention whatever of the episode is made in the Holy Scriptures, and that none of the characters of the Old or the New Testament ever makes the least allusion to it. To say the least, this silence is surprising." (Parrot, p. 17.)

20. A. Pinker, "The Tower of Babel -- God's Towering Pride," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, XXVII:2 (1999) pp. 89-99.

21. Ben-Zvi, pp. 298-306.

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ARCHETYPES IN THE PATRIARCHAL FAMILY

MOSHE REISS

THE TWO ADAMS

Joseph Soloveitchik, a great Jewish theologian of the 20th century, analyses the two accounts of creation of Adam.¹ In the first (Gen. 1), God creates Adam-One in His image, and no physical body is mentioned. In the second (Gen. 2), God fashions Adam-Two from dust, and breathes life into his body. God's mandate to Adam-One is to *subdue* the earth; His mandate to Adam-Two is to *cultivate* it, and thereby serve it.

Adam-One is charged to subdue and dominate nature. This raises practical questions: How does one subdue and dominate? One must use power and technology. Adam-One is to be "aggressive, bold and victory-minded [and in this way] to imitate his Maker." He understands the hostility of nature and is intent on survival. His mission is to subdue. He is a hunter rather than a thinker. Soloveitchik calls him "the Majestic Man"; he is worldly-minded, externally motivated, creative and dynamic.

Adam-Two, the younger Adam, is created to serve. He does not ask the functional question of *how*, but rather "*why* is it, *what* is it, and *who* is it?" His mission is to serve and be receptive. He is likely to be a conciliator and will try to establish an intimate relation with people and with God. "Adam [Two] sees his separateness from nature and his existential uniqueness not in dignity or majesty but in . . . the redemptive." The age of redemption is always a future goal, it can never be accomplished in the present. His present is a "link between the before" in which he was not involved and the "after" from which he will be excluded.² "Redemptiveness does not have to be acted vis-a-vis the outside world."³ He is the Man of Faith. It is his thought that controls him. Unlike Adam-One, he is internally motivated.

Soloveitchik maintains that both models of human behavior are sanctioned by

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God.⁴ The key words are "subduer" and "servant" and both of them have positive and negative connotations. One who subdues may be overly aggressive to the detriment of others. To *love your neighbor as yourself* is difficult. On the other hand, one is always required to survive and that may require aggressiveness. To be a servant of God is a compliment, as with Moses *the servant of God*. To be a servant of Pharaoh is not a compliment.

It is understood that while Soloveitchik is writing about men of God, his analysis applies to human personalities in general. This essay will apply the thesis of the two Adam-personalities to Esau and Jacob, and pose two questions: Can these brothers represent those two personalities described by Soloveitchik? Is the Jewish tradition of viewing Esau as evil and Jacob as good be justified by the text of the Torah?

THE PARENTS

Before we can discuss Esau and Jacob, we need to discuss their parents, Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac is the son who was traumatized by the willingness of his father Abraham to sacrifice him. He survived the near-sacrifice, but thereafter his vision is dimmed figuratively and in the end literally. Isaac suffers the trauma, and Abraham receives the blessing: *'I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore'* (Gen. 22:17). Isaac is the descendant,⁵ who moments before was bound as though he were a sacrificial ram, with his father holding a knife over his throat. It is difficult to conceive of anyone recovering from such an experience.

Isaac does not independently choose a wife, as did his father and his sons, but accepts the one brought to him by his father's servant. When he first meets his cousin-bride Rebekah, he is *out walking in the field toward evening* (24:63). He is in the gray twilight between day and night.

What do we know of Rebekah prior to this meeting? Abraham sent his servant to Aram-naharaim to find a wife for Isaac in the land whence he himself had come. This servant, though never named in the text, is traditionally identified with Eliezer (cf. 15:2). He chose Rebekah, a beautiful young virgin, daughter of Bethuel, whose own parents are Milcah and Nahor, brother of Abraham (24:15). Her parents and her brother Laban approve the match, but Rebekah's own

consent was required before she left for Canaan. She made her own decision to leave her home and family and go to be the wife of Isaac.

After the couple met, Isaac *brought her into the tent of his mother, Sarah, and he took Rebekah as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother's death* (24:67).

For the first 20 years of her marriage, Rebekah was barren. Was there ever any talk about this between wife and husband? Isaac prayed for her, and finally she did conceive. Was she aware of Isaac's intervention? She decided to seek an oracle about the difficulties of her pregnancy. Did she consult with Isaac about this? We are never told anything of communication or lack of communication between them.

Rebekah asked the Lord, למה זה אנכי [*lamah zeh anochi* -- "Why me?" or "Who am I?" or "For what?" or perhaps "Why am I?"⁶]. This is a surprising question in view of the assumed happiness of finally conceiving after 20 years of barrenness. This is a question from an Adam-One personality, who needs to control her life. It is not the query of one who accepts the world, its opportunities and its problems, without analysis.

The Lord answered her,

*'Two nations are in your womb,
Two separate peoples shall issue from your body;
One people shall be mightier than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger'* (25:23).

It is not said whether she shared this revelation with Isaac. It is plausible to conjecture that had she done so, the later conflict between Esau and Jacob over the blessings might have been avoided.⁷

THE BROTHERS

The firstborn boy was covered with red hair, and he was called Esau [עשו/*Esav*, from שער/*se'ar* -- hairy]. His twin brother was then born, clutching the heel of Esau, as though struggling to be the firstborn, and he was called Jacob [יעקב/*Ya'akov*, from אקב/*akev* -- heel]. When the grew up, *Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors, but Jacob was a mild man who stayed in camp* [or: *in tents*] (25:27). Esau was the one who brought home food, a man who went out to dominate nature. He was born to be an Adam-One. Jacob, who

stayed at home, was born with an Adam-Two personality, but was to spend much of his life trying to be an Adam-One like his brother. Esau, on the other hand, an Adam-One personality - a majestic man - and not a man of faith, was quite content to be what he was.

Jacob was the favorite of Rebekah, who overprotected her younger child and taught him to deal with the world through guile and manipulation. Esau, not favored by his mother, was the favorite of his father. Isaac, an Adam-Two who had been passive even when Abraham was about to sacrifice him, loved his Adam-One son who was a skilled hunter and slayer of wild game. Perhaps he was drawn to the personality opposite to his own. (Did he love his wife because she, too, had an Adam-One personality?)

The first incident involving the adult twins began with Esau out hunting and Jacob at home cooking, typical of their roles.⁸ Esau returned and asked of his brother, *'Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished'* (25:30). Jacob replied, *'First sell me your birthright'* (25:31). Esau, whose role was to bring home food, was weak from hunger, and Jacob, whose role in the family was to cook, took advantage of his position.

What was this birthright that Jacob so coveted? In ancient cultures and in Jewish law, the oldest received two privileges. One was a double portion of the inheritance (Deut. 21:17), primarily in property and livestock. The second had a spiritual dimension: the priesthood. What did Jacob seek? His brother's material inheritance, or his spiritual status, or both? This question will arise again when Jacob obtained his father's blessing by stealth.

Jacob stole his brother's blessing from their old, blind father under the direct contrivance of his mother. Rebekah told her beloved Jacob that she accepted full responsibility for the deception. She wanted her younger son to have the firstborn blessing, which she supposed would give him an aggressive personality. Ironically, she also wanted him to be what Isaac admired in Esau: an Adam-One. She wanted him to replicate herself. If she were seeking for Jacob to have the spiritual blessing, how could that be won by deception? As we shall see, Jacob himself wanted to combine both values, the aggressive power of Adam-One and the spiritual thoughtfulness of Adam-Two.

Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau's clothing and in kidskins, and Isaac, catching their scent, remarked, '*Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of the fields that the Lord has blessed.*' Then he pronounced the blessing:

*May God give you
Of the dew of heaven, and the fat of the earth,
Abundance of new grain and wine.
Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow to you;
Be master over your brothers,
And let your mother's sons bow to you.
Curse be they who curse you,
Blessed be they you bless you' (Gen. 27:27-29).*

The blessing is addressed to Esau, whose *smell . . . was like the smell of the fields*. Who would subdue *the fat of the earth* if not a real hunter, and who is that but Esau? Who will *peoples serve . . . and nations bow to*? That would, in time, be the descendants of Esau whom Jewish tradition equated with Rome.

Edom, the nation derived from Esau, eventually came to stand for Rome and for Christianity, so the blessings of the two brothers are a presage of the conflict between "Edom" and "Israel."

THE SISTERS

Jacob's mother told him to leave home because Esau, the victim of their plot, was threatening to kill him. His father, on his mother's urging, told him to leave home and go find a wife. Isaac understood that once Jacob had received the blessing of the firstborn, he could not passively wait for a wife to be brought to him, but must "subdue" one. Therefore, Jacob went off to his uncle -- and future father-in-law -- Laban. Laban was a master deceiver, and from him Jacob would learn how to be aggressive and manipulative. Rebekah must certainly have known her brother's predilections. As has been seen, she had a similar manipulative personality.

He arrived at the local well where he met Rachel, the younger of Laban's two daughters, who was tending her father's sheep. Before Jacob actually met Laban himself, there are five references to the relationship with "his mother's brother".

Is this repetition a warning that as his mother deceived both Isaac and Esau, so her brother would deceive him about both Rachel and the flocks?

The first deception came after Jacob had given seven years of service to Laban in exchange for Rachel as a bride, but Laban had Leah take her place on the wedding night. His explanation to Jacob the next morning was that *'It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older'* (29:26). There is implicit irony in this stress on the right of the older child, and in the trick perpetrated on him. Jacob, his perception dimmed by passion, mistook Leah for Rachel, just as Isaac, his perception dimmed by age, mistook Jacob for Esau.

Of the two sisters, Rachel the shepherdess went out into the world among the men, and was in charge of an important part of the family property. She was the Adam-One wife. Leah, it is assumed, had tasks within the home. She was the female counterpart of the *quiet man who dwells in the camp*. She obeyed her father in carrying out the deception of Jacob. She was the only one of the four matriarchs who had no fertility problem, and bore six sons and a daughter. She continued to love Jacob, though she knew that he did not love her. Leah was the Adam-Two wife. She seems to be the least appreciated of the matriarchs, but in the end it was Leah and not Rachel who was buried in the family tomb at Machpelah beside Jacob, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah.

JACOB-ISRAEL

The estranged brothers finally met again, after 21 years of separation. Jacob had sent a conciliatory message to Esau, and learned that the latter was now coming to meet him all the way from his own present home in Edom. Jacob feared that he and his family might be in danger from Esau, and tried to protect them by dividing them into two camps. He sent them across the River Jabbok, but remained behind alone. There, on its bank, "a man" wrestled with him all night and could not prevail over him. At morn, he said *'Let me go, for dawn is breaking'* but Jacob answered *'I will not let you go unless you bless me'* (32:25-27). How did Jacob have the strength to wrestle all night? Why must the "man" leave because dawn is breaking?

The "man" is traditionally supposed to be an angel, but in a midrash it is said that he represented Esau. Jacob, having stolen a blessing from Esau, now

wanted a blessing of forgiveness from Esau. The "man" asked Jacob his name, though surely he must have known it. Then he announced, *'Your name shall no longer be Jacob but Israel, for you have striven with things divine and human [or: with God and men] and have prevailed'* (v. 29). In effect, he was telling Jacob that he had achieved his objective, he had the power he had always sought, he had become Adam-One. Jacob then asked the man/angel *his* name, but he refused to reveal it. Then וַיִּבְרַךְ אֹתוֹ שָׁם [NJPS: *he took leave of him there*; alternatively, *He blessed him there*;]. No blessing is quoted, but Jacob realized that he had indeed been blessed: he has *seen God face to face* (v. 31), he had struggled and he had survived.⁹

God later confirmed that he shall be called Israel and no longer Jacob (35:10), but Jacob did not entirely change his name to Israel, his name of power. Thereafter, he used both names, and both are used of him in the books of Prophets and Writings. He understood that he needed to combine Power and Thought, a synthesis of Adam-One and Adam-Two.

After this, came the reconciliation. Jacob had offered rich gifts to Esau, who wished to decline them: *'I have enough, my brother. Let what you have remain yours'* (v. 9). Jacob, seeing that Esau had forgiven him, insisted that he take בְּרִכְתִּי [*birkati*]. This is often rendered "my gift" or "my present" but can be taken here as "my blessing" -- that is, the birthright (v. 11). The two brothers now understood that each had been blessed by God, each had what he wanted, and they no longer need resent one another.

Jacob's journey began with a sunset (28:11), and it ended with a sunrise (32:32). Having achieved his objective, and been reconciled with Esau, he could begin his new life as Adam-One-and-Two.

