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Published by the
WORLD JEWISH BIBLE SOCIETY

In cooperation with the
Department of Education and Culture of the World Zionist Organization
and the
World Jewish Congress, Cultural Department

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Dor le-Dor is published by the World Jewish Bible Society for the English reading public and is directed primarily to interested Jewish laymen who wish to deepen their understanding and appreciation of their heritage through Bible study.

WORLD JEWISH BIBLE SOCIETY, 18 Abarbanel St., JERUSALEM

AN AFFILIATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN THE DIASPORA OF THE
WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION

דפוס רפאל חיים הכהן בע"מ, ירושלים

PROPHECY AND HALACHA

BY HYMAN ROUTTENBERG

What relationship does the prophet bear to the Halacha? Did the prophet introduce new Halachot? Did he make any changes in the Halacha?

This entire matter of the relationship of the prophet to the Halacha is very complex and confusing. On the one hand, we are told by our sages that "a prophet may, henceforth, (i.e. after Moses) make no innovations" (Shabbat 104a). This is derived from the verse in the Torah which says: "These are the commandments" (Lev. 27:34), thus implying that there can be no additions or subtractions to the commandments that are contained in the Torah. In fact, the Torah expressly says in regard to the commandments "thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. 13:1). Furthermore, the Rabbis affirm that though there were forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses in Israel, none of them diminished from or added to what is written in the Torah with the exception of the reading of the Megillah (Megillah 14a). The Yerushalmi brings evidence from Ecclesiastes 1:10 that there were no innovations, and affirms that all the laws that are found in the entire range of Biblical and Rabbinic literature were already transmitted to Moses at Mt. Sinai (Yer. Megillah 27a). Similarly, Rabbi Yitzhak said: "Whatever the prophets prophesied in every generation, was received at Mount Sinai" (Exod. Rabba 286).

NOTHING DIMINISHED NOR ADDED, YET . . .

From the above sources it appears clear and unequivocal that the prophets did not make any innovations or changes in the Law. Nothing was diminished from or added to what is written in the Torah. And yet, as Rav Tzair (Chaim Tschernowitz) points out in his "History of the Halacha" (Vo. 2, pp. 101 ff), we find that there are many contradictions to the principle laid down by the Rabbis. In a number of instances the Rabbis have ascribed various laws and innovations to

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the prophets. Thus, for example, the Mishnah states that the early prophets (Samuel and David) instituted twenty-four Mishmarot (Courses), and for every Course there was a 'Maamad' in Jerusalem made up of priests, Levites and Israelites¹ (Taanit 4, 2). The Tosefta adds to this that the prophets who were in Jerusalem instituted there twenty-four 'Amudim' or 'Maamadot,' corresponding to the twenty-four 'Mishmarot,' in order to supervise the sacrifices (Taanit 3, 2).

Similarly, we find that the Rabbis ascribed a number of laws to the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Thus we read in the Talmud: I call heaven and earth to witness that upon this mortar (or mortar-shaped seat) sat the prophet Haggai and delivered the following three rulings: That a daughter's rival is forbidden; that in the lands of Ammon and Moab the tithe of the poor is to be given in the Seventh Year (of the Septennial cycle); and that proselytes may be accepted from the Cordyenians and the Tarmodites (Yebamoth 16a).²

LAWS NOT MENTIONED IN THE TORAH

Isaac Hirsch Weiss brings to our attention a number of laws and customs referred to by Jeremiah which are not mentioned in the Torah. When the prophet admonishes the people to observe the Shabbat, he warns them to "bear no burden on the Sabbath day" nor to "carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day" (Jer. 17:21-22). These prohibitions are not mentioned in the Torah. There are also customs of mourning mentioned by Jeremiah which are not found in the Torah, such as the breaking of bread for the mourners and giving them the cup of consolation to drink (Jeremiah 16:7). Similarly, Weiss points out, we find in the Book of Ezekiel laws and customs that were in vogue in the days of Ezekiel but are not mentioned in the Torah (Dor Dor V'dorshav).

The Talmud relates that according to R. Johanan, the rite of the willow-branch on Sukkot is an institution of the prophets,³ whereas R. Joshua b. Levi maintains that it is a usage or 'minhag' of the prophets⁴ (Sukka 44a). According to the

1. There were twenty-four Courses (I Chron. 24:4 ff.) serving in the Temple in rotation, each for one week. Cf. Sukka 5, 6-8.
2. Despite the opinion of some Rabbis that they were to be regarded as mamzerim.
3. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi to whom tradition ascribed many enactments.
4. They had it only as a custom and therefore no benediction over it is necessary.

Mishnah, the prophets enacted that tithes should be given in Babylonia (Yadayim 4, 3).

In the Book of Daniel reference is made to the "law of Moses, the servant of God," and also to "His laws which He set before us by His servants the prophets" (Daniel 9:10–11).

HEARKEN TO THE PROPHETS

Ephraim Urbach points out in his article on "Halacha and Prophecy" that we already find in the Sifre a limitation to the rule that a prophet cannot make any changes. On the verse, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet . . . unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15), the Sifre says: Even if he tells you to transgress one of the Mitzvot of the Torah, as Elijah did on Mount Carmel, hearken unto him (Sifre, Shoftim 10, 175).

In the same vein we read in the Yerushalmi (Megillah 1, 13): Said R. Yose bar Hanina, only the prophet may grant permission to offer sacrifices on the 'bamah' which the Torah prohibited (Deut. 12:13), as Elijah did at a time when the 'bamot' were prohibited (I Kings 18:36). It is clear from the Yerushalmi that only the prophet is able to make changes and even he can do so only at God's command. Similarly, R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Yohanan: In every matter, if a prophet tells you to transgress the commands of the Torah, obey him with the exception of idolatry (Sanhedrin 90a).

AND CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT

The 'Semag' makes the significant observation that just as there is a commandment in the Torah to abstain from work on the seventh day, so it is incumbent to rejoice then as it is said "And call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable, and shalt honor it, not doing thine own ways, nor pursuing thy business, nor speaking thine own words" (Isa. 58:13). The sages interpreted the above words of Isaiah as follows: *And thou shalt honor it*: thy Sabbath garments should not be like thy week-day garments; *Not doing thine own ways*: thy walking on the Sabbath shall not be like thy walking on weekdays; *nor finding thine own affairs*: thine affairs are forbidden but the affairs of Heaven (religious matters) are permitted; *nor speaking thine own words*: thy speech on the Sabbath should not be like thy speech on weekdays (Shabbat 113a).⁵

5. Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (Semag), Vol. 2, 30

Maimonides makes a similar statement in these words: Four things have been said in regard to the Sabbath, two of which are contained in the Torah and two of which come from the prophets. The two in the Torah are "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8), and "Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Deut. 5:12). The two that are added by the prophets are "honor and delight" as it is said, "And call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of the Lord honorable" (Isa. 58:13).⁶

According to our sages there are a number of other laws that are derived from the same verse in Isaiah. From the words *And call the Sabbath a delight*, Rav derives that it is a religious duty to kindle candles for the Sabbath for in that way one honors the Sabbath and makes it a delight (Shabbat 25a – See Tosafot). From the first part of the verse, *If thou turn away thy foot because of the Sabbath*, the Rabbis learn that one is not permitted to walk through the city on the Sabbath in order to bathe in the bath house immediately after the Sabbath is over. From the next phrase, *Pursuing thy business on my holy day*, they learn that one is not permitted to walk across his field on the Sabbath in order to see what it requires. From the phrase, *Nor pursuing thy business*, they learn that one is forbidden to ask for his own requirements on the Sabbath. One of the commentaries explains that the Sabbath can be a delight to him only if he feels that he has everything that he needs.