ESAU-EDOM

The last report on Esau in the biblical record is a summary of his descendants (36:32,41). He, like Jacob, had 12 sons, and they were chieftains of clans. This certainly implies an element of Majestic Man.

Isaac did not expire until Jacob had reached home. Did he know that his twin sons had been reconciled, and he could thus die in peace? He was buried by Esau and Jacob, named in that order (36:29). When Abraham died, he was buried by Isaac and Ishmael, named in that order even though Ishmael was the

older. Esau, perhaps because he forgave Jacob, was given priority in the burial of their father.

Esau showed himself in a sympathetic light in relation to his father and the blessing, he showed consideration for his parents, and he showed graciousness to Jacob. Yet, in Jewish lore he is seen as evil. This tradition developed during the period when the Romans occupied Judea and oppressed the Jewish people. Esau had early been identified with Edom, and later Edom was identified with Rome and later still with Christianity. The opprobrium linked to his name was thus incurred by "Edom" as a symbol for Rome and Christianity, and not by the man Esau as he appears in the Book of Genesis.

The Zohar, the most spiritual book of Jewish mysticism, states that redemption can only come if Esau's tears are dried.¹⁰ *The Zohar* recognizes not only Jacob's offense against Esau, but also Jewish tradition's misplaced perception of Esau as evil. It says that this perception must change before redemption can come. Jacob-Israel managed the change, but much of Jewish tradition has fallen short of it.

NOTES

1. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) pp. 18-25. An earlier version was published in *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought* (1966).
2. *op. cit.* p. 69.
3. *Tradition* version, p. 24.
4. Book version, pp. 82-85.
5. The Hebrew text has זרע [your seed], and a case could be made that this is plural, so that Ishmael is also included in this blessing.
6. Aviva Gottlieb Zorenberg, lecture in Jerusalem on November 24, 1997.
7. Zorenberg.
8. Is it surprising that Jacob makes a vegetarian lentil dish, rather than the meat that his father and his brother would prefer?
9. Only Moses sees God face-to-face (Deut. 34:10).
10. *Zohar*, Translated by M. Simon and P.R. Levertoff (London: Soncino Press, 1976) Vol. 2, p. 66.

THE MEANING OF "צִמַּח ה'" IN ISAIAH 4:2

J.J.M. ROBERTS

*In that day 'צִמַּח ה'
Will be a source of splendor and glory,
And the fruit of the land פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ
Will be a source of pride and beauty
To the remnant of Israel.*

The meaning of "צִמַּח ה'" in Isaiah 4:2 is a hotly disputed question, despite the ease with which one may translate the phrase. It may be translated as the "sprout," "shoot," or "new growth" of the Lord,¹ but the crucial question concerns the referent of this expression. To what does the phrase refer? Three main answers to this question have been proposed.² Some scholars understand *the new growth of the Lord* to refer to the miraculously abundant crops and vegetation that God will cause to grow in the land in the eschatological future.³ Others take the expression as a metaphor for the human population that will abound in the land in the future.⁴ Still others follow the Targum⁵ in assigning the phrase a messianic interpretation.⁶

The correct choice among these three interpretations depends on the appropriate weighing of three other observations about the passage.

1. There is a clear parallelism between "צִמַּח ה'" and the following expression "פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ" [the fruit of the land].

2. Verses 4:2-6 are clearly dependent on the preceding context for their meaning. The oracle has been placed here to show that the awful judgment announced against Jerusalem in 3:1-8 and 3:17-4:1 is not God's last word. There yet remains a future for the people of God. Even if 4:3-6 represent later expansion of 4:2,⁷ this verse is still dependent on the preceding context.

3. In some sense, both the "צִמַּח ה'" and the "פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ" will be objects of beauty and splendor and sources of pride and glory *to the fugitives of Israel*.

Those who argue against the messianic interpretation of "צִמַּח ה'" point out that "פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ" is never attested as a messianic designation, and they reason

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JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

that since the two expressions are used in parallel one must assign "צִמְחָה" the same non-messianic significance that one gives to "פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ." The unexamined assumption here is that parallel terms must be synonymous if not identical; that, in any case, they must have the same referent. This assumption, however, is patently false unless one is willing to define the referent in a very broad sense. The seconding involved in parallelism may be that of complementarity rather than identity.⁸ In other words, parallel terms may name distinct referents which together constitute a more comprehensive whole.

The parallelism between Ephraim and Damascus in verse 17:3, for instance, does not identify these two distinct states, though together they constituted the main forces arrayed against Judah in the Syro-Ephaimite war.

The parallelism between "מֶלֶךְ" [king] and "שָׂרִים" [officers] (32:1), does not imply the identity of this official and his underlings, though together they constitute the ruling authorities in a monarchy. Orphans and widows are not identical (10:2), nor as a group are they identical to young men (9:16). The same may be said for Zion and those who return to it (1:27). The parallelism between מְאֹשְׁרֵי הָעָם [the leaders of this people] and מְאֹשְׁרֵיהֶם [they who are led] certainly does not identify the rulers and the ruled (9:15). One should also note the way the reference to the promised ruler is seconded by a reference to his glorious abode in Isaiah 11:10b:

אֵלֵינוּ גּוֹיִם יִדְרְשׁוּ וְהִיטָה מְנוּחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד

To him the nations will go to inquire

And his resting place will be glorious.

In view of these examples, the parallelism between צִמְחָה and פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ need not be taken to imply that the two phrases have the same referent. The Targum's rendering of one by "the anointed of the Lord" and the other by "those who do the law" may be overly precise, periphrastic, or highly interpretive, but the distinction it draws cannot be ruled out by the mere fact that the two phrases are A and B terms in poetic parallelism.

The negative argument advanced above does not prove that the messianic interpretation is the correct interpretation, but it gives more room for that possibility, and it allows one to look at today's dominant interpretation more critically. One should note that the interpretation of פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ and hence of צִמְחָה

as referring to luxuriant vegetation is supported primarily by reference to penta-teuchal citations. This interpretation does not fit the context of 4:2, however, and it does not correspond to normal Isaianic usage.

As noted above, 4:2-6 is dependent upon a response to the preceding judgments announced in 3:1-8 and 3:17-4:1. The Lord may remove every mainstay of Jerusalem's social structure (3:1-2), but there will be a holy remnant (4:3). The Lord may remove the "beauty" [תפארת] of the fine clothing of the haughty women of Jerusalem (3:18) and replace it with filthy rags (3:24), but after this judgment He will wash away their filth (4:4), and there will once more be "beauty" for the survivors of Israel (4:2). In the light of this dependency of 4:2-6 on the judgments threatened in Chapter 3, one should note that these judgments never explicitly mention crop shortages. The shortage announced in the judgment (3:1-2; 3:25; 4:1) is a shortage of men!

Moreover, Isaiah often employs plant imagery to refer to the human population. The vineyard [הכרם] that the elders and officials devour in 3:14 is probably to be understood similarly to the Lord's vineyard and His pleasant planting mentioned in 5:7; that is, as God's people. The use of this vegetation imagery is particularly common in passages describing or threatening the devastation of the human population (9:9,17-18,10:16-19,33-34,17:4-6) or the ruin of a city (28:1-4). Clements cites 37:30 as evidence for the use of פרי [fruit] to refer to the produce of vegetation. That is certainly a legitimate usage, but the next two verses are far closer to our passage in thought, and they use vegetation imagery to refer to the growth of the remaining human population:

And the fugitives of the house of Judah who remain will again take root downward and make fruit [פרי] upward, for a remnant will go forth from Jerusalem, and fugitives from Mount Zion (37:31-32).⁹

A very similar thought is also expressed in the later Isaianic tradition. In the Isaianic Apocalypse one finds the promise: *In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit (27:6).*

Moreover, Second Isaiah, in a passage (44:1-5) with some marked similarities to 4:2-6,¹⁰ speaks of Jacob's offspring as sprouting like trees:

For I will pour out water on the parched ground and streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my spirit on your seed and my blessing on

your offspring. And they will sprout [וּצְחָחוּ] like a tamarisk of the courtyard,¹¹ like poplars beside watercourses (44:3-4).

Thus, both the context and usage of the Isaianic corpus suggest that one understand *the fruit of the land* to refer to the human population that remains in Jerusalem and Judah.

Wildberger argues against this interpretation on the basis that "*die Frucht des Landes' fur die Geretteten Israels dasein soll.*"¹² That is, if the fruit of the land is identified with those who escaped from Israel, how could it at the same time be a source of pride for these same people? This objection, however, is more apparent than real. The distinction between Jacob and his seed or the survivors of Judah and their fruit in the passages cited above shows that there is no real problem with the interpretation of פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ as referring to the human population. The survivors could take delight and pride in the renewed growth of the population of the land. A citizen may look upon the population of which he or she is a part with joy and pride despite the fact that he or she is a part of it. Moreover, it is not entirely certain that יִשְׂרָאֵל refers to the survivors from Jerusalem anyway. If this oracle goes back to an Isaianic original, *the fugitives of Israel* could refer to refugees from the north who took delight in the glorious new life offered by a purged, renewed, and ideal Jerusalem.¹³

In my opinion, then, *the fruit of the land* refers to the burgeoning new population in Jerusalem and Judah after the purging fire of judgment. But, as already intimated, *the shoot of the Lord* may have another referent. In 11:1 the prophet uses נֹצֵחַ and חֹטֶר, both of them synonyms of צִמְחָה, to refer to the ideal king from the root of Jesse who would rise up after the Lord had cut down the forest of Jerusalem's enemies (10:32b-34). In 11:10 there is a reference to the same figure, or perhaps to the continuing Davidic line, as the source to whom the nations would resort for counsel:

*In that day the root [שֹׁרֶשׁ] of Jesse which remains standing
Shall become a standard to the peoples --
To him nations will go to inquire,
And his resting place [מְנוּחָתוֹ] will be glorious.*

This resort to the Davidic king, whose glorious resting place can hardly be understood as anything other than a purged and restored Jerusalem, his royal

capital,¹⁴ is parallel to the nations' pilgrimage to Jerusalem to inquire of the Lord in 2:2-4. Finally, in an Isaianic oracle of disputed interpretation but which in its present form clearly refers to the death of a Judean king (14:28), the prophet promises a royal successor who would come from his root:

*For from the root [שרש] of the serpent shall come forth a viper,
And his fruit [ופרי] shall be a flying cobra (14:29b).*

Even if the passages in Chapters 11 and 14 do not use the noun צמח, it is probable that they have influenced Jeremiah's promise that God would raise up for David a righteous shoot [צמח צדיק], who would rule wisely and justly, and in whose days Judah and Israel would be saved and live in security (Jer. 23:5). The same promise is found with some interesting differences in Jeremiah 33:15. There God promises, *I will cause to sprout for David a shoot of righteousness* [האצמיח לדוד צמח צדקה] and it is Judah and Jerusalem who will dwell in security. This promise is picked up in the post-exilic period by Zechariah, who uses the term צמח as a technical term for the expected Davidic king, whom he identifies as his contemporary Zerubbabel (Zech. 3:8; 6:12). If Isaiah 4:2 goes back to an Isaianic original, it could provide a middle term between the ideas expressed in 11:1,10 and the actual terminology used to express the same ideas in the later prophecies of Jeremiah and Zechariah.

Wildberger rejects this possibility by making a big point of the fact that 4:2 speaks of צמח ה' [a shoot of the Lord], while 11:1 speaks of חטר מגזע ישׁי [a rod from the stock of Jesse] and the Jeremiah passages refer to a shoot לדוד [for David]. The implication is that 4:2 involves a radically different concept from the other passages. Speaking of Isaiah, Wildberger asserts, "*Das zeigt, dass auch er vom צמח aus Davids Geschlecht reden konnte, kaum aber vom צמח ה'*"¹⁵ Wildberger's argument will not hold water, however. If there were any doubt, the formulation in Jeremiah shows that two motifs were implicit in the promise of the ideal king: God would raise him up (Jer. 23:5), or cause him to sprout (33:15), and he would be from the Davidic line [לדוד]. The Isaiah passages (11:1,10) do not explicitly affirm that God would cause this new shoot from Jesse to sprout, but that is certainly implied. And if Isaiah regarded The Lord as the One who would cause this ideal king to spring forth like a new shoot, the prophet would have no problem designating the future king as *the shoot of the Lord*.

Moreover, if one dates 4:2 to the post-exilic period, the case for a messianic reading of 'ה צמח becomes even stronger. Rather than a middle term between 11:1,10 and the later developments in Jeremiah and Zechariah, 4:2 would be later and probably influenced by all these passages. In the light of Zechariah's absolute use of צמח as a messianic title in the early post-exilic period, it is hard to see how an even later writer could avoid messianic implications in the use of the phrase 'ה צמח. If he has, it is clearly intentional, a possibility to which I will return.

Assuming an Isaianic original, therefore, one could paraphrase my interpretation of 4:2 as follows: In that day the king that the Lord will raise up will be an object of splendor and glory. And the burgeoning population of the land will be an object of pride and beauty, For those of Israel who have survived the judgment.

The reason for this delight in the king and his subjects is spelled out in the following verse, where those who remain in Zion are characterized as "holy" [שׁוֹדֵק] This parallelism between the ruler and his subject population is analogous, though not identical, to that between the ruler and his glorious resting place in 11:10, or the king in his beauty and his broad land in Isaiah 33:17. The former of these passages may have influenced the interpretation of 4:2 offered by Hayes and Irvine. They read *the fruit of the land* as a reference to Jerusalem.¹⁶ My interpretation differs, but not greatly. Though the emphasis in 11:10 and 33:17 falls more on the capital city or on the broad land of the king as a sign of the king's glory and power rather than on the character of the inhabitants of the city or land, ultimately it is the population of a city or land that is its real glory. It is the character of Zion's rulers and her population that will cause the city to be once more called *City of Righteousness, Faithful City* (1:26). Not only will the ideal future king rule in wisdom and righteousness (11:1-5) and his officials officiate with justice (32:1), but only those subjects will remain in Jerusalem whose behavior prepares them to live in the presence of a holy God (1:27; 33:14-16).

If 4:2 does not go back to an Isaianic original, but dates to the exilic or post-exilic period, one must consider one other possibility of interpretation. As is well known, Second Isaiah took royal traditions and democratized them, apply-

ing promises made originally to the Davidic line to the nation as a whole (55:3-4). This process is continued in the post-exilic period by Third Isaiah. Isaiah spoke of the ideal king as a "sprout" [נצר] from Jesse's root which would bloom (11:1), but Third Isaiah speaks of the people as a whole as the *sprout* [נצר] of God's planting (60:21). This passage and its parallel in 61:3c are worth quoting in full:

*And your people, all of them righteous,
Shall possess the land forever.
They are the sprout that I planted,
The work of my hand in which I glory (60:21).
They shall be named oaks of righteousness,
Trees planted by the Lord for his own glory (61:3c).*

One might also compare Second Isaiah's description of the unimposing appearance of God's servant Israel as *growing up like a sapling* [יֹנֵק] *before him, and like a root* [שֹׁרֵשׁ] *out of dry ground* (53:2a).

All of these passages seem to be playing with the language of earlier royal prophecies, democratizing the imagery to apply it to the people as a whole. If 4:2 dates to this late period, it is possible that the messianic overtones of the title צִמְחָה are still heard, but that they have been intentionally muted by the parallelism with פְּרִי הָאָרֶץ precisely because the poet wants to transform the ancient promise of a chosen king into a promise applicable to the whole people as His chosen plants.

NOTES

1. The Revised Standard Version rendering of צִמְחָה as "branch" is less appropriate because it does not convey the notion of growth that has just sprouted. NJPS translates צִמְחָה as "radiance," but this translation is based on the meaning of the root in Syriac, and there is no convincing evidence that the Hebrew term ever had that meaning. The unique translation of צִמְחָה with *ἐπιλαμπω* this one time in the LXX does not support such a meaning for the Hebrew, since the Greek translator of Isaiah was obviously struggling to make any sense of his Hebrew text at this point. Moreover, the NJPS translation requires an unusual rendering of the parallel term פְּרִי as well, and to nail down its interpretation it also suggests the emendation of הָאָרֶץ to אֲדָנִי. Even without the daring emendation that is too many unusual or unattested meanings to sustain the translation and interpretation proposed by NJPS.

2. There is a good summary of the various positions taken by scholars in, John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).
3. This is perhaps the dominant interpretation today. It is held by Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja* (Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament XI/1; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972); R.E. Clements, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Isaiah 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I-XXVII, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), and many others.
4. This position is defended in John Mauchline, *Isaiah 1-39, Torch Bible Commentaries* (London: SCM Press, 1962) and others.
5. The Targum renders צִמְחָה דִּירִי as מְשִׁיחָה דִּירִי [the anointed of the Lord].
6. This view was defended by Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889). It was maintained by very conservative scholars like E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), and recently it has been taken up again by John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah: The Eighth-century Prophet, His Times & His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987).
7. Wildberger defends the "kerygmatische Ganzheit" of 4:2-6, but he nonetheless argues that this unity developed in three stages; verse 2 was expanded first by the addition of 4:3-5a and then by that of 4:5b-6 (pp. 152-153). I am more inclined to ascribe the poetic unevenness in the text to the process of textual transmission which has substantially prosaized an originally unified poetic text. Even the prosaic verses 3-6 preserve enough elements of parallelism to suggest a poetic original.
8. I have been influenced in my understanding of parallelism by the very clear and stimulating work of James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), but one need not agree totally with his argument in order to accept my point here. Even if the relationship between parallel terms sometimes is A=B, it is still clear that at other times the relationship must be that of completion, of A+B.
9. The term צִרְיָ is also used of human offspring in 13:18 and, under animal imagery, in 14:29.
10. Note that both 4:3 and 44:5 speak of recording the survivors names in writing.
11. Reading כְּבִין חֲצִיר for בְּבִין חֲצִיר, but the argument is unaffected if one retains the MT.
12. Wildberger, p. 155.
13. See the very suggestive discussion of Hayes and Irvine on this passage and compare my study of the north-south contrast in "Isaiah 2 and the Prophet's Message to the North," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 75/3 (1985) pp. 290-308.
14. Note the use of מְנוּחָה for Jerusalem in Psalm 132:13-14.
15. Wildberger, p. 154.
16. Hayes and Irvine, p. 96.

THE SAGA OF THE ARK

JOSIAH DERBY

In the 300 years from the Exodus (ca. 1250 BCE)¹ to the erection of Solomon's Temple (ca. 950 BCE) the Ark of the Covenant which Moses had built in the wilderness was part of a number of crucial events in the history of Israël. It was carried before the Israelites through the wilderness. It crossed the Jordan with them, and was present at the fall of Jericho. The Israelites took it out of Beth-el to the war with the tribe of Benjamin.

Its wanderings in the years thereafter can be traced through I Samuel 4-7:2 and II Samuel 6. It was taken from its shrine in Shiloh to assist the Israelites in their first encounter with the Philistines. The Philistines captured it and brought it to one of their five city-states, where it wreaked havoc upon the people and upon the Philistine god Dagon. In desperation, the Philistines placed the Ark upon a new wagon, drawn by two milk cows, added special gifts of gold, and sent it back to the Israelites. It then came to a halt at Beth-Shemesh. The people of Beth-Shemesh also suffered from its presence, so they sent it to Kiryat-yearim, and it was taken thence to the home of a man named Abinadab in the town of Gibah. There it remained for 20 years.²

David, having become king of all of Israel and having made Jerusalem its capital, then assembled a great entourage to escort the Ark from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem. Because of the death along the way of one of the escort, David halted the procession and left the Ark at the home of Obed-edom the Gittite. After three months, David finally brought the Ark up to Jerusalem with great pomp and circumstance, and created a shrine for it under a tent on the threshing-floor that he had bought from Arauna the Jebusite. Years later, after Solomon built the Temple, the Ark at last came to a resting place in the Holy of Holies [דביר] of the Temple (I Kg. 8:6).

Then a strange thing happens. The Ark vanishes from the pages of the history of Israel. It is never again mentioned throughout the Books of Kings. After so

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much is told of its first 300 years in Israel, there is not a word about it for the next 350 years, up to the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BCE.³ Why?

The Ark is not mentioned by the prophets except in Jeremiah 3:16, and is not explicitly mentioned in the Psalms other than Psalm 132:8. However, there are scholars who maintain that the Ark is alluded to in Psalms in a number of places. For example, G. Henton Davies⁴ notes that in Psalm 78 the capture of Shiloh (v. 60) is followed by *He let His might* [עָזָו] *go into captivity* (v. 61) and argues that this must mean the Ark. This leads him to suggest that "might" [עָזָו] elsewhere in Psalms also means the Ark, as in Psalm 99:4.

Others propose that phrases speaking of God as "sitting" or "enthroned" on cherubim [יֹשֵׁב כְּרוּבִים] (Ps. 99:1; Is. 37:16) refer to the Ark with the cherubim on top of it. Or, the phrase *before the Lord* also implies the Ark because the Presence of God is assumed, invisible of course, to hover above the cherubim of the Ark. According to Menahem Haran,⁵ "His footstool" [הַדָּוֶם רַגְלִי] is another metaphor for the Ark. He argues that the cherubim constituted God's throne, and thus the chest on which the *kaporet* with the cherubim rests becomes God's footstool. Thus, in Psalm 99:5 "His footstool" means the Ark. If we accept these interpretations, must we infer from them that the psalmist was speaking of the Ark as existing in his time? And if the psalmist found it fitting and proper to mention the Ark, why did not the prophets or the historians find even a single occasion upon which to speak of the Ark?

I am inclined to accept the view of those scholars who reject these allusions. As to the specific mention of "the Ark" [אָרֹן] in Psalm 132:8, Mitchell Dahood⁶ believes that this Psalm was written in David's time to commemorate his bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. From the proximity of "His footstool" in verse 7 to "the Ark" in verse 8 one might conclude that "His footstool" means the Ark.⁷ Yet in Psalm 99, it would appear "His footstool" in verse 5 relates to "His holy hill" in verse 9, the mountain on which the Temple stood. In Isaiah, on the other hand, God's footstool is *the entire earth* (66:1).

We can now return to our original question. Why is the historian silent about the Ark after it was ensconced in the *D'vir* of the Temple by Solomon? Is it possible that the legend that King Josiah concealed the Ark was conceived in

the fertile imaginations of the rabbis of the Talmud as an answer to this question? Such an answer, it seems, satisfied the classical Jewish commentators. Among modern Bible scholars who wrote about the Ark, I could find only two who addressed this question directly, Menahem Haran⁸ and Joseph Gutmann.⁹ Haran speaks of "the disappearance" of the Ark as "one of the enigmas of the history of the First Temple". He deals with Jeremiah 3:16:

And when you increase and are fertile in the land, in those days -- declares the Lord -- men shall no longer speak of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, nor shall it come to mind. They shall not mention it, or miss it, or make another.

Haran says of this passage, "These words would be devoid of any significance unless the Ark was no longer in existence." What, then, is Haran's answer? According to him the Ark disappeared during the reign of the apostate King Manasseh (son of the pious King Hezekiah) who during his 55-year reign introduced all sorts of pagan cults into the Temple. This solution poses three problems. First, Haran does not say how the Ark disappeared, nor why this could not have happened earlier, perhaps during the six-year reign of the wicked queen Athaliah, sister or daughter of King Ahab of Israel (II Kg. 11). Second, why did the historian not mention this very vital fact as another illustration of Manasseh's apostasy? Third, what about the 300 years between Solomon and Manasseh? Why does the historian tell us nothing about the Ark during that long period of time?

Turning to Gutmann, it seems that he goes over the deep end altogether. Based upon what he terms "historical considerations" and "form analysis" he concludes that there were three distinct and different Arks. (1) The Shilonite Ark (that had no staves), that David ultimately brought to Jerusalem "was probably not transferred to Solomon's Temple." (2) The Deuteronomic ark of acacia wood (Deut. 10:1), ungilded and without specified dimensions, was built by Josiah as a repository for the two tablets of the Covenant. He installed it in the Temple as we read in II Chronicles 35:3. This is the Ark to which Jeremiah refers (3:16), and "which was probably destroyed later along with the Temple." (3) The Ark described in Exodus "in all likelihood actually stood in the Second Temple," and was removed at some time by the Pharisees. Gutmann

derives this from Mishnah Yoma 5:1. All of this, he concludes, "... inclines us to deny the existence of any ark in Solomon's Temple."

Gutmann's conclusion (to which I will return) may be right, but his reasons are not. For one thing, he fails to tell us what the Shilonite ark looked like, where it came from, and what its function was. As to Josiah's wooden ark, Gutmann believes that the two tablets of the Covenant somehow survived the 600 years from the time they were brought down from Sinai until Josiah deposited them in his box.¹⁰ If this were such an important matter for Josiah, as Gutmann believes, would he not have made it an occasion important enough to be recorded?

I shall now propose three other scenarios and let the reader decide which is the most plausible. Or, better still, let readers come up with their own solutions.