(Leviticus Rabba 34, 16)

PROHIBITION OF DOING BUSINESS ON THE SABBATH

In the Book of Nehemiah reference is made to the prohibition of doing business on the Sabbath: "And if the peoples of the land bring wares or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy of them on the Sabbath or on a holy day" (Nehemiah 10:32).

The prohibition against doing business on the Sabbath is also implied in the Book of Amos. The merchants are showing impatience with the Sabbath and are saying: "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth corn" (8:5).

Isaiah mentions the prohibition of doing week-day (profane) things on the Sabbath . . ." And shalt honor it, not doing thy wonted ways, nor pursuing thy business" (58:13).

6. רמב"ם, הלכות שבת, פרק ל' 6.

The Mishnah states that a man is not permitted to hire laborers on the Sabbath, nor is he permitted to instruct his neighbor to hire laborers for him. These laws are also derived by the Rabbis from Isaiah 58:13: *Nor pursuing thy business, nor speaking thine own words*. On the other hand, say the sages, one may make arrangements on the Sabbath for the betrothal of young girls and the elementary education of a child and to teach him a trade. This we learn from the phrase, *nor pursuing thy business*: thine affairs are forbidden, but the affairs of Heaven (i.e. religious matters) are permitted (Shabbat 150a).

ADDITIONAL LAWS DERIVED FROM THE PROPHETS

In addition to the above laws that the Rabbis derived from the words of the prophets, Urbach lists many others in his article on "Halacha and Prophecy" (Tarbitz, vol. 18). Among them are the following: The reciting of Hallel on Passover when the Paschal lamb is eaten, is derived from the verse: *Ye shall have a song as in the night when a feast is hollowed* (Isaiah 30:29). The law pertaining to a precept fulfilled through a transgression (which is forbidden Succah 30a), is derived from the verse: *And ye have brought that which was taken by violence and the lame and the sick* (Malachi 1:13). The commandment of uncovering the corona at circumcision (Yebamoth 71b), is derived from the verse: *At that time the Lord said unto Joshua: 'Make thee knives of flint and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time'* (Joshua 5:2).⁷ The laws of 'kinyan' or acquisition (Kiddushin 26a) are derived from the following verses: *Men shall acquire fields with money* (Jer. 32:44); *So I took the deed of purchase* (Ibid 32:11); *And dwell in the cities that ye have taken* (Ibid 40:10) — how did ye take it? by dwelling therein (I.e. by hazakah, possession); *And their father gave them gifts . . . with fenced cities in Judah* (II Chron. 21:3).⁸ The law that witnesses are to affix their signature to a 'Get' (Gittin 36a) is derived from the verse: *And subscribe the deeds, and seal them* (Jer. 32:44).

7. Since a second circumcision was necessary, it is assumed that the previous circumcisions performed in accordance with the law given to Abraham, without uncovering the corona, were made invalid in the days of Joshua.

8. Thus they acquired the gifts, which were movables, in conjunction with the fenced cities.

A NEW LAW FROM EZEKIEL

There is a law in the Mishnah that all sacrifices whose blood was caught by an uncircumcised priest are disqualified (Zebahim 15b). The Talmud asks: (Ibid 22b) Whence do we know it? R. Hisda replies: We did not learn this from the Torah of Moses our teacher, but from the words of Ezekiel the son of Buzi: *No alien, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My sanctuary* (Ezek. 44:9). Thus R. Hisda, without any qualms, derives a law from Ezekiel which he is not able to derive from the Torah. Ravina, on the other hand, attempts to reconcile the contradiction between the fact that many laws are derived from the words of the prophets and the principle that a prophet may not make any innovations. According to him, the prophets merely reinstated laws that were given at Sinai and had been forgotten. They received them as a tradition and gave them a support in Scripture (Zebahim 18b).

DECISIONS FOR THE HOUR

What is especially difficult to explain is the matter of special rulings for particular occasions which the Talmud ascribes to a number of prophets who suspended or changed a commandment of the Torah on the basis of a 'special ruling' or 'decision for the hour.' The classical example of this is Elijah on Mount Carmel. Thus the Talmud says: "Come and hear: *Unto him ye shall hearken* (Deut. 18:15); even if he tells you, 'Transgress any of all the commandments of the Torah,' as in the case of Elijah on Mount Carmel, obey him in accordance with the needs of the hour" (Yebamoth 90b). Thus we see that in special circumstances the Torah grants the prophet the authority to change the law. Elijah, by his illegal act, saved Israel from idolatry and brought them back to the worship of God.

We have a number of other examples of the prophets doing things that were contrary to the teachings of the Torah. In most instances the sages explained that these acts were not permanent abrogations of the law but merely 'a decision for the hour.' Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Chajes, in this book 'Torat Neviim', includes the following among the acts of the prophets that were in violation of the teachings of the Torah:

Joshua had Achan put to death upon his own admission of guilt (Joshua 7:20-25) despite the fact that the Torah requires the testimony of two witnesses.

Maimonides explains that this was 'a decision for the hour' (Mishnah Torah, Sanhedrin 18, 6).

Gideon offered a burnt-offering with the wood of Asherah (Jud. 6:27). R. Aba b. Kahana said that eight things (which were contrary to the Torah) were permitted that night (Temura 28b).

David killed the Amalekite upon his own admission that he had killed Saul (II Sam. 1:15). Again Maimonides explains that this was 'a decision for the hour' (Mishnah Torah, Sanhedrin 18, 6).

Elisha ordered every good tree of the Moabites to be felled (II Kings 3:19) despite the commandment in the Torah not to cut down "the trees for food" of the enemy (Deut. 20:19–20). Maimonides explains that this was also 'a decision for the hour' (introduction to Seder Zeraim). R. Giddal said that when "Ezra praised the great God," (Neh. 8:4–6), he magnified Him by pronouncing the Ineffable Name. The Talmud explains that this was 'a decision for the hour' since it is forbidden to pronounce the Ineffable Name outside the limits of the Temple (Yoma 69b).

NOT TO BE TAKEN AS A PRECEDENT

It thus appears clear that, according to our sages, the above acts of the prophets were not permanent abrogations of the law but merely 'decisions for the moment.' They were decisions that were made in an emergency for 'the safeguarding of the cause' and were not to be taken as a precedent. The Torah granted the prophet the authority to suspend the law temporarily in accordance with the needs of the hour and the people are commanded to obey him as it is said: *Unto him ye shall hearken* (Deut. 18:15). This is in keeping with what Resh Lakish said: There are times when the suppression of the Torah may be the foundation of the Torah (Menahoth 99b), or as R. Nathan interprets the words of the psalmist: *It is time to work for the Lord; they have made void Thy law* (Ps. 119:126); this means they have made void Thy law because it is time to work for the Lord (Berakhot 54a). The only exception to this is if the prophet tells you to serve idols (Sanhedrin 90a).

AUTHORITY TO INNOVATE LAWS

It is interesting to note that Yehuda Halevi, the noted philosopher of the Middle Ages, ascribes to the prophets the authority to make new laws and regards every

prophet a lawmaker. We have seen new commandments, he says, which came after Moses and were accepted as 'Torah.' Among such innovations he cites the one where Solomon "hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord," offered burnt-offerings outside the altar, and "held a feast . . . seven days and seven days, even fourteen days"⁹ (I Kings 9:64-65).

Another innovation was the order of the singers which David and Samuel established in the house of the Lord and which subsequently became a permanent institution (I Chron. 9:22, 33; II Chron. 5:12-13).

Still another innovation was the third part of a shekel which Ezra imposed upon the people to give yearly for the service of the house of the Lord (Nehemiah 10:33).

When the Kuzari asks: How can you reconcile all this with the warning in the Torah, "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. 13:1), Yehuda Halevi replies that this warning was intended only for the masses so that they would not make any new laws, but it did not apply to the prophets (Kuzari 3, 39-41).

LAWS OF MOSES AND LAWS OF PROPHETS

Rav Tzair appears to arrive at the same conclusion as Yehuda Halevi. He believes that the matter of 'special rulings' must be given a broader meaning for it implies that the prophets were really legislators who gave laws and mitzvot to the people of their generation, since their words were divinely inspired and were essentially words of tradition. The difference between the prophecy of Moses and his laws and the prophecy of the other prophets and their laws is really only relative. Whereas the law of Moses was a law for all generations, the law of the prophet was a law for his own generation. But insofar as strength of authority is concerned, there is no difference between Moses and the other prophets. In fact, as we already noted above, the Torah gave the prophet the authority to suspend temporarily any one of the commandments with the exception of idolatry.

From all that has preceded, we see that there is a good deal of confusion in the matter as to whether or not the prophet had the authority to make innovations in

9. The first seven days were the days of the dedication of the Temple and the last seven days were the days of Succot. All of these days were days of feasting even though they included the day of Yom Kippur. Thus we see that the observance of the Day of Atonement was that year suspended by the prophets because of the dedication of the Temple (Mo'ed Katan 9a).

the law. This confusion comes about from the fact that we find many contradictions to the principle that was laid down by the Rabbis that the prophet is not permitted to make any innovations. The answer given in the Talmud by Ravina to these contradictions is that the new laws or innovations that we find in Ezekiel and in the other books of the prophets were really not new but were "Halacha l'Moshe Misinai" (Zebahim 18b), a tradition transmitted from Sinai.

SUMMARY

What all of this adds up to is the following: There are really differences of opinion as to whether or not the prophet had the authority to make innovations. The consensus seems to be that the prophet was not permitted to make any innovations in the law. Exception was made, however, in the case of 'special rulings' for particular occasions. Basically the prophet did not introduce new laws but was rather the custodian of ancient customs and traditions as we see from what the Rabbis tell us in regard to the three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, who went up with the Israelites from the exile: One testified about the dimensions of the altar and the site of the altar; another testified that they could offer sacrifices even though there was no Temple; and a third testified that the Torah should be written in Assyrian characters (Zebahim 62a).¹⁰

It is therefore correct to say, as the Rabbis maintained, that the prophets did not make any innovations. What they did was to preserve ancient traditions. They also reinstated laws that had been forgotten (Shabbat 104a). Whatever seemed new was really not new. When the law that an uncircumcised priest disqualifies the service was ascribed by R. Hisda to the prophet Ezekiel, the Talmud asks: How then did we know this before Ezekiel came? The answer given is that it was a tradition from Sinai and Ezekiel came and gave it textual support (Zebahim 18b). The function of the prophet was not to create new laws but rather "to restore the crown to its ancient completeness" (Yoma 69b). □

10. I.e. The square form of Hebrew lettering now in use.

PHENOMENOLOGY OF PROPHECY – III EMERGENCE OF LITERARY PROPHECY

BY SHIMON BAKON

“A new epoch not only in literature but in religion began with the rise of the literary prophets, for they did not merely produce a new class of literature but ushered in the greatest movement in the spiritual history of mankind.”¹ How did this remarkable movement emerge and what were the conditions that gave rise to it?

SENSITIVITY TO EVIL

Amos, the first of the literary prophets, lived during the brilliant reign of Jeroboam II (ca. 786–745), who “restored the borders of Israel from the entrance of Hamat to the sea of Arabah” (II Kings 14:25). During this period Assyria, shortly to become the scourge of Israel and the entire Middle East, was still weak, and the power of Syria was on the decline. Jeroboam not only succeeded to extend his dominion, but also to stimulate commerce and to accumulate wealth. No doubt that this wealth, with the introduction of luxuries benefiting the ruling class, broadened the gulf that existed between the poor and the rich. Yet it is a misreading of the essential of prophecy to state that it was the injustice of the growing disparity between social classes, or the conditions of the times, which caused the emergence of literary prophecy. It was rather the prophet’s perception of the special relation between God and man that made him sensitive to what he considered the essential good or evil.

In Amos, this specific sensitivity can be summed up in terms of divine justice, requiring also man’s justice. It was otherwise with Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, to whom the essential relationship between God and Israel is expressed in the following words:

1. Bewer, Julius A. *The Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 87

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Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel.

For the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

Hosea 4:1

To Hosea, the loving, intimate relationship was the crux of God's special covenant with Israel, and Israel's sin was her unforgivable faithlessness, her hankering after Baal worship, symbolized in that strange marriage between Hosea and Gomer.

PROPHECY, ORATORY, LITERATURE

All that has been said before explains the prophet but does not contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of literary prophecy which, as noted before, produced a new class of literature.

What constitutes this newness? First, we find a successful merger of three separate forms of communication, the prophetic, the rhetoric and the literary.

When we re-read the great oratory of Churchill, at the start of the Second World War, we, who had listened to it and were moved by it at that time, are startled by its flatness today. It has now little to say to us. Great literature, on the other hand, transcends the man and transcends time and is for all eternity.

When we read Amos, we are struck by the fact that all the three modes of communication appeal with equal strength. When reading the opening chapters, we perceive the great oratorical skill that draws the audience and makes them listen to his words. We can visualize the growing delight of the Israelites at words of condemnation thundered against surrounding hateful nations, summoned to divine judgement for their evil deeds. We can palpably feel the sudden consternation as Amos now directs his words against Israel! As for the prophetic message, for the first time, the moral conduct of people other than Israel is shown here to be of deep concern to God, thus ushering in the "greatest movement in the spiritual history of mankind."

On reading this and following chapters, we are astonished by the rhythmic flow of words, grouped in strophes; the poetic power, the rich imagery, and the skillful and impressive uses of refrains. One marvels at this farmer from Tekoah. Where did he find the power to express his words in language that made it great literature, comparable with some of the best chapters of Isaiah?

CONFRONTATION

Scripture knows the dramatic power of confrontations. Each of them, whether it be that of Nathan and David, or Elijah and Ahab, were seminal events with far reaching consequences. The true significance of another confrontation, that between Amos and Amaziah, priest at Beth-el, as recorded in the book of Amos, chapter seven, has not been fully appreciated. Too many seized upon it, to point out an alleged conflict between prophet and priest. In so doing they missed the crucial significance of this event, which ushered in a new and magnificent era of literary prophecy.

As recorded, a man from Tekoah, a little townlet, approximately twelve miles south of Jerusalem, preached his visions in Beth-el, the sanctuary and royal house of Jeroboam II, "in the midst of the house of Israel." In a crescendo of visions where first he intercedes on behalf of Israel he proceeds to the vision of the "plumbline" where the verdict is announced that God "will not pardon Israel anymore," finally proclaiming the penalty: "and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

Here, in a few verses, we find the essential elements that were to characterize literary or classical prophecy: a series of visions, clothed in superb language; directed to an audience; recorded, either remembered by some listeners, or written down by disciples or perhaps by the author himself; uttered by a true and not a professional prophet, called away from his peaceful pursuits, "to go and prophesy to My people Israel."

WORDS REMEMBERED

To chronicle events surrounding a king is as old as recorded history. It is a known fact that many of the earlier prophets² had served as chroniclers of kings. Even later the great Isaiah chronicled the life of King Uzziah.³ But slowly it must have dawned on some nobler minds that the value of ruling power is a passing event and that the words of prophets, speaking in the name of God, are lasting and needed to be preserved, taught and transmitted to generations. This change was the *conditio-sine-qua-non* from which the phenomenon of literary prophecy could emerge.