1. Once Solomon installed the Ark in the Holy of Holies, it remained there until it was destroyed in 586 BCE together with all the other remaining appurtenances of the Temple. It acquired added sanctity from its location and was never removed from there, hence the historian had no compelling reason to refer to it. It may be that on occasions such as the coronation of a king or on New Year's day, the Ark was taken out and carried in great processions to the accompaniment of so-called "royal" or "enthronement" psalms.¹¹ Such occasions were not important enough to describe in a brief history. The Ark had become too holy even to be taken to battle. There were now prophets who could be consulted. God communicated with them in ways other than *from between the two cherubim* as he had done with Moses.

According to this view, the officers of Nebuchadnezzar probably destroyed the Ark and took its gold. In II Kings 25:13 it is recorded that they broke up the two huge columns of brass and the brazen basin to take the metal. The historian fails to mention the Ark for reasons given below.

2. Some scholars place the author of the Books of Kings in the mid-sixth century BCE.¹² He was an anti-iconic monotheist, an adherent of the religious philosophy of Deuteronomy. For him, as in Deuteronomy, the *kaporet* with its cherubim is not acceptable. He feels that he has to record the early history of the Ark because it is sanctified by age, but his revulsion at images of any sort leads

him to ignore the Ark once it is placed in its permanent home. This attitude can also be attributed to the prophets, and account for their ignoring the Ark.

3. A number of scholars, known as "minimalists," theorize that no event in the Bible can be considered historical unless there is archaeological or other extra-biblical evidence to support it. Hence, biblical history prior to the ninth century BCE is mythology.

It may then be supposed, they say, that an ancient saga circulated in Israel about a golden throne and footstool for the invisible God, made by Moses at the very beginning of Israel's relationship with its God. It was purported to perform a second function, as the place where the tablets of the Covenant between Israel and its God were to be kept. The footstool was thus an ארון [aron], a box or ark, and the throne on top of it included a pair of those exotic creatures, cherubim.

In my opinion, none of these proposed solutions to our problem is completely satisfactory. Each is flawed to a greater or lesser degree. It is altogether fitting that the Ark, whose structure and function were mysterious, should come to an equally mysterious end.

Reality or myth, the Ark is still seen as a "supreme monotheistic symbol as a sign of God's covenant with Israel." This symbol has been carried over into the synagogue in the form of an ornate cupboard, if possible embedded in the wall facing Jerusalem, in which the Torah scrolls are housed. It is called *Aron HaKodesh* [ארון הקדש] -- The Holy Ark. Had it not been for the Mosaic Ark, the Torah scrolls might have been consigned to some box or other container to be taken out only at times when the Torah is read. Instead, the *Aron HaKodesh* is the focal point of attention and of worship. Over the centuries, it has been a major subject for Jewish art and architecture.

NOTES

1. In I Kings 6:1, the interval is 480 years. That would put the Exodus at 1440 BCE, a date few scholars accept. See, John Gray, *Kings I and II* (Phila.: Westminster Press, 1970) pp. 150-151.

2. This number, if correct, would reduce the length of Saul's reign to a mere 13 years, which is not possible. See, M. Segal, *The Book of Samuel* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer) (Hebrew) p. 56.

3. Except for the reference in II Chronicles 35:3, this text puzzled the sages. They made it the source of the legend that King Josiah decided to spirit away the Ark and a few other holy historical artifacts so that they would not be destroyed by the imminent conqueror, and he mentions "the House that Solomon built" to indicate that Solomon had prepared the secret hiding place (Yoma

52b). Modern scholars see this verse as one of many instances in which the Chronicler endeavors to put the spotlight upon the Levites. In Yoma 53b there is a contrary tradition based upon II Chronicles 36:10, that when Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiachin into exile (597 BCE), and took away *the precious things of the House of the Lord*, the Ark was presumably among them. There is no record of this in his annals, nor is the Ark found on the long list of Temple artifacts that the Babylonians took away. There is the famous Arch of Titus in Rome depicting the loot that the Roman soldiers had taken from the Temple which included the golden candelabrum. There is no Ark, for there was no Ark in the Second Temple.

4. G. Henton Davies "The Ark in the Psalms," in *Promise and Fulfillment: Essays presented to Professor S.H. Hooke*, ed. F.F. Bruce (Edinburgh:1963) pp. 51-61.

5. M. Haran, "The Ark and the Cherubim," *Israel Exploration Journal*, 9:1 (1959) pp. 30-38; 9:2, pp. 89-98.

6. *The Anchor Bible: Psalms III*, p. 241.

7. For a full discussion of Psalm 132 see, Heinz Kruse, "Psalm 132 and the Royal Zion Festival," *Vetus Testamentum*, 33, pp. 279-297.

8. M. Haran, "The Disappearance of the Ark," *Israel Exploration Journal*, 13 (1963) pp. 46-58; p. 46, n. 2; mentions a 1901 article by Meir Ish-Shalom (Friedman) entitled "Where Is the Ark?"

9. Joseph Gutmann, "The History of the Ark," *Zeitschrift für die Altestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 83, No. 1, pp. 22-30.

10. For the suggested size and weight, see my article "The Two Tablets of the Covenant," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* XXI (1993) pp. 73-79.

11. Kruse.

12. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament* (NY: Harper and Row, 1966) p. 242.

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KING OF PRINCES: AN EXEGESIS OF HOSEA 8:10

HERBERT COHN

Yea, though they were exiled among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes (Hosea 8:10).

Hosea 8:10 is a most difficult verse and has been translated in different ways. It closes with the phrase מֶלֶךְ שָׂרִים [*melekh sarim*], meaning *king of princes*, designed to indicate the mighty power of the Assyrian monarch whose *princes are kings* (Isa. 10:8). The usage, then, is not dissimilar to that of Ezekiel 26:7, where the king of Babylon is described as *king of kings*. *Sar sarrani* frequently occurs as a title for Assyrian kings, from Tiglath-pileser I to Ashurbanipal.

One of the explanations of Hosea 8:10 is: Israel will be exiled among the nations, but the people shall be gathered again to the Land of Israel, and the heavy burden imposed by the *king of princes* will be eased. For reasons that will be explained farther on, a process was set into motion whereby מֶלֶךְ שָׂרִים was turned from *king of princes* into *king and princes*.

The oldest extant Hebrew text of the books of the Prophets was written by Moshe ben Asher in 895 C.E. The phrase in Hosea 8:10 it is written as מֶלֶךְ שָׂרִים [*king of princes*], and it also appears as such in the Masoretic text, which according to the majority of the Bible researchers, is the most reliable.

The Greek Septuagint, the first translation of the Bible into a foreign language, is also the oldest Bible text we possess, arranged in its present form in the second century. C.E. The words in Hosea 8:10 are rendered as βασιλῆα καὶ ἀρχουτὰς [*basilea kai archotas*] -- "kings and princes." The Latin Vulgate, dating from the fifth century C.E, based itself upon the Septuagint and we find there the same meaning: kings and princes [*regis et principum*]. However, it would be a mistake to assume that these Greek and Latin translations are correct

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because they predate the oldest copy of the Hebrew Masoretic text. The Septuagint and the Vulgate both abound in mistakes, and the saying "*traduttore traditore*" may well be applied to them.

Among the classical Bible commentators, Radak (David Kimhi, 1160-1235) was the only one who dealt with the matter. He was of the opinion that the Hebrew letter "vav" [standing for "and"] was missing, and therefore the meaning is "king and princes," not "king of princes." The explanation given by Radak to prove his point does not hold.² Nevertheless, this is the way Hosea 8:10 is understood today by traditional Jewish scholarship, disregarding that in those early times "king of princes" was understood to mean "King of Assyria."³

Why is the verse wrongly understood?

The Babylonian Talmud quotes Hosea 8:10 only once (Tractate Bava Batra 8a). The oldest complete Talmud manuscript (Munich 95 of the year 1343) reads "king and princes." The original text of the Hamburg manuscript (nr. 165) was also "king and princes," but the letter "vav" was erased, to fit it to the Masora).⁴ Raphael N. Rabinovicz, who compared the various manuscripts of the Talmud in his monumental work *Dikdukei Sofrim*,⁵ basing himself on the Munich 95 manuscript, did not report "king of princes"; the text has become "king and princes." In this way, the authoritative Bomberg (Venice 1521) and the Lublin print of the Talmud (1576) have "king and princes," and all Talmud editions printed afterwards quote the verse in its "corrected" form.

Those interpreting שָׂרִים וְנָסִיךְ as "king and princes" did not understand (or did not wish to acknowledge) its meaning in its historical context. Why was this? I venture to propose an explanation of the riddle: The correction was carried out in a totally different context to serve a totally different problem. It was interpreted and "corrected" in the framework of the endeavor of the Amoraim to "prove" that a political leader was not to levy taxes upon sages who study the Torah.

R. Nahman b. R. Hisda levied a poll tax on the rabbis. R. Nahman b. Isaac said to him: You have transgressed against the Torah, the Prophets and the Hagiographa You have transgressed against the Prophets, where it says: "yea, though they study* among the nations, now shall I gather them, and a few of them shall be free** from the burden of king and princes" (Hosea 8:10). This verse, Ulla has told us, is written (partly) in Aramaic*** (and is to be expounded thus:) "If all study, I will gather

them now, and if only a few of them study, (those few) shall be free from the burden of king and princes" (and are free from paying the toll tax).⁶

This was the twist used in the Talmud in order to prove the point. Instead of "exiled among the nations," the Hebrew word גלות [exiled] was supposed to be the Aramaic גלות [learn], and גלות [they sorrow] turned into "they are exempt." The passage thus becomes: (Those) that learn (the Torah) among the nations will be exempt from the burden of kings and princes. However, the Book of Hosea does not use any Aramaic!

Traditional (orthodox) religious education stresses the Talmud and neglects the study of the Scriptures. Therefore, it is not surprising that the change of "king of princes" in the Book of Hosea into "king and princes" passed unnoticed.⁷

The privilege of *talmidei hakhamim* not paying taxes was later anchored as a *halakha*, and as such became a *mitzvah* [commandment]:

Talmidei hakhamim do not go out with the people for building, public digging for the state, and so forth, in order that they will not be despised by the *amei ha'arets* [illiterate, common people], and one is not to collect from them dues for the building of the wall, the repair of the city gates, the wages of the guards, and so forth, and not dues for the royal tributes, and they are not to be compelled to pay taxes, be these taxes levied on the people living in the town, or taxes levied on everybody (Maimonides, *Mishne Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah* 6:10).

Maimonides used in his *halakha* the words of Nahman b. Yitzhak quoted above. Nevertheless, he did not dare to change the Scriptures: The first print of the *Mishne Torah* (Moshe b. Shaltiel, Spain or Portugal, year of print uncertain) is still faithful to the Masoretic text of Hosea 8:10. However, in the Rome print of the *Mishne Torah* (1480), we find a clearly discernible correction made by hand: The addition of the "vav," so that "king of princes" became "king and princes." All subsequent editions of the *Mishne Torah* quote the "corrected" scriptural verse.⁸ According to the exegesis propounded above, this is how the King of Assyria turned into "king and princes": namely, into those Jewish notables who have the obligation to support the sages who learn the Torah, an occupation that became their profession.