2. See my article: *The Phenomenology of Prophecy* – II, Dor le-Dor, Vo. VIII, No. 1 p. 24

3. II Ch 26:22

We cannot be too certain who, other than Jeremiah and Ezekiel, recorded the lives and utterances of prophets. Jeremiah, as is well known, dictated many parts of his prophecies to Baruch ben Neriah. Likewise, Ezekiel stepped out of anonymity, writing his entire book, as attested to by the entire account given in the first person.

What is certain is that prophecies were well remembered. Thus we find in the Book of Jeremiah⁴ that certain of the elders, wishing to protect Jeremiah who stood accused of high treason, quoted Micah's statement: "Zion shall be plowed as a field . . . and the mountains of the house of God as the high places of a forest" (Micah 3:12), claiming that Hezekiah in his time did not put Micah to death for his prophecies.

NEW STATUS OF THE PROPHET

With Samuel a metamorphosis in the function of the judge-prophet had come about when, reluctantly, he had transferred major powers of leadership to the king. Since that time the significance of the prophet had diminished. At best, he could change the course of history through the influence he could bring to bear on kings.

It is to the credit of Elijah and Elisha that they discovered the power residing in the people. For was it not the people who destroyed the Baal priests on Mount Carmel? And was it not the people, encouraged by Elisha, who brought Jehu to the helm, thus toppling the house of Omri?

We may speculate that Amos learned from both. It is to the people one must bring the message. Characteristically, all his messages are directed to the people and not even once is there a confrontation with the king, thus deviating from the pattern followed by all known prophets preceding him. Therein lies one of the secrets of literary prophecy. Addressing oneself directly to the people necessitates speech as the major tool of communication.

Beyond finding a new role for the prophet, Amos also insisted on a new status for him, for "the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). It is through the prophet that God's intention for His people will become manifest.

4. 26:17-18

MORALITY A COSMIC FORCE

It has been said about Newton that he was able to project a simple observation of the falling of an apple into the universal principle of gravitation. Amos likewise projected his observations of cause and effect, taken from his life as a farmer, into a universal law. There is an inseparable relationship of cause and effect between the roaring of a lion and finding his prey; the bird falling in a snare when there was a lure for it. When the lion roars, we understand its warning sound, just as the blast of the Shofar in the city warns of approaching danger. When God reveals His counsel to His servant the prophet, who will be so obtuse and not listen to His message?

The laws of God are operative in nature and in human affairs,

For, lo, He hath formed the mountains and created the wind and declareth unto man what is His thought.

4:13

*Him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion
and brought on the shadow of death in the morning . . .
That causeth destruction to flash upon the strong
so that destruction cometh upon the fortress.*

5:8-9

These are not novel thoughts. For the same God, who created heaven and earth also called on Abraham to go forth from Ur. He split the Red Sea, and made a covenant with Israel at Sinai. It is not so much the grandeur of God, expressed by Amos, which is novel, but the projection of the simple observations of cause and effect into a cosmic principle, with God representing, in non-philosophical terms, the ultimate Cause. The principle of physical and moral laws, both emanating from God, is expressed in the following vision of the plumbline:

Thus He showed me: and behold the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand.

And the Lord said unto me: "Amos, what seest thou?" And I said, A plumbline.

Then said the Lord: Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel. I will not again pardon them any more."

Amos 7:7-8

The implications of this vision are clear. Just as a crooked wall must collapse by inherent physical laws, so must a crooked society crumble by inherent moral law. The impending destruction of Israel, "seen" by Amos, will come about because morality operates in human affairs, just as physical laws operate in the physical sphere, both stemming from the Lord.

It is the same cosmic force of morality which must be operative not only in Israel but in all nations of the world. Many scholars, Jewish and non Jewish, attributed to this novel universalism the birth of literary prophecy. Yet it was not new, but long implicit in the Jewish tradition. Already Elijah, and even more so, Elisha, had made some of the nations surrounding Israel the arena of their activities. The contribution of Amos was that he made explicit what was already contained in the concept of One God, the father of all mankind, amongst whom Israel is the first-born.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE COVENANT

Heretofore prophets had acted as emissaries of the Lord in response to a specific occasion or issue. Nathan confronted David on the matter of Bat-sheba as Elijah faced Ahab on his crime committed against Nabot. Elijah is instructed specifically at Horeb to anoint Hazael king of Aram, Jehu king of Israel and Elisha to be prophet.

With Amos there occurred a radical departure from such "ad hoc" prophetic activity. He thought deeply and comprehended more profoundly the implications of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. What is the specific relation between them? Is it that of exclusiveness, or is Israel first among equals? Is it that of privileges or that of duty?

His response is found in the following passages: "Are you not as the children of Ethiopia to Me?" (9:7), and: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore will I visit upon you all the iniquities" (3:2). In these two passages he makes explicit what was implicit in God's words to Moses "And thou shalt say to Pharaoh: Thus speaks the Lord, My son, My *firstborn*, is Israel" (Exodus 4:22).

In the dialectics of a covenant, Israel had relied too heavily on the promises given by God, and forgot or ignored the obligations she had taken upon herself in pursuit of this covenant. It is to the credit of Amos that he stressed Israel's obligations: noblesse oblige. Other prophets, following him, especially Hosea and

Jeremiah, detected in that relation of the covenant an intimate element of mutual love. Amos opted for duty. What is it that God demands of man or Israel? His classical answer to this question is in these immortal words: "Let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (5:24).

Amos excoriated Judah "because they have rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept His statutes" (2:4). But what are these statutes and what is the law of the Lord? Are there within the framework of man's obligations some priorities? While he attacks ritual and sacrifices performed soullessly, he scorns the blatant inconsistency in that "they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge" (2:8), in contravention of the moral law of returning clothes taken in pledge to the poor.⁵ For the very essence of man's closeness to God is precisely "to hate the evil and love the good" (5:15).

SEEK YE ME AND LIVE

The supreme duty of Israel is: "Seek Me and live" (5:4). It is this demand on man and Israel, wherein lie the secret of survival and the method of reformation.

The significance of the individual and of collective Israel is thus rediscovered. Their acts, in consonance with the covenant, can influence God's decision. He is willing to reverse Himself: "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord. . . will be gracious with the remnant of Joseph" (5:15).

One hundred years had passed since Elijah was granted a revelation of God in a still, small voice. Elijah had stormed Heaven on Carmel, Elisha had seated and unseated kings to bring Israel closer to the faith in the Lord. But it was reserved for Amos to comprehend this still, small voice by vesting final responsibility in the individual and in Israel *to seek the Lord and to live*.

Many grand ideas, that of individual responsibility for one's actions, the meaning of suffering, the final redemption, the sanctification of time, the untouchable holiness of God, the saving remnant, and other, had yet to find prophetic spokesmen, but it was Amos who served as their model.

CESSATION OF PROPHECY

Just as the sudden bursting forth of prophecy on the historic arena of Israel,

5. Exodus 22:25 "If thou at all take thy neighbours garment for a pledge, thou shalt deliver it to him by sundown, for that is his only covering . . ."

also its almost abrupt cessation is shrouded in darkness and mystery. If we were to make an educated guess as to the why of cessation and to interpret it in human terms, one has to take the tradition seriously that it was Ezra — and with him, and soon after, the Anshe Knesset Hagdolah, who collected holy writ and canonized it.⁶

After that collection no other book was admissible. All that the Lord had wished to impart through His servants, the prophets, was already imparted and was in possession of the people, to interpret and to live by. The test of inclusion was intrinsic: only records which were in keeping with basic truths and tenets of Torah were worthy of inclusion.⁷

A poignant and daring Aggadah,⁸ relating to an argument about a Halachic point (the oven of Akmai) between Eliezer ben Hyrkanos and his colleagues, is indicative of a process that must have been in the making, pointing to the decline of prophecy.

This Aggadah tells of divine intercession requested by R. Eliezer in support of his argument. In spite of such intercession the sages, in particular R. Joshua ben Hananiah, were unruffled and exclaimed: Halacha, is not in Heaven!, meaning that Halacha, or the interpretation of God's word, is not determined by Heaven anymore, but by the majority of sages. The climax of the Aggadah is God's response to this "Chutzpah": "My sons have conquered Me!"

Ezra and the Anshe Knesseth Hagdolah must be congratulated on their faithfulness to truth in admitting to the canon only the prophets we now know, as well as on their exquisite literary taste: for there is none who can doubt the superb literary quality of Scripture.

Now that the entire Torah was in the hands of man, no miracle, not even a *נִתְקַל* could interfere with its interpretation by the sages.

Thus the magnificent voice of the Prophet was stilled, and this most remarkable phenomenon, having lasted for one thousand years, came to a conclusion. □

6. See B.B. 14b–15a

7. See also Josephus, *Apion I–VIII*, 41: 'From the time of Artaxerxes to our own time, each event was recorded, but these writings are not deemed equally trustworthy . . . because the exact succession of prophets no longer exists.'

8. B.B. 59b

NABAL AND ABIGAIL

BY SOL LIPTZIN

The biblical tale of Nabal and Abigail rarely aroused the interest of creative writers in former centuries and only a few writers in our century attempted imaginative reinterpretations of this strange episode which occurred when David sought refuge from Saul's pursuers in the Wilderness of Paran. Is it because the biblical narrative is so unusually detailed and picturesque that writers despaired of vying with the original text? Or is it because they could not find anything heroic in Nabal, the rich, coarse, mediocre, and yet conceited sheepbreeder, whose very name branded him a fool? Or is it because they could not sympathize with Abigail, one of the wisest and most beautiful biblical women, in her subservience and fidelity to her pompous, unloved husband, whose worthlessness she recognized and yet for whose welfare she risked her life and good repute?

It was on the eve of the First World War that the German novelist Arnold Zweig, who was then known primarily as the narrator of the *Novellen um Claudia*, published his three-act tragedy *Abigail und Nabal*, 1913, and that the Yiddish novelist David Pinski completed his one-act drama *Abigail*, 1914. The American poet Mark Van Doren's poetic portrait of Abigail did not appear until half a century later.

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT

The original source of the story is found in the First Book of Samuel, chapter 25. The outlawed David, who is in great straits while hiding in the desert, sends ten young men to pay his respects to the wealthy Nabal during the sheep-shearing season. David's followers have helped Nabal's shepherds to guard the large flock and to ward off marauders. Now he is in need of provisions for his men and he hopes that Nabal will be generous in rewarding his services. Nabal refuses his request and adds insult to injury by calling David a servant, one of many who

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broke away from their masters, a servant who did not deserve bread, meat or water. David is furious at Nabal's ingratitude and orders four hundred of his followers to gird for battle. He vows to avenge himself by slaying everyone of Nabal's men. When Abigail learns of her husband's rude behavior, she decides to ward off the mortal danger threatening him and his household. Without his knowledge, she quickly assembles provisions and sets out to appease David. On meeting this aggrieved leader, she blames herself for not having been aware of his just request and asks him to pardon her husband's foolishness. Her speech is a masterpiece of cunning flattery and an appeal to David's better nature. He accepts her gifts and grants her plea to spare Nabal's household. When she returns to her husband at night, she finds him drunk at a feast. She waits until the morning, when he has sobered up, and then tells him of what she has done. He gets so excited at her disobedient behavior that he suffers a stroke and dies ten days later. When David hears that Nabal is dead, he sends for Abigail to be his wife and she humbly agrees.

ARNOLD ZWEIG

Arnold Zweig, who undertook to dramatize this narrative, could not use as a principal character a Nabal who was merely a fool and completely worthless. Nabal must have possessed qualities of greatness, if he succeeded in retaining the loyalty of the beautiful and wise Abigail. He must have been a strong personality, if he could treat David's delegation with so much contempt, though aware of David's reputation as the slayer of Goliath. Hence, Zweig projected him as a feudal lord, an adherent of Saul and a possible successor of this monarch to the throne of Israel. Nabal is cold and imperious. He brooks no opposition. He does not need the assistance of the rebel David to protect his sheep and he will not pay for the unsolicited protection. As the descendant of the mighty Caleb, he does not need to woo the youngest son of Jesse and will not pay tribute to him.

Nabal is an esthete and epicurean. In his youth, his father and the prophet Samuel called him a useless person and he is still happy in being useless, in enjoying the good things of life, and in contemplating the stars at night. He does not thirst for power beyond what he wields in his own household. He has observed what power does to people, how those who grasp for it are never sated but become arrogant, blinded, distraught. Saul was happy as a guardian of sheep but his heart became darkened when he accepted the crown offered him by Samuel.

Nabal holds David to be foolish in aspiring to the throne. He himself has no such aspiration. Were Saul to offer him the royal succession, he would hesitate to accept it. He likes the indolent life. He is content to let his administrator manage the large estate, while he himself makes merry with wine and women and enjoys the products of his servants' toil.

Abigail was one of Nabal's acquisitions. She grew up in poor circumstances. Her father and brothers were laborers. The girls around her who were richer had no difficulty in finding husbands and, when she visited them, she wept at night on her lonely couch because of the passing wasted years. When Nabal, who had a reputation as a wealthy and very wise landowner, asked for her hand in marriage, she looked forward to a life of happiness as his helpmate, his inspirer, his comrade who would take loneliness from him, for he too was without a friend. But he continued to use her as a thing, a decoration, a bit of jewelry to hang about his life, while she yearned for a human being with whom to share inmost thoughts and feelings. At night she found him irresistible, but during the day she hated him and even came to hate herself for her weakness. She was his prisoner, his slave, and not the partner of his plans and the confidante of his wisdom. And yet, when he offered to divorce her, she dreaded returning to her uncouth father and her brothers who looked down upon her. She dragged on her years and tended to Nabal's household, while her dreams of meaningful, great deeds receded ever further.

The hour for a deed of tremendous courage came when she learned that the infuriated outlaw and pretender to Saul's throne had threatened to destroy all of Nabal's men because of Nabal's ingratitude and insults. Though it was unheard of that a married woman, who never left her home unveiled and without her husband's permission, should make her way at night to the camp of a stranger, she dared to take such a step in order to prevent David's carrying out his threat. Her beauty and eloquence had a tremendous effect upon him. His hate-filled heart thawed. She convinced him that his vengeance, though justified, would defile him and that the memory of his massacre, if carried out, would persist to haunt him ever thereafter.

When David learned that she had come of her own free will, unenticed by her husband, with whom she had little in common, indeed that she was protecting her mate, even though her initial love had turned to hate, he offered to put an end to her pain, loneliness, and fettered existence, to shelter her with his love and under-

standing. She was terrified at his offer and he found her reaction incomprehensible. He asked her: "Where did you get the courage to come to me, where your confidence in me, where the magic of your voice and the spell that emanates from you? A person tortures you and you undertake to save him. You don't love him and yet you risk your life for him. Maybe you even hate him and yet you flare up in anger at me when I speak of liberating you from him, from a husband's house which you confess to be shunning. I don't understand you. Why, tell me, did you come to me?"