NOTES

1. Woolf, *Vetus Testamentum* (1956) pp. 316ff.
2. Radak, who frequently used Hebrew grammar in his interpretations, in his commentary to Hosea 8:10 gave two examples to explain the omission of the word "and" in this phrase: (1) Habakkuk 3:11: *The sun [and] the moon stood still in their habitation!* (However, in the Hebrew text the verb עמד [stand, stood] is singular; so is the possessive termination of *habitation*. Therefore, the verse can certainly be read: *Oh Sun! Oh Moon! Stand in its habitation!*); (2) Exodus 1:2; I Chr. 2:1: *Reuben [and] Simeon, Levi and Judah*. This is an enumeration, and there is no need to interpolate "and" between Reuben and Simeon. Thus, Radak's explanation about "king of princes" meaning "king and princes" is not convincing.
3. Most modern Bible interpreters take the Masoretic text as authoritative: *The International Critical Commentary on Hosea* (A.A. Macintosh [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997]) translates Hosea 8:10: *Yet though they are delighted by their affairs among the nations, now I shall make an end of them and they shall soon show weakness because of the oppression of the king of princes.*
4. Besides the Septuagint and the Vulgate, the Syriac (based on the Septuagint) also has "king and princes," as do several manuscripts, collated by Christian David Ginsburg, that follow the talmudic text: Add 21161 (ca. 1150 CE); Add 4708 (ca. 1180-1200); Add 15451 (ca. 1200); Add 14760 (ca. 1293); Or 4227 (ca. 1300); Or 2091 (ca. 1300); Add 9398 (ca. 1300); Harley 5721; Add 11657; Harley 5509. Targum Yonathan, edited several times in Babylon before reaching its final form in the seventh century, conforms to the text of the Babylonian Talmud: "king and princes."
5. Munich: Huber, 1881.
6. Talmud, Bava Batra 8a. The asterisks denote: * E.V. "hire"; ** E.V. "begin" or "sorrow." וְהָיָה is taken as from וְהָיָה [break, or 'to be exempt; hence, to be free'] *** The word וְהָיָה is to be understood as if it were an Aramaic and not a Hebrew word.
7. Rashi (whose commentary is printed together with any Talmud edition) ignores it altogether. The scientific edition of the Babylonian Talmud by S. Abramson (Tel-Aviv: 1948) abstains from any comments, as do all the commentators consulted (in chronological order): Hananel b. Hushiel of Kairoun (990?-1053/6); Yosef b. Meir Halevi ibn Migash (1077-1141); Meir Halevi Abulafia ("Rama"; 1170-1244); Yeshayia b. Mali of Trani the Elder ("Rid"; 1200-before 1272); Shlomo b. Abraham Aderet ("Rashba"; 1235-1310); Menahem b. Shlomo ha-Meiri (1249-1316); Yom-Tov b. Abraham Ashvili (1250?-1330?); Yehuda Liova b. Bezalel ("Maharal" of Prague; 1512?-1609); Bezalel b. Abraham Ashkenazi (16th century). The 1996 Hebrew edition of the Talmud by Adin Steinsaltz has a note to Tractate Bava Batra: "In some manuscripts we find 'king of princes.'"
8. The scientific edition of the *Mishne Torah* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1957) adds the short note: "King and princes," according to the Talmud (Bava Batra 8a). The text in the Scriptures is 'king of princes.' The entire matter is generally ignored by orthodox commentaries. One exception is the Bible commentary *Da'at Mikra* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook): 'From the burden of the king of princes - from the burden, e.g., from the injustice and serfdom that the gentile king and his ministers inflicted upon Israel. And it is possible that שְׂרָפִים (ministers) means 'kings' (as in Akkadian; compare with Isaiah 10:8), and according to this, מֶלֶךְ שְׂרָפִים means 'king of kings' (Ezekiel 26:7), being one of the titles given to the Assyrian kings.

JACOB: FATHER OF A NATION

SHIMON BAKON

Abraham enters the limelight of biblical history at the age of 75, and gently fades from it after the Akedah, the binding of Isaac. In this relatively short period of his life we glimpse an awesome, granite-like personality, unfailing in his faith in God, though sorely tried by Him. For Isaac, the major event in a long life was his total submission to being an עולה [burnt offering] -- what Eli Wiesel called a holocaust in the service of God.

How different is the life of Jacob, the most fascinating of the Patriarchs. We make his acquaintance even before he is born, struggling in the womb with his twin Esau. We part with him 147 years later when, after a most eventful life, his embalmed body is returned from Egypt to Canaan to be buried in the family sepulcher, the Cave of Machpelah. He is a highly complex individual, possessing contrasting personality traits, nobly flawed by loving too much, which causes distinct changes in his life and their far-reaching consequences.

It needs to be said here that in biblical history the invisible hand of God hovers over events in which men act out their loves, hates and aspirations, while moving toward a point determined by Divine destiny. It should be noted that misfortunes that struck Jacob are personal and tangential to the destiny of Israel. Only at moments decisive for the future of an emerging nation is there Divine intervention.

JACOB -- A COMPLEX INDIVIDUAL

Jacob is an אִישׁ יָשָׁר [an upright man], yet one who purchased the birthright from Esau by devious means. He has a magnificent dream of a ladder reaching up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending (Gen. 28:12), but also dreams of mating by speckled and mottled he-goats (31:10). He desires peace, yet his life is beset by strife and tribulation, partly of his own making. Above all, Jacob was a man who loved not wisely but too much, thereby disrupting his household and visiting sorrow upon himself and his family. His excessive love

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for Rachel created jealousy between two sisters, one loved but barren and the other unloved but blessed with children. On his way home, after 21 years in Paddan-aram, he purchases a parcel of land in Shechem and tarries there. We would expect him to travel directly to Beth-el to fulfill a vow he had made when fleeing from the fury of Esau, and from there to be re-united with his parents. What, then, is he doing in Shechem? The answer seems to be that Rachel, in delicate health, is pregnant, and Jacob does not wish to expose her to the dangers of travel. Here in Shechem, his daughter Dinah is raped and Jacob's sons massacre the men of Shechem, forcing him to flee in fear of an attack by the *inhabitants of the land*. Soon after, Rachel, on the way to Ephraim, expires in childbirth.

While there may have been feelings of personal guilt on the part of Jacob regarding what had happened in Shechem and to Rachel, his guilt in the disappearance of Joseph is unquestioned. His excessive love for Joseph and its detrimental effect on sibling relationships is documented in Scripture. How is one to explain why Jacob presented Joseph with *a coat of many colors*, an ornamental garment suited to one chosen for leadership? Jacob seems totally blind to the growing jealousy and hatred of the brothers toward Joseph, and what is happening to his family. His beloved son, ignored by the sons of Leah, brings bad reports about them to his father, and has dealings only with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. Yet Jacob is silent.

True, when Joseph recounts his second dream about the sun, moon, and stars bowing to him, Jacob shows anger and berates him. Yet when the brothers are sent to Shechem to graze their father's flock, Joseph, a lad of 17, is kept at home. It may be that Jacob realizes his mistakes, and to rectify them sends Joseph to Shechem to inquire after the welfare of his brothers. By now, it is too late. Neither Jacob's display of anger when Joseph tells his dream, nor belatedly sending him to his brothers, assuages their fury and hatred. Thus begins the chain of events that brings Joseph to Egypt and bereavement to Jacob. He has lost two of the people he loved most, loved almost exclusively. The biblical record is silent on this issue, but it can be assumed that in the years of mourning, refusing to be comforted, Jacob must have come to realize his part in the two grievous losses.

CHANGES IN HIS LIFE

When he flees from the fury of his brother Esau, Jacob is a mild, fearful homebody. After the magnificent dream of the ladder, reassured, he is able to face manfully whatever the future holds. A second change occurs after the mysterious encounter with "the man," when his name is changed to Israel. (This name perhaps means "Striving for God.") He becomes a man of destiny, responsible for the eventual emergence of a new, remarkable people. In the great episode at Peniel, Jacob is advised: *'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel'* (32:29). Yet, throughout his remaining years he is indiscriminately called either "Jacob" or "Israel." How are we to understand this duality?

The term שֵׁם [*shem*], usually translated "name," also has another connotation. When Moses, deprived of the assurance of God's Presence after the disaster of the Golden Calf, pleads: *'Yet Thou hast said: I know thee by name'* [יָדַעְתִּיךָ בְּשֵׁם] (Ex. 33:12). Feeling that the task imposed upon him of bringing the people up from Egypt is too difficult without Divine assistance, Moses reminds God that He Himself had selected him to fulfill His mission. Thus מִשְׁמָה then also signifies "task," or "mission."

Jacob, after his encounter with "the man" in Peniel, has become aware of a great burden laid upon him. His essential task from here on is as "Israel." His descendants, the בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל [children of Israel] are to be a people burdened with the noble but thankless task of striving for God.

Perhaps the most dramatic change, though not clearly delineated, occurs when Jacob sets out on his journey to Egypt. It is probably the hardest decision in his life. While most anxious to be reunited with his long-lost Joseph, he is concerned over what will become of the Divine promise given to Abraham *'I will give the land wherein you sojourn to you and your offspring to come as an everlasting possession'* (17:8).

Let us follow the biblical record. Jacob journeys to Beersheba, where he offers sacrifices to *the God of his father Isaac*. Why to the God of his father Isaac? We know that Isaac had been instructed by the Lord not to go down to Egypt, even though there was famine in the land of Canaan. Jacob is fearful that he does not follow in the footsteps of his father Isaac. At this point of indecision, there is Divine intervention. God calls to Israel: *'I am the God of your father*.

Fear not to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you a great nation' (46:1-2).

His fear assuaged, Jacob now resumes his journey with a compact family of 70 souls. From here on in, he will repair the damages of the past in order to insure the integrity of his family. Abraham's son Ishmael split from the revolutionary movement of monotheism. Isaac's son Esau followed his uncle away from his father's faith. This was not to happen to any of the sons of Jacob-Israel. To the uniqueness of Abraham's discovery of the One God, righteous and demanding righteousness from His descendants, Jacob now adds another unique feature in the history of man: the emergence of one nation from one family. The circle will be closed by Moses, who brings the Word of God from Sinai down to Israel and mankind, completing the foundation of emerging Judaism. How did Jacob accomplish this?

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

Anyone who has read the story of Joseph must have wondered why he had failed to inform his aged and doting father that he was alive and had been raised to high status in the Egyptian hierarchy. One may reverse the question and ask: What were the actual feelings of Jacob after his reunion in Goshen with his son Joseph? Did he not agonize time and time again over the obvious heartlessness of Joseph? Did he confront Joseph or did he keep silent? There are other, equally disturbing questions. How did Jacob find out how Joseph was sold into slavery? Surely the brothers did not divulge it, yet it must be assumed that Jacob knew. Once he knew, did he confront his sons or did he keep silent?

There is another incident in his life, also clothed in silence, told in one short verse: *While Israel stayed in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel found out* (35:22). Was it youthful folly that prompted Reuben to commit this unspeakable deed, or was it a rebellious act, comparable to that of Absalom (II Sam. 16:21), reminiscent of the practice of an heir taking possession of his father's concubines to show his right to succession? While nothing is told of Jacob's reaction when he found out, the verse that follows this incident is most significant: *Now the sons of Jacob were twelve in number* (25:23).

Scripture keeps mute on all these questions. This biblical "conspiracy of silence" demands דרשני [interpretation]. Jacob's silence could be seen as one of the ways of keeping the family together. Better to swallow one's pride and suffer in silence. The cohesion of the "twelve sons" was to be the first step in the implementation of the Divine promise given to Abraham in the Covenant בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים [between-the-pieces].

GOSHEN

Abraham had to pay a dreadful price for the covenant-between-the-pieces: *'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them 400 years'* (15:12). Jacob, his grandson, was now the instrument to implement this Divine decree by going down to Egypt. However, the choice of Goshen as a temporary residence was by design, for only in the relative isolation of Goshen, where the family would continue in its traditional way of life, was there any chance for preventing disintegration and absorption into the Egyptian polity. It is for this reason that the brothers refused the royal offices offered by Pharaoh, emphasizing that they were shepherds and keepers of cattle, an occupation detested by the Egyptians. They pleaded for Goshen, for they needed pasture for their flocks, and Pharaoh agreed. It is in Goshen that the family of Jacob turned into "the children of Israel."

It should be noted that the living presence of Jacob the patriarch contributed to an uneasy truce between Joseph and his brothers, which can be seen in their concern after Jacob's death: *'It may be that Joseph will hate us and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him'* (50:15); a fear that turned out to be groundless due to Joseph's magnanimity.

The adoption by Jacob of Ephraim and Manasseh on an equal footing with his own sons, giving Joseph two portions, seems another act of the preferential treatment which in the past had led to much mischief, but it could also be viewed as a stroke of genius on the part of the patriarch. From hints in the Bible, possibly because of the sheer distance between Goshen and the government's seat of power, Joseph's family kept aloof from the rest of the brothers. Indeed, there may have been danger of an actual split so prevalent in the histories of the

patriarchs. By drawing Joseph's sons closer to the family, Jacob assured the cohesion of the "twelve."

VERSES 49:1-29: BLESSING OR CHARGE?

This chapter is quite puzzling. Commentators of old already questioned whether it constitutes a blessing or a charge to his sons. It is prophetic: *'Come together that I may tell what is to befall you in days to come'* (49:1). It seems to point ahead to the time of David, or perhaps to a messianic future beyond him. Yet at the same time, it also contains sharp rebukes to his sons Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. We note an uncanny correlation between the character of some of the sons as portrayed in the biblical narrative and events later on in the history of Israel. Not noted by many, it also contains a reassessment of Reuben, Joseph, and Judah in terms of leadership. Reuben, the firstborn, is characterized as מַיִם כְּמַיִם [unstable as water]. Indeed, his various acts show a person of good intentions but weak character, indecisive, one who does not succeed. To quote Jacob: *'Exceeding in rank and exceeding in honor, Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer'* (49:3) How does he characterize Joseph? Unquestionably, much love is poured upon him, yet Jacob calls him only נָסִיךְ [Prince] *among his brothers* (v. 26). This is a recognition that Joseph, though born to greatness, never was and never could have been the leader of his brothers.

This position is reserved for Judah: *'Your father's sons shall bow low to you. The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . .'* (8:9). This, as stated before, may be a prophetic statement pointing to David. However, it is also a true reflection of Judah the person as portrayed in the Book of Genesis. He is the one whose suggestion to sell Joseph, rather than kill him, is adopted by his brothers. He is the one whose pledge of surety for Benjamin is accepted by Jacob. It is Judah who so eloquently pleads before Joseph, and it is he whom Jacob sends to explore Goshen.

JACOB'S BURIAL IN THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH

Only two verses were written to describe the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord. By comparison, Scripture devotes no less than 20 verses to the approaching death of Jacob, the oath exacted from Joseph that he bury him in the Cave of Machpelah, the many days of mourning, the long process of embalm-

ing, Joseph's request that Pharaoh permit him to take his father to Canaan, an impressive cortege of nobles from Egypt, and Jacob's final interment.

Two questions need to be answered. Why did Jacob insist upon an oath, as though a solemn promise were not sufficient? Why were so many verses devoted to Jacob's death? As to the first question, Jacob was aware that only an oath would enable Joseph to get out of a most embarrassing situation. Was this proper gratitude for the kindness shown by Pharaoh, for Jacob to live as an invited guest in Egypt but be buried in Canaan? As to the second question, it will be recalled that Scripture also devoted a seemingly inordinate number of verses to the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah (23:1-20). This acquisition by Abraham, for the price of 400 shekels, was a public act, witnessed in the presence of an official assembly of the men of Heth. It is the first toehold in the Promised Land. The lengthy description of Jacob's death, with all the pomp and circumstance, is Scripture's affirmation that the sojourn in Egypt was temporary, and that the destiny of his children was to return to the Promised Land.

עשה תורתך קבע

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February	Job 30 - 42
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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

JOSHUA J. ADLER

At the outset of this paper we must note that in recent decades archaeology has fallen into a sad state. There are fewer departments of archaeology at universities today and fewer students interested in entering the field. The reasons for this include: the rising cost of archaeological digs, the unattractive salaries in the profession, the dangerous location of many of these digs in the Middle East which is an area of conflict, and the realization that archaeology is far from being an exact science.¹ One may also cite the fact that those who now study the Bible do not find a great deal of support from archaeology as students in former years did. In fact, the dialogue between Bible professors and archaeologists has almost broken down since modern day "diggers" have renounced the methods as well as the conclusions of William F. Albright and his school of archaeology which aimed at proving the truth of the Biblical record through use of the spade. Today there is even a group of archaeologists who are referred to as minimalists which claims that the facts uncovered on the ground cannot be used to prove anything we read in our Bibles prior to the ninth century BCE. This means that from the point of view of archaeology there was no Moses, King Saul, David or Solomon. When questioned how they explain the Israel mentioned on the Mernpetah Stela which dates back to the latter part of the 13th century one of the leaders of the minimalists, Professor Tom Thompson, simply has no clear explanation.² This 7.5 foot high black granite stela lists Pharaoh's military victories: "Canaan is plundered with every hardship. Ashkelon is taken. Gezer is captured, Yanoam is reduced to nothing. **Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more.**"

Although this is the first extra-biblical mention of Israel it is obvious that this Stela does not depict a wandering people that had just left Egypt but an Israelite people already settled in its land. Thus, even a conservative archaeologist such as William Dever, a veteran "digger" and professor of archaeological studies at

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the University of Arizona, admits that this find cannot be reconciled with the description of Israel as recorded in the Bible. He explains the stela reference by positing the existence of a proto-Israelite people not connected to what we read about Israel in the Bible which already in the 13th century was living in Central and Northern Canaan.³ There are however other scholars, like Nahum Sarna, who feel that the Israel mentioned in the Stela may still be reconciled with the Biblical account since it may refer to Israelites living in a recently occupied settlement in Canaan rather than being veteran settlers.⁴ The Pharaoh's claim about the destruction of Israel is an example of exaggeration which is a trait unusual neither for ancients nor for moderns.

Although most archaeologists, including Dever, do not believe that the account of Israelite history as recorded in the Bible would agree with one written by archaeologists, he does believe, against the minimalists, that a great deal of information can nevertheless be gleaned from the Bible and is useful to archaeologists.⁵ The argument that famous historical figures must be myths unless their existence is proven by archaeological discoveries is absurd. Why should oral traditions written down after a few generations be less reliable than stone inscriptions full of hyperbole written by megalomaniac Egyptian or Assyrian kings? Nevertheless, there are stone inscriptions which do support the biblical record, such as the recently discovered inscription cited by Dever, at Tel Dan which reads BYTDWD or Bet David, thus proving that there was in existence a Davidic dynasty at least by the tenth century. The minimalists, however, challenge this inscription on the grounds that since there is no period or space separating the letters BYTDWD, this inscription may actually be referring, not to a Davidic dynasty but to some place name or may even be read as *bet dod* meaning the "house of the beloved." Others even question the authenticity of the entire Tel Dan inscription calling it a fake.⁶

Another source of dispute among archaeologists involves both the dating and significance of the so called Solomonic gates found at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. Some see in the similarity of all three of these gates evidence that there was a united Israelite monarchy if not in the eleventh century then surely in the tenth.⁷

Other extra-biblical evidence which points to the existence of an Israelite monarchy and which is not disputed, dates from the ninth century and is known

as the Mesha Stela. Here, King Mesha of Moab describes how he freed himself from Israel's rule. *Omri was the king of Israel and he oppressed Moab for many days, for Kemosh was angry with his land. And his son reigned in his place; and he also said, 'I will oppress Moab!' But I looked down on him and his house and Israel has been defeated; it has been defeated [or perished] forever!* [Needless to say, like Mernpetah's boast, here, too, is an example of hyperbole].

Further proof for a 9th Century monarchy in Israel is the basalt obelisk with a picture of Jehu, King of North Israel, paying tribute to the Assyrian monarch, Shalmaneser III.⁸ Archaeologists have also been able to identify many of the sites and locations mentioned in the Bible, e.g. Hazor, Megiddo, Lachish, as well as unearth and decipher many ancient texts e.g. Mernpetah, Mesha, Nuzi, Ebla, which aid students of the Bible to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the Hebrew Scriptures. From artifacts found on various sites such as pottery, jewelry, bones as well as unearthed houses, one learns a great deal about the daily life of biblical people such as what they ate, how they dressed, the tools with which they worked and their rituals and religious symbols.

Yet, those who believe in the Bible need not base their faith on what archaeologist do or do not find because it is not the Bible's aim to be a substitute for a course in geology. Nor should one think that the Bible is a complete history of the people of Israel. The Bible's purpose, rather, is to be a guide on how an Israelite is to fulfill the will of God in this life as part of a holy people and to demonstrate God's hand in shaping history. Furthermore, one must not expect that archaeology will always or even usually corroborate what is written in the Bible nor should a traditionalist fear the anti-biblical views of the minimalists. We should rather remember the dictum: "The absence of evidence is no evidence of absence."⁹

Professor Dever, who describes himself as being somewhere between minimalists and maximalists, believes that in order to write a proper history of ancient Israel it is necessary to rely on the Bible to a greater or lesser extent.¹⁰ He further believes, against the old Wellhausen school of Bible criticism and against the new minimalists, that most of the early books of the Bible were indeed written (though he feels they were probably edited after the Babylonian exile) during the First Temple period and not during the era of the Second Temple. He cites the example of the Hebrew word *pym* [I Samuel 13:21] whose

meaning was uncertain until archaeologists discovered a dome shaped weight with the word *pym* written upon it. Thus, to Dever, it is very unlikely that a Second Temple scribe would have used an "unknown" word or object which went out of use many centuries earlier in describing how the Philistines made sure that the Israelites would have no iron weapons which could be used against them.¹¹

Another professor, Kenneth Kitchen, argues for an early second millenium dating of many sections of the Bible thus going much beyond the opinion of Professor Dever. He cites the Joseph story as proof that it must have originated during a very early era probably around, the period of Hammurabi, namely the 18th century BCE. His reason is based on the price for which Joseph was sold by the brothers which was for 20 pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28). Since that early period more than 10 centuries went by with an ever increasing price for slaves. If this Biblical story would have been written during the Second Temple period it would be unlikely that a late scribe would have written 20 shekels as the price of Joseph.¹²

Another argument among archaeologists concerns the question of when the Israelite monarchy was first established and who first sat on the throne of Israel. Dr. Frank Yurco cites the inscription found in the temple of Amun Karnak which describes the Egyptian Shoshenq's victories (Shishak in our Bibles) and his receiving tribute from King Rehoboam in the fifth year of his reign. These facts fit in well with what we read in the Bible about Rehoboam and the Egyptian king, Shishak (Shoshenq) who had invaded the territories of various peoples, living in the Fertile Crescent. In order to prevent the devastation of Jerusalem, King Rehoboam paid him a huge bribe (I Kings 14:25-29). But from where did Rehoboam, just five years after inheriting the throne, obtain his wealth with which to bribe Shishak? The most logical answer is that he inherited it from his rich father, King Solomon, something which points to the fact that a monarchy already existed in Judah - Israel which had been united under David and Solomon in the tenth century.¹³

That the biblical accounts of David and Solomon were not a figment of the imagination of some Second Temple scribe can also be deduced by the fact that no scribe would have dared to write such terrible things about the messianic family (David's sin with Bathsheva and Solomon's dozens of gentile wives who

were allowed to continue their pagan cults under Solomon's nose) if these accounts were not based on fact and recorded **before** the concept of a Messiah son of David was popularized by Isaiah who lived in the latter part of the eighth century. There is therefore no logical reason for anyone to question the Biblical account about the establishment of an Israelite monarchy in the tenth century.

Archaeologists have also discovered and deciphered "libraries" of hundreds of ancient texts which often seem similar to many of the narratives and laws which we find in our Bible. For students of the Bible, these similarities are both interesting and serve as a stimulus for making comparisons with such stories as Creation, the Deluge and even the birth of Moses. Yet, upon examination we find that the similarities are mostly superficial and that the differences are even more striking. Let us, for example, compare the legend of Sargon with that of Moses.

According to this legend, Sargon lived about a thousand years before Moses and established the first semitic dynasty based in Akad which later became the first of the great world empires.¹⁴ The inscription purports to be his autobiography which in part reads as follows:

My mother was a high priestess, my father I knew not...

My mother, the high priestess, conceived, in secret she bore me
She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid
She cast me into a river. ...

The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the drawer of water.

Akki, the drawer of water lifted me out....

Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son and reared me

Akki, the drawer of water, appointed me as his gardener

While I was as gardener, Ishtar granted me her love

And for four and ...years I exercised kingship.

What one should note here are several of the differences between what we read about baby Moses and the story of Sargon. The first difference is that Sargon's mother was probably a celibate priestess who conceived illegally while in our story Moses was a legal child from parents who were married. (Exodus 2:1ff). In our story the mother, in desperation to save her child, placed him in a basket near the shore surrounded by reeds so that he would not drift away. In contrast, Sargon's mother cast him into the river so that he would drift away,

something which seems suspiciously close to wanting him to die or by some miracle saved by someone down-stream . In this case it was a simple water carrier, Akki, who saved him and brought him up and taught him to be a gardener. Unlike Sargon, baby Moses was far more fortunate. He was found by a princess and raised by his biological mother the first few years of his life and then turned over to the Egyptian princess who brought him up in Pharaoh's palace.

As to parallels between the laws of ancient Mesopotamia and the laws of the Torah we need only compare a few to point out the chasm which separates them. If we take the case of willful murder we know that biblical law demands that the murderer be executed and that he cannot ransom himself or substitute another person to be executed in his stead as in Mesopotamian law. Mesopotamian law also makes distinctions between perpetrators and victims regarding punishment, depending upon their station in society, while Torah law makes no distinctions between rich and poor, simple Israelites or noblemen. Another major difference is that in Mesopotamian law a person can be given capital punishment for crimes against property such as theft, something which is not at all found in Torah legislation, where there is only monetary compensation for such crimes. In Assyrian law, even a wife who steals from her husband can be punished with death. Not only is it important to note the specific differences between these laws and biblical law but, as Moshe Greenberg points out, also the different philosophy behind the respective law codes. In Mesopotamia the value of property is above human life while in the Torah human life is placed above property.¹⁵

As an example of the antiquity of biblical narratives as well as its laws we cite the cases found in Genesis where a father designates which of his sons will be granted the birthright. This is precisely the custom of the ancient Hurrians so that this Patriarchal practice is a reflection of pre-Torah times. Later the Torah changed this to primogeniture where a father had to give the birthright to his eldest son and no longer had any choice in the matter.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the Levites who were a special category of Temple servants and assistants to the Kohanim. Yet, the Book of Genesis gives us the picture of Levi as a hotheaded fighter which is completely out of character for this later role. This again is an illustration of the antiquity of the Genesis narratives that no Second Temple scribe would have invented.