When she reveals ever deeper layers of her soul that impelled her to her deed, David too opens up the innermost recesses of his heart. He makes her aware of his basic loneliness and his longing for someone to share with him his burden and his spirit's suffering, someone to whom he can confide without reserve the titanic plans that occupy him throughout his days and nights. In Abigail, he has at last found the queen of his heart. Each of them walked hitherto on lonely paths and now these paths converged and they can share misery and greatness together. Her answer is: too late, too late. "Had God brought me to you earlier, I would have brought you peace. I would have been of use to you. By now, I have been broken by Nabal. The fragments of me show their mark. I am tired and old — what should you do with me, you who glow with youth and are about to make the leap for a kingdom?" Once she was a seedling that grew ever taller and higher; but inexplicable fate took hold of her and bent her backward until she could no longer grow upward. She has been transplanted into Nabal's garden and she will always remain his wife, even if her thoughts stray elsewhere.

When David, nevertheless, seeks to embrace her and she for a moment feels herself weakening under his spell, she opens her eyes and sees in his flaming eyes a sensuality resembling Nabal's. She flees in horror back to her husband.

Nabal meanwhile has been visited by Abner and a disguised figure that he recognizes as Saul. The tired monarch, disappointed in Jonathan who is prepared to renounce his own claim to the throne in favor of David, offers the succession to Nabal, the Judean patrician. He then learns that the latter prefers his present life of contemplation under the stars and his freedom from responsibilities to a more strenuous life of action, struggle, domination, and destruction, in the full glare of the sun. He would rather remain the undisputed lord of his household than bear the worries of numerous subjects. However, immediately after Saul departs to continue the pursuit of David, Nabal learns from Abigail that he is not

even the undisputed lord of his own wife, the creature he formed for his own bodily pleasure, and discarded, when she wanted a share of his soul. Perhaps there were husbands who could share with women body and soul, dreams, longings, insights. He could not. His soul was his unique treasure, and his alone. He would always remain what he was, suave, cool, sure of himself, unshattered in his equanimity, a true sage. But then this sage learns that neither he nor any husband can prevent dreams and longings from arising in the caverns of a woman's heart. Abigail tells him of her encounter with David during the preceding hours of the night. His whole carefully contrived *Weltanschauung* collapses about him and he is ripe for death. Abigail, however, is now free to enter upon a rejuvenated life with David.

DAVID PINSKI

David Pinski's *Abigail* is the second of five playlets in the series *King David and His Wives*. These playlets trace the changes in David's personality as mirrored in his changing attitudes toward the women who meant most to him. His first wife was Michal, the daughter of Saul. He won her in his young days when he championed God's cause against the Philistines. Then his love was pure. He was even ready to renounce it, if necessary, so that all might realize that, when he confronted Goliath, he fought solely for God and God's people, and not for any reward, be it the king's daughter or the king's wealth.

In the playlet *Abigail*, David is maturer. Michal was given to him and then taken from him by her father's command. The former carefree harpist at Saul's court is now the hunted leader of exhausted, hungry men in the wilderness of Paran. He is forced to plead humbly for provisions from the wealthy and evil Nabal. When his plea is turned down, he is prepared to kill in order to feed his followers and to avenge himself on Nabal for the insulting refusal. But when Abigail comes to him, her beauty makes him forget his resolve. The hunger of his men is stilled with the provisions she has brought but his own hunger can be stilled only by her. She, however, insists on remaining faithful to her husband, though he be wicked and hateful to her. To be unfaithful would mean to break God's commandment, which a moral person ought not to do.

David is entranced by her looks and goodness. He is upset that a scoundrel like Nabal should have such a precious jewel as a wife. Nevertheless, he too will not go against the Lord's commandment. He treats Abigail honorably and is

prepared to let her return to her home. But at this moment Nabal bursts upon the scene in search of his wife. He reviles David's men as thieves, beggars, hungry dogs, locusts on the field of others, and he abuses David himself as a seducer, wife-chaser, and coward. When Abigail seeks to calm the infuriated Nabal and defends her own action as the desperate effort of a dutiful wife to save her husband from death, and when David's men taunt Nabal with his food that they are now enjoying, he collapses in a rage. His death is unmourned. David praises God who punished the wickedness of Nabal and delivered Abigail from bondage to an unworthy mate. He asks her to be his wife and he reads her answer in her eyes even before she drops on her knees before him in humble submission to his will.

The five-act play *Abigail*, 1924, by the American dramatist Grace Jewett Austin versified the biblical narrative but added no new insights.

MARK VAN DOREN

The American poet Mark Van Doren, in his lyric *Abigail*, follows the biblical narrative faithfully but adds a touch of irony, since he is writing in the irreligious generation between the two World Wars. The cunning Abigail meets the bandit chieftain David in a wild pass of the mountains. She reveals her sagacity by arguing that her husband, in refusing the request of David's envoys, did not do so out of malice but because he was a fool, as his name clearly indicated, and that, by sparing him, David would save himself from blood-guilt. When David, who was sensitive to beauty, looked at her beauty, he heeded her plea and he even magnanimously let her return to her husband unharmed. She, however, had felt the impact of David's loveliness and, when she got back to her husband and found him drunk, she told him everything. Then his spirit sank in him like a stone and he did not survive beyond ten days. When David got the news that Nabal was dead, he sent messengers to Abigail that he wanted her as his wife. She was ready and "married him forever, and forgot. — Or did you, Abigail, that first one's fall?"

ITZIK MANGER

An ironic tone also pervades Itzik Manger's lyric *Abigail*, 1935. This Yiddish poet attains original effects by letting his biblical characters think, feel, behave and misbehave as they might have if they grew up in an Eastern European Jewish community still steeped in ancient traditions and if their personalities were shaped

in townlets that had just begun to feel the refreshing breath of modern enlightenment.

Manger's Abigail sits in her little room dressed in a yellow, silken pyjama and with a hyacinth in her hair. The week of mourning for her late husband Nabal is just over and she longs, during the warm summer night, to experience the finale of the biblical romance assigned to her in the *First Book of Samuel*. Free of marital ties, she is ready to answer the summons of David, who is waiting for her in a cave, his hiding place. In marrying him, all her dreams will come true, all her secret longings will be fulfilled. Her eyes are dim with tears as she prepares to play out her biblical role to its happy ending.

MOSHE SHAMIR

The Hebrew novelist Moshe Shamir, in his novel *David's Stranger*, 1964, treats the Nabal-Abigail theme as but a minor episode in the harried life of David, while concentrating attention on the Bathsheva theme. He does, however, draw a parallel between Nabal's folly and David's folly.

The narrative encompasses the last days of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheva, after his arrival in Joab's camp, unwittingly bearing the message of his own doom. In recording the story of his early years with David, the faithful Uriah recalls their visit to the wealthy landowner, Nabal the Carmalite, who welcomed them with a feast of roast lamb. This feast was interrupted by a grief-stricken vassal, who complained that his one and only ewe lamb had been taken from him and slaughtered for the banquet. David reacted angrily: "By God, Nabal, if I were not your guest, I would not stay my sword. A man who does such a deed deserves to die!" This cruel deed, as the Prophet Nathan was later to point out, parallels David's own deed in taking to himself Uriah's beloved wife, even while this faithful follower was risking his life at the battlefield.

In the dramatic encounter between David and Abigail, Shamir stresses her superiority to David's other wives. In those days, women were not the doers and the thinkers and the fighters. They were expected to be humble and modest. But Abigail was different, a woman of action, wise, brave and magnificent. She asked no man's permission for her behavior and sought no man's blessing. She alone, by her sharp intelligence, saved Nabal and his household from David's vengeance and, after Nabal's death, rose to become David's queen.