As we have seen archaeology has had many successes in supplying us with the ancient background and giving us a greater understanding of biblical texts and not only in identifying many biblical locations. These positive achievements should be appreciated despite the failure of archaeologists to answer many questions such as the precise location of Mt. Sinai or where Sodom and Gomorra were located or dating of events which are of particular interest to lovers of the Bible. Archaeology has also not succeeded in identifying what the food called Manna was, or properly explaining how 2 to 3 million people could have participated in the Exodus from Egypt or the meaning of the word Shad-dai, one of the names of the God of Israel, and many other questions still unanswered which relate to Biblical archaeology. In sum, archaeology in this part of the world despite all of the economic, political and religious hurdles can still make many contributions to our knowledge of the Bible just as in past decades even though the enterprise is both difficult and not always crowned with success.

NOTES

1. Hershel Shanks' "Interview with William Dever" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22:5 (1996) p. 30ff..
2. See Thompson's unclear response BAR 23:4 (1997), p. 34.
3. For Devers' view see BAR 22:4 (1996), pp. 30ff.
4. Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus* (NY: Schocken Books, 1986) p.10ff.
5. BAR 22:4 (1996) p. 30ff.
6. BAR. 23:4 (1997) p. 34ff.
7. BAR 23:4 (1997) p.38ff.
8. BAR 23:4 (1997) p. 41.
9. Quote of Kenneth Kitchen BAR 21:2 (1995) p. 50.
10. BAR 22:4 (1996) p. 62.
11. BAR 22:5 (1996) p.36.
12. BAR 21:2 (1995) p 50.
13. Dr. Frank Yurco of the University of Chicago BAR 23:6 (1997) p. 14.
14. Based on analysis and translation of Sarna, pp. 29-30. Some translators challenge his "High Priestess" translation.
15. For additional differences and discussion of the philosophy behind this subject, see Moshe Greenberg, *The Jewish Expression*, Ed. Judah Goldin (NY: Bantam Books, 1970) pp. 26ff.

RAHAB THE HARLOT AND OTHER PHILOSOPHERS OF RELIGION

BEREL DOV LERNER

According to Scripture, when Joshua sent two men to spy out Jericho on the eve of Israel's conquest of Canaan, they found safety in the home of a surprising biblical heroine, Rahab the Harlot. Some years ago, Rahab enjoyed a brief moment in the limelight of modern Israeli political debate. When the religious and historical significance of Jericho was mentioned in arguments against its being handed over to Arab-Palestinian control, supporters of the Oslo agreements parodied its opponents' concern for holy places with sarcastic remarks about "the tomb of Rahab the Harlot."

Some traditionalists took the implied defamation of Rahab to heart. They felt obliged to point out that Rashi (on Joshua 2:1), adopting *Targum Yonatan*, the traditional Aramaic translation of the Prophets, renders "*zonah*," the Hebrew appellation for Rahab, not as "harlot" but as "*pundakita*" [a woman who sells a variety of foods]. Legend has it that Rahab converted to Judaism, and even eventually became Joshua's wife.

Actually, these pieties do not reflect a genuine consensus in traditional Jewish scholarship. The Medieval exegete David ben-Kimhi points out that the word *pundakita* is used in contexts which clearly involve sexual license. Rashi himself, in his commentary on Joshua 2:11, quotes a talmudic midrash on Rahab whose astonishingly bawdy humor leaves no doubt as to the antiquity of her profession. (See Zevachim 116a-b for the full text.)

Leaving these issues aside, I would like to consider Rahab's *philosophical* attractions. In a way, it is a shame that some traditionalists feel it necessary to explain away Rahab's indiscretions. The less she is genteel, the more striking her words become. Among biblical characters, Rahab is uniquely qualified to demonstrate the renown of God's glory. God's miraculous interventions in human affairs are so universally famous that even a Canaanite prostitute speaks the language of Israelite religion:

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I know that the Lord has given the country to you, because dread of you has fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land are quaking before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Sea of Reeds for you when you left Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings across the Jordan, whom you doomed. When we heard about it, we lost heart, and no man had any spirit left because of you; for the Lord your God is the only God in heaven above and on earth below (Josh. 2: 9-11).

Like Joshua, Rahab does not let the words of the Torah cease from her mouth. Her closing sentence *for the Lord your God is the only God in heaven above and on earth below* is almost an exact quotation from a speech of Moses' that appears in Deuteronomy, but lacks its final monotheistic clause: *The Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other* (Deut 4:39).

Unfortunately, the precise extent of Rahab's deviation from Deuteronomy has been obscured by the new Jewish Publication Society translation,¹ from which I have been quoting. There is no textual basis (such as the presence of the definite prefix "ha") for Rahab's purported use of the monotheistic expression *the only God*. Here the earlier Jewish Publication Society translation² steers closer to the Hebrew text, rendering her words; *The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath*. In fact, besides the assumption that there can be only one God in heaven and earth, there is little reason not to introduce the indefinite article "a" and translate the verse, *The Lord your God is a god in heaven above and on earth below*. (In contrast, the grammatically similar verse in I Samuel 17:33 is rendered in the new translation *and he has been a warrior from his youth* rather than *and he has been the warrior from his youth*, on the contextual assumption that Goliath was not the *only* existent warrior.) I have belabored Rahab's lack of explicit monotheistic sentiment because it stands in such strong contrast to Moses' statement. Beyond adding the clause *there is no other* [god], Moses further emphasizes his monotheism by supplying the word *elohim* [God] with the definite article prefix "ha," thus justifying the English rendering, *The Lord alone is God*.

Enough philology and on to theology. Rahab clearly acknowledges the reality of God's miracles and interventions in history; so why does she not share Moses' commitment to monotheism? There are limits to what our observations of na-

ture and history can add to our knowledge of Divinity. The great Enlightenment philosopher David Hume pointed out that even if we agree to view nature as a work of deliberate design implying certain characteristics in its Creator:

... it is still a question whether all these attributes are united in *one subject* or dispersed among *several* independent beings [emphasis added], by what phenomena in nature can we pretend to decide the controversy?³

Even though Rahab *does* admit that all of the miracles of the Exodus were produced by the solitary God of Israel, she cannot possibly conclude that no other gods exist. While the God of Israel might have been grabbing many headlines in Joshua's day, His activity offered no reason to deduce the non-existence of Ba'al, Astarte and Co.

If Rahab's agnosticism is so eminently reasonable, what then is the source of Moses' monotheistic confidence? Here I must quote the context of his statement at length in order to make salient the element which Rahab did not, and indeed could not, take into account:

You have but to inquire about bygone ages that came before you, ever since God created man on earth, from one end of heaven to another: has anything as grand as this ever happened, or has its like ever been known? Has any people heard the voice of a god speaking from out of a fire, as you have, and survived? Or has any god ventured to go and take for himself one nation from the midst of another by prodigious acts, by signs and portents, by war, by a mighty hand and outstretched arm and awesome power, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? It has been clearly demonstrated to you that the Lord alone is God; there is none beside Him. From the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; on earth He let you see his great fire; and from amidst that fire you heard His words. And because He loved your fathers, He chose their offspring after them; He Himself in His great might, led you out of Egypt, to drive from your path nations greater and more populous than you, to take you into their land and give it to you as a heritage, as is now the case. Know therefore this day and keep in mind that the Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other (Deut. 4: 32-39).

While Moses shares Rahab's preoccupation with Divine participation in history, he does not neglect the role of revelation. Monotheism cannot be derived from God's activity in history alone; Moses must depend on God Himself to tell him of His uniqueness. Given that Moses has learned to trust God's word, he can accept His pronouncements on such otherwise insolvable theological issues, such as the monotheist/polytheist debate. It is only by virtue of the fact that *From the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; on earth He let you see his great fire; and from amidst that fire you heard His words* that Moses can conclude, *the Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other*. In the words of the biblical theologian James Barr:

A God who acted in history would be a mysterious and suprapersonal fate if the action were not linked with this verbal conversation . . . in his speech with man . . . God really meets man on his own level and directly.⁴

Both Rahab and Moses arrived at reasonable conclusions based on their respective experiences of the Divine. Scripture claims that God had met Moses "on his own level and directly," and that Moses, together with the entire people of Israel, received the monotheistic commandment *You shall have no other gods beside Me* (Ex. 20:3) at Sinai in a moment of mass revelation. Addressing the Israelite people, Moses was perfectly justified in claiming these experiences as evidence for monotheism.

Rahab, speaks of God's *deeds* but makes no reference to His words; she is unaware of God's revelation of Himself. Untouched by revelation, Rahab has never heard God's own endorsement of monotheism. Rahab thus remains unconvinced of God's uniqueness.

NOTES

1. *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Phila. and NY: JPS, 1988).
2. *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation* (Phila.: JPS, 1955).
3. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Hafner, 1948) p. 40.
4. James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* (London: SCM, 1982) p. 78, as quoted in R. Gnuse *Heilsgeschichte as a Model for Biblical Theology: The Debate Concerning the Uniqueness and Significance of Israel's Worldview* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989) p. 24.

THE AKEDAH MACHLOKET L'SHEM SHAMAYIM

SHUBERT SPERO

Berel Dov Lerner, in his article "Saving the *Akedah* from the Philosophers" (*JBQ* XXVII:3, 167-173) has earned the gratitude of *JBQ* readers by bringing to our attention the fascinating interface between biblical themes and philosophy. However, he has not fully succeeded in extricating the *Akedah* from the clutches of the philosophers. For, while repelling their incursions at some points, he has unwittingly perhaps accepted two of Kierkegaard's presuppositions which led him to an interpretation of the *Akedah* which, in my judgment, is fatally flawed.

The two presuppositions are:

1. The *Akedah* presented Abraham with a *moral* problem. That is to say, stripped of its religious terminology, to *bring up Isaac as a burnt-offering* means to kill him, which is murder!
2. The purpose of the *Akedah* was primarily to test Abraham's *faith* in God.

While Lerner rejects Kierkegaard's approach to the moral problem, he accepts the premise that it is a problem. This is a mistake! While the *Akedah* confronted Abraham with a severe challenge in the sense that he was being asked to give up his only son and perhaps even his understanding of God's ways, there is every indication in the text that he did not consider what he was about to do as possibly being murder or in any way immoral.

We had just read in Chapter 18, in connection with the destruction of Sodom, how Abraham did not hesitate to challenge God when he believed He was about to do something unjust. And that encounter did not end until Abraham had wrested from God an agreed understanding as to the meaning of justice and the limits of mercy. Abraham had learned from that experience that God does not *sweep away the righteous with the wicked* and that 10 righteous can redeem an entire city. Had Abraham, after this experience, believed that the God whose

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moral nature he had started to appreciate was now demanding of him an act of "murder most foul," he most surely would have at least challenged Him. After all, this is the man who dared question God's morality even before he knew much about God's moral standards or about the people he was pleading for.

Surely, if Abraham had the slightest reason to think that the command he received from God was immoral, or that for Isaac to die was unjust, or that for him to kill his son was morally wrong, he would not have hesitated at least to seek clarification.

So why *did not* Abraham think he had a moral problem?

First, we must understand that Abraham, unlike Kant, had no doubts whatsoever that the command came from God. We cannot begin to imagine what it is like to be suddenly addressed personally by the Creator of us all. But evidently to Abraham it was self-evident that this was God speaking and not an hallucination, and the entire experience was self-validating. Moreover, at that point Abraham had already experienced several Divine encounters for some of which he had already received empirical verification of promises kept and of information revealed. So that when *God* commands Abraham to bring up his son Isaac to Him as a burnt-offering, God the owner of us all is in effect asking for the return of a gift that Abraham had received unexpectedly, gratuitously and miraculously. Under such special circumstances, there was nothing actually unjust or immoral in God's command or in Abraham's readiness to obey.

If there is no moral problem to begin with, there is no need for Lerner's unlikely theory that Abraham believed he was causing Isaac no harm because he knew that God would somehow keep him alive in order to fulfill His earlier promise of *upholding His covenant with Isaac*.

The dynamics of the *Akedah* lie precisely in this: to the extent that we appreciate the enormity of Abraham's sacrifice, do we appreciate the depth of his love and regard for God. The text itself makes this quite clear when we are told in the name of God: *'Now I know that you are a God-fearing person seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son [that you love -- 22:2] from Me' (22:12).*

Before Kierkegaard, readers for centuries had no problem understanding that Abraham's sacrifice had nothing to do with morality but everything to do with being a father. Everything to do with the question how much of my being must I

be prepared to surrender to God? What was involved in the *Akedah* as sacrifice were the following elements:

1. The natural feeling of love and devotion of a father to his son,
2. one's *only* son there being no chance of another,
3. a son received in old age after he had given up all hope,
4. a son whom God had designated as the link to a glorious future.

Now it is this last point (No. 4) that needs clarification. Lerner, following Kierkegaard, makes this the linchpin of the *Akedah* test. Abraham remembered that God had promised '*For in Isaac will thy seed be called and I will uphold my covenant with Isaac*' (17:19). So how could God now command Abraham to *bring Isaac up as a burnt offering*? The rabbis had noted this but merely observed that this was one of the questions that Abraham pondered as he silently made his three-day journey to Moriah.

According to Kierkegaard, Abraham's faith enables him simultaneously to believe in the continuation of the covenant with Isaac and to believe the God wants him to kill Isaac. Abraham believes both statements, although contradictory, to be "true." Such is the concept of faith in Christianity. And this was the test of the *Akedah*, to show that Abraham's faith supersedes both reason and morality. "To one who believes all things are possible."

Lerner properly rejects Kierkegaard's interpretation but accepts, wrongly in my view, the premise that Abraham's trust in God's promise of the covenant to Isaac is the major factor in Abraham's decision to obey God's command. That is, since God promised, '*I will uphold my covenant with Isaac*' which Abraham accepts in perfect faith, he is convinced that no matter what he [Abraham] will do, Isaac will remain alive so that God can carry out His promise. Thus Lerner solves the "moral problem." Abraham is not really "killing" Isaac. It is all "make believe"!

I believe this to be a gross distortion of the *Akedah* story. For, if Abraham's trust in the promise of the covenant is enough in his mind to render the action moral, then it is surely sufficient to strip Abraham's act of obedience of any sacrificial character and to render God's judgment, '*I now know that you are a God-fearing person,*' totally farcical. For if Abraham is offering Isaac to God today it is only because he knows he will get him back tomorrow. Lerner's analogy of "falling back into the arms of a friend" is not convincing. When it is

God who is standing behind you, overcoming an instinctual fear is not much of a test.

Let us examine a bit closer Lerner's conception of Abraham's trust in God: Because Abraham had heard God's promise, '*I will uphold My covenant with Isaac and For in Isaac will thy seed be called,*' he is convinced that Isaac will remain alive. But is such "trust" truly justified? Even for a man of faith like Abraham, the following doubts should have arisen:

- Am I sure I remember correctly what God said to me many years ago?
- Am I interpreting His words correctly?
- Perhaps what He said was conditional on there being an Isaac and God's present command supersedes the promise?
- Do I know God so well that I can be certain that He does not change His mind? (Jacob in confronting Esau was not at all sure that God's promise to him would hold. See Rashi on Genesis 32:11).

Moreover, is this "trust in God" or rather "trust" in one's own interpretation of what was said? Is this the piety of being *whole-hearted* [*tamim* Gen. 17:1]? If Abraham has misjudged then, according to Lerner, he is committing murder! Such a clever, calculating Abraham is hardly the personality that at this stage emerges from the pages of the Bible.

The *Akedah* was indeed a terrible ordeal for Abraham and Isaac and, according to a midrash, may even have been responsible for the death of Sarah. The *Akedah* put to the test Abraham's love and reverence for God and his response has become a model and inspiration for all time. For what Abraham was prepared to give up for the sake of God was not only his beloved son but also his entire grasp of the future; that is, all that he thought he understood to be God's plan for him and his seed. However, Abraham never gave up his original belief that the God who had commanded him to leave Haran and go to Canaan and who commanded him now was a *moral* God. Nor was he ever asked to do so.

THE PREFERENCE OF EPHRAIM

ZVI RON

One of the major themes of the Book of Genesis is reverse primogeniture. Rather than having the first-born son assume a leadership role, this position is usurped by the younger, more worthy sibling. Instead of basing preference on birth order, the Torah presents a system where preference is based on God's decision or the evidence of more lofty characteristics. This is the case with the rejection of Ishmael, Esau, and Reuben.

An outstanding case in point is the story of Joseph. Such is the favoritism that his father Jacob bestows on him that he gives him *one portion more than to his brothers* (Gen. 48:22). This is traditionally interpreted to mean that Joseph would now turn into two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob's preference for Joseph could be explained by the fact that his mother Rachel was the only one Jacob truly loved and wanted for a wife, but why this preference for Ephraim? Even prior to the blessing, when Jacob's two grandchildren are placed before him, he refers to them as "Ephraim and Manasseh" (48:5), reversing the order of their birth. During the actual blessing, Jacob places his right hand on Ephraim and his left on Manasseh (48:14), despite the protests of their father Joseph (48:18-19). There does not seem to be any explanation for Jacob's preference of Ephraim over Manasseh. We are not given any indication as to why Manasseh was not considered worthy of receiving the blessing of the right hand.

The traditional explanation for this decision is based on the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh. Rashi quotes the Midrash Tanchuma that Ephraim was chosen for greatness because Joshua would be his descendant and would perform great miracles. Manasseh's descendant Gideon would not be as great as Joshua.¹ Alternatively, Rashi implies that Ephraim may have been chosen since he studied Torah with Jacob, while Manasseh assisted his father Joseph with matters of Egyptian government and politics.² These explanations are not indicated in the text. The *pshat* [simple meaning] remains elusive.

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There may be a textual hint as to the elevation of Ephraim over Manasseh. When Jacob is preparing to bless his grandchildren, he recalls God's promise to him at Luz: '*Behold I will make thee fruitful*' (48:4). The word "fruitful" [פֶּרֶךְ -- *mafrecha*] is an echo of the name Ephraim [אֶפְרַיִם], whom Joseph named in reference to God making him fruitful in the land of his affliction.³

As Jacob continues, he recalls the death of Rachel who was buried on the road at Bethlehem (48:7). It is not clear what the function of this statement is in relation to the blessing of the grandchildren, and this is the subject of much commentary.⁴ Another possible connection to Ephraim stands out: Jacob twice mentions that Rachel died while he was on the way to Efrat. Again we have a verbal similarity to Ephraim.⁵

It may be that these allusions explain the choice of Ephraim over Manasseh. First, his name reflects the blessing that God gave to Jacob, whereas Manasseh's name refers to Joseph being able to forget his hard times living with his brethren (41:51). Secondly, his name recalls the place where Jacob's favored wife, Rachel, who was also Joseph's mother, was buried.

It has been suggested that Jacob's adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh, and their elevation to tribal status might be a compensation of sorts for Rachel dying and not being able to bear additional sons.⁶ Jacob may have selected Ephraim to receive the primary blessing because his name more vividly recalled Rachel, both in its meaning of "fruitfulness" that she sought but did not completely achieve, and in sounding like the place where she was buried.

This would explain not only why Ephraim was elevated, but also why Jacob recalls the blessing at Luz (that he renamed Bethel) and the death of Rachel at the time of the blessing. Jacob was hinting at his reasons for favoring Ephraim.

NOTES

1. Rashi on Genesis 48:19.
2. Rashi on Genesis 48:1 and Pesikta Rabbati 3:93
3. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 1991) p. 207.
4. See Rashi and Rashbam, Genesis 48:7.
5. *Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum Sarna (Phila.: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) p. 326.
6. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (NY: W.W. Norton, 1996) p. 288.

DARSHANUT

Darshanut, derived from the Hebrew root darash [explicate, expound], presents the expository, homiletic interpretation of the Bible. Its origins are as old as the most ancient aggadic and midrashic teachings and as new as the sermon or D'var Torah delivered on the most recent Shabbat. The intent is a challenge to relate the Bible to the problems, issues and goals of daily living.

We encourage our readers to contribute to Darshanut. The submission should be based on the Bible, no more than 750 words in length, and as relevant and current as you would like to make it. For more information on submissions, see the inside back cover.

NOAH AND HIS FAMILY RELATIONS

HAYIM GRANOT

God makes a covenant with Noah before instructing him to enter the ark. Noah and his family will be saved and never again will his descendants be subjected to a great flood.

And as for Me, behold I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven: everything that is in the earth shall perish.

But I shall establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou and thy sons, and thy wife and thy sons' wives with thee (Gen. 6:17-18).

We note, as did several traditional commentators, the interesting differences in the order of the family grouping in the course of the story. God instructs Noah to enter the ark with his sons, and apparently separate from his wife and their daughters-in-law. In times of crisis, even one who is secure should refrain from

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marital relations. One recalls that much later, Uriah the Hittite refused to sleep with his wife while his comrades-in-arms were engaged in life-or-death combat and the Holy Ark stood at the battlefield (II Sam. 11:11). The Almighty's instructions to Noah are understandably and readily obeyed: *And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood* (Gen. 7:7).

After they emerge from the ark, God three times blesses Noah and his family that they be fruitful and multiply. The first time, they are among all other creatures:

Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh, both fowl and cattle, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may swarm in the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth (v. 17).

In two other passages, God blesses Noah and his family explicitly as human beings: *And God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them: 'Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth'* (Gen. 9:1). And again: *And you, be fruitful and multiply; swarm in the earth and multiply therein* (Gen. 9:7).

What circumstances necessitated the repetition is not immediately clear. It is, however, understandable in light of the emphasis on procreation, that God instructed Noah and his family to emerge from the ark as married couples: *Go forth from the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee* (Gen. 8:16). Yet, a careful reading of the next verses reveals that Noah disobeyed God's will, leaving as he entered: *And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his son's wives with him* (8:18).

The Midrash also notes this disobedience and observes that Noah did not wish to resume normal marital relations following the traumatic events of the Flood. Noah questioned the point of procreation if, one day, the world might again be destroyed. There have been periods in history when human pessimism led to abstinence from procreation. One recalls the Midrash regarding Miriam's admonition to her father for having separated from his wife, Yocheved.

Seeing that Noah remains apprehensive over the future, God repeats His covenant with humanity.

And as for Me, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and your seed after you. And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh

be cut off any more by the waters of the flood, neither shall any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth' (9:9-11).

The phrase, *And as for Me*, used before the start of the Flood, is used again to emphasize the repetition. The covenant is not only repeated but the rainbow, a natural phenomenon existing since Creation, is now designated as a sign of God's eternal commitment to that covenant. Only then do Noah and his family resume normal marital relations.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

In his article *Hesed - Mercy or Loyalty?* (JBQ XXVII:3, July 1999), Harold Kamsler asserts: "*Hesed* describes a mutual relationship between man and man or between man and God." This is absurd. The word *hesed* by itself does no such thing. Nor does the word "loyalty." *Hesed* in most of its usages (see: Lev. 20:17 for a problematic use) denotes a quality of benevolence which may be attributed to an action or may characterize a disposition in a person. However, it says nothing about to whom or to what it may be extended and certainly not whether it is reciprocated.

In the texts cited by the author, any suggestions of loyalty, if there be any at all, come from the context and not from the word *hesed*. And even in those texts, the word *hesed* could plausibly be translated by most of the entries given in the Alcalay dictionary: "favor, goodness, love, grace, mercy, charity, kindness, benevolence, boon." The translator may choose the English word that best catches the particular nuance of benevolence implied by the context. Often the word *hesed* is taken to mean the kind of goodness which the recipient does not deserve nor is the donor obligated to extend but is simply gratuitous and was so perceived by the Talmudic rabbis.

Simon Chanito
Jerusalem

Sir,

I find the article by Naphtali Gutstein, "Proverbs 31:1-13: The Woman of Valor As Allegory" (JBQ XXVII:1, January 1999) very interesting. However, there is yet another possible interpretation which I would suggest -- very much down to earth and a complete opposite of allegory. If our alleged superwoman were to do all that is suggested: run the home, the farm, the business, then there is nothing left for her husband to do.

Suppose one translates *aishet hayyil* as "wife of a warrior"? This would explain the strange use of *shallal* [spoils of war] and also why she is managing everything in his absence. The feisty woman holding things together until he returns -- familiar in all times and places? Perhaps.

Personally, I prefer the "wisdom" allegory, but this is just another way of looking at such a many-layered text.

Cecily Solomons
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P.O.B. 29002
JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

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