ABIGAIL, SYMBOL OF AN INDEPENDENT WOMAN

The idyllic biblical tale of Abigail is of questionable morality. It is not as clearly immoral as is the tale of David's later wife Bathsheva, a wicked deed of lust which involved him in sin and guilt and afterwards in remorse, atonement and much suffering. On the other hand, it was not easy throughout the many centuries when religious establishments had a dominant hold upon human minds for commentators and imaginative writers to justify a wife's independent decision to act contrary to her husband's will and to set out upon a perilous adventure in hostile territory in order to parley with an infuriated outlaw, even though this outlaw turned out to be a Robin Hood type. It was far easier for a twentieth century poet or dramatist, after the double standard of morality in the relationships between man and woman was largely discarded, to exalt the behavior of Abigail as noble, self-sacrificing, heroic. Such exaltation was implicit in the biblical narrative and recent writers were therefore not contradicting the original text when they undertook an imaginative retelling of their biblical source in the spirit of our century, stressing the beauty, wisdom, purity and fascination of the independently-minded woman who defied convention. Abigail, wife of Nabal, and later of David, thus became the symbol of the brave woman who dared mightily, risked tragedy, and won through.



Abigail Pleading for her Husband

From an Old Dutch Bible

I Sam 25

THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A TORAH SCROLL

BY ÉTAN LEVINE

THE HISTORY OF TORAH SCROLLS

Jewish communities throughout the world have maintained the oldest known scribal tradition: the writing of holy scripture. One of the most amazing achievements of Jewish tradition generally is the extent of accuracy that is found in scrolls of the Pentateuch. For almost two-thousand years Jewish communities in the most far-off regions succeeded in copying the Torah, from generation to generation, virtually without error! This is a 'success story' which has yet to be paralleled even in our generation of computerized printing and of mass production by means of sophisticated technology.

The purpose of this brief study is to survey the methods used by the Jewish scribes, the regulations concerning the production of a Torah, and the general physical characteristics of a Torah scroll. It will be shown that the Torah — the holiest of all Jewish holy objects — was produced with extreme care for meticulous detail.

According to ancient tradition, scrolls of the Pentateuch were in use in Palestine, in public forum, since the time of Ezra in the sixth century B.C.E. The text of these scrolls was written in square 'Syrian' characters, rather than in the earlier Canaanite script, in order to demonstrate the sacred status of the text, and in order to distinguish it from the Samaritan Pentateuch.¹ In addition to merely

1. For background data and photographic reproduction, see Étan Levine, *The Pentateuch; Vatican Ms. Ebr. 2*, Jerusalem 1979. For calligraphic tradition, see TB *Sanhedrin* 21B–22A and TJ *Megillah* 71B.

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copying the Old Testament, the scribes amended the text, often 'correcting' Biblical verses that were deemed embarrassing or in other ways problematical.²

Although the title Scribe (Hebrew 'Sofer') was used as an honorific title during the Talmudic period,³ they were poorly paid.⁴ The scribe was so vital a functionary that one account asserts that the members of the Great Sanhedrin observed twenty-four fast days on which they prayed that the scribes might not become wealthy, lest they consequently become unwilling to write!⁵

The writing of a Torah scroll was (and continues to be) regarded as a sacred act. Thus, it is surrounded by religious ordinances. In quoting the verse, "This is my God, and I will adorn him" (Ex. 15:2), the Talmud adjures, "Serve him in a beautiful manner . . . prepare a beautiful Torah scroll, written in good ink with a fine pen by an expert scribe."⁶ Talmudic law conveys great specificity as to the treatment of the special parchment, the indelibility of the proper ink, and the correct tracing and squaring of lines, so that the calligraphy will be both straight and uniform.⁷ Artistic ornamentation and coloring were strictly forbidden, however,⁸ so that the finished product would retain its sacred, rather than artistic character.

Ancient Jewish tradition held that every adult male should write out a Torah scroll. The passage, "Now therefore write this song for you, and teach it to your children" (Deut. 31:19) was interpreted as a proof text; the entire Pentateuch, which includes "this song" should be copied.⁹ And the King of Israel was obligated to keep a second copy with him at all times, whether next to his throne

2. Several such scribal emendations are presented in *Mekilta, Beshallah* Shirah 6 and in Midrash *Tanhuma, Beshallah* (ed. Vienna 1863), 82b. The degrading phrase (Gen. 18:22) "And the Lord still stood before Abraham" was changed to "And Abraham still stood before the Lord." Persons were changed in Nu. 11:15, I Kings 12:16, etc. Other signs of scribal revision are dots placed above doubtful words.

3. See TB *Sotah* 15A. Later this deteriorates into a term for an elementary school teacher (cf. TB *op. cit.*, 49A) Note also the Judeo-Aramaic title *Liblar*, from the Latin *Libellarius*. In addition to being expert in penmanship, he was expected to teach his craft to others (TB *Yoma* 38B).

4. TB *Pesahim* 50B; Tosefta, *Biqqurim* II, *ad fin.*

5. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, TB *Pesahim*, *loc. cit.*; TB *Sanhedrin* 17B.

6. TB *Shabbat* 13B.

7. See *Masseket Sofrim*, *passim*, TB *Gittin* 6B, and TB *Shabbat* 103B.

8. Many scribes were artists who illuminated their *mss.* Alexandrian scribes for example, used gilt ink when writing Divine names in the Pentateuch. But the Jerusalem rabbis forbade all such calligraphy and barred such scrolls from use. (See *Masseket Sofrim* 1, and TB *Shabbat*, *loc. cit.*).

9. TB *Sanhedrin* 21B; See *Jewish Encyclopedia* XI, 12B *et seq.*

or accompanying him in battle.¹⁰ The owner of a Torah scroll must go to all lengths to avoid selling it.¹¹ The traditional attachment of Jewish communities and individuals to their Torah scrolls can scarcely be exaggerated. In times of expulsion and pogrom, the Torah scrolls were the primary objects of concern.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

A Torah scroll must be written on the skin of a clean (i.e. '*kasher*') animal, although it need not be slaughtered according to Jewish ritual.¹² Originally, leather made from the hides of wild animals were used, but by the middle of the 16th century, parchment was the norm in Western (i.e. European) Jewish communities. Even in Talmudic times, leather was treated with lime and gallnut to enhance its durability;¹³ the hide was scraped, and a smooth surface was obtained. The hide was then split, and the superior outer side was used for the writing of Torah scrolls.¹⁴ Only the inner surface of this outer layer was written upon.¹⁵

The parchment sheets are sewn together with thread made of dried tendons (also of *kasher* animals). The stitching is from back to front, with the tops and bottoms of leaves left open to accommodate stretching. Each sheet must be sewn to the next, else the Torah scroll is considered unfit for use.¹⁶ A tear in the parchment of two lines in length may be repaired by sewing or patching. A larger tear requires replacement of the entire sheet.

PHYSICAL MEASUREMENTS

In the course of centuries, certain physical measurements of the Torah scroll

10. See Deut. 17:18, and Maimonides, *Hilkot Sefer Torah* VII, ff.

11. Regarding the currency of Torah scrolls, these were scarce in Biblical times (cf. II Chron. 17:7 ff.), increased in currency during Talmudic times due to Rabbinic efforts, and decreased during the Middle Ages (in Christian Europe) due both to the impoverishment of the Jews and persecutions. Whereas European synagogues generally had only a Torah Scroll, and perhaps, a separate scroll of the Book of Esther, Oriental synagogues usually had scrolls of the Prophets and of the books of the Hagiographa, in addition to Torah scrolls.

12. TB *Shabbat* 108A; cf. Lev. 11:2 *et seq.*

13. TB *Megillah* 19A; see Jewish Encyclopedia XI, 128 *et seq.*

14. The term *gevil* referred to the entire skin; the term *qelaf* designated the outer surface used for inscribing Torah scrolls.

15. See TB *Shabbat* 79B.

16. A minimum of three stitches must be intact. See TB *Megillah*, TB *Gitin* 60A.

...same normative. Thus, the length of the scroll was between 16 and 24 inches. Each line was made to accommodate 30 Hebrew letters; the lines being neither too short (resembling an ancient letter) nor too long (which would involve shifting the body while reading). Each sheet must contain no less than three columns, and no more than eight. However, the last column of the entire scroll may be narrower, and it must end the Pentateuch in the middle of the line.¹⁷

Margins were established in size; the top margin was three inches, the bottom margin four inches, and between the column of a sheet two inches. Maimonides gives the required length of the page as seventeen inches: three inches for the top margin, ten inches for the length of the written columns, and four inches for the bottom margin. In the scroll that he himself transcribed, each page contained fifty-one lines (i.e. 3 × 17). The scroll measured approximately thirty-two meters in length, comprising two hundred sixty-six columns in all.¹⁸

Lines on a page in the Middle Ages were not less than forty-eight nor more than sixty in number, although in antiquity more were permitted.¹⁹ In time forty-two lines became the norm, and this continues to the present day. Spacing between lines equal the size of the lettering.²⁰ Spacing between each of the five books of the Pentateuch must be four lines, and extra spacing is provided at the beginning and end of the scroll where it is attached to the rollers.

No marginalia are allowed. In fact, no part of the text may be written outside the ruled lines except for one or two letters of a word that has begun, if it contains more than twice as many letters *in toto*. Some scribes use an acrostic to begin each column (i.e. the initial letters forming the words "By His name J-H; Ps. 68:4); others begin all columns (except the first, of course,) with the letter *waw*.

In keeping with the original nature of the ancient Hebrew Bible, the Torah scroll is not divided into verses or even chapters. Rather, it is divided into sections (Hebrew '*Parashah*'; pl. '*Parashiyyot*'). These fall into two categories: open chapters (Hebrew '*Petuḥah*') and closed chapters (Hebrew '*Seṭumah*'), the latter being a smaller division than the former.²¹ In describing the spacing between chapters, Maimonides writes:

17. TB *Menahot* 30A; cf. Maimonides, *op. cit.* VII, f.

18. See Maimonides, *loc. cit.*; cf. TB *Baba Batra* 14A and *Soferim* II.

19. Maimonides, *op. cit.*, VII 60. Contrast *Masseket Soferim* II 6.

20. TB *Baba Batra* 13A.

21. TB *Menahot* 32A.

“The text preceding the *petuḥah* ends in the middle of the line, thus leaving a space of nine letters remaining at the end of the line. And the *petuḥah* begins at the beginning of the second line. However, if there is no room for a space of nine lines, the *petuḥah* begins at the beginning of the third line, with the intervening line being left blank. The text preceding the *seṭumah* section ends in the middle of the line, a space of nine letters is left blank, and the *seṭumah* begins at the end of that same line. However, if there is not enough space on the line, a small space is left at the beginning of the second line, equalling *in toto* an interval of nine letters’ space, and then the *seṭumah* section is begun. In other words, the *petuḥah* always begins at the beginning of a line, and the *seṭumah* begins at the middle of a line.”²²

Some scholars followed an exactly reverse pattern of spacing, and the norm became a compromise: the *petuḥah* is preceded by a line which ends nine spaces before the margin, and it begins at the beginning of the next line. The *seṭumah* chapters are preceded by a line which continues to the margin, and it begins in the middle of the next line, following a nine-letter space.²³

There are two exceptions to the usual layout of the page. The poetic verses of the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:1–18) are metrically arranged in a sequence of three and two stych lines. And the verses of Moses’ poem (Deut. 32:1–43) are written in seventy double-columns.

CALLIGRAPHY OF THE TORAH

In order to avoid errors in transcription, extreme care was taken in the calligraphy of Torah scrolls. First, the text must be copied; even if a scribe has perfectly committed the Pentateuch to memory, he may not write even one word without consulting a perfect copy that is before him.²⁴ The utmost care must be taken to spelling, crowning of letters, spacing, and avoiding of any accenting, vocalization or other additions. The text must conform to the Massoretic *Qetib*,

22. So Maimonides, *op. cit.*, VIII, 1f.

23. See Shulhan Aruk, *Orah Hayim*, 32.

24. A “*tiqqun soferim*” is a perfect version for scribal use. Note 1st century adjuration in TB *Erubin* 13A, and account in TB *Megillah* 18B.

25. Shulhan Aruk, *Orah Hayim* 32, 36; *Masseket Soferim* II, 10.

including the anomalies of calligraphy. Even confusing a regular letter with its usual form, makes the scroll unfit for public use.²⁵

In his compilation of laws concerning the Torah scroll, Maimonides gives twenty types of flaws which render a scroll unfit for public liturgical use.²⁶

The Massoretic text of the Bible contains numerous cases of scribal abnormalities purposely copied by scribes, (and also found in many printed additions). These include the bisected *waw* in the word '*shalom*' (i.e. 'peace') in Nu. 25:12; the final *mem* in the word '*lemarbeh*' (i.e. to increase) in Is. 9:6; the inverted \beth in Nu. 10:35f., and in Ps. 107:23–28, 40. The main categories of anomalous letters are small letters (*zeira*) and large letters (*rabbati*). The large letters are apparently used to signify Talmudic or midrashic allusions, as well as safeguards against errors. In the Talmudic period, the following listing is known:²⁷

The first word of the Bible, *Bereshit*, 'In the beginning' is stretched; the first letter (*Bet*) is extended.

26. *Hilkot Sefer Torah*, X, 1.

1. If it is written on the hide of an unclean (*non-kasher*) animal.
2. If it is written on the untreated hide of an animal.
3. If the hide was treated for a different purpose.
4. If it is written partially on parchment and partially on leather.
5. If it was written on the wrong side of the parchment or leather.
6. If it was written on the inner side of a split hide.
7. If it was written without lining.
8. If it was not written in indelible ink.
9. If it was written in a foreign language (i.e. not Hebrew).
10. If it was written by a heretic or non-believer.
11. If the references to God were written unconsciously.
12. If even one letter is missing.
13. If even one letter is added.
14. If one letter touches another.
15. If a letter was faultily written so that it is illegible or resembles another letter.
16. If a letter is inappropriately close or distant from its neighbor so that a confusion could occur.
17. If the sections were divided improperly.
18. If the two long verse sections were improperly divided.
19. If other sections of the scroll were arranged in verse form.
20. If the sheets were sewn with unclean (*non-kasher*) material.

27. *Masseket Soferim*, IX.

The letter *waw* in the word 'belly' (*gahon*) in Lev. 11:42 is raised, since this is the mid-point of the entire Pentateuch.²⁸

The word *wa-yishbat* ('and he slew') in Lev. 8:23 is spaced, since it is the beginning of the middle verse of the Pentateuch.²⁹

The word *Shema* ('Listen') in Deut. 6:4 is placed at the beginning of the line and all of its letters are spaced. The last word, *Ehad* ('One') is placed at the end of the line.³⁰

The lamed in the word '*wa-yashlikem*' ('and he threw them') in Deut. 29:27 is lengthened.

The letter *heh* in *Ha-la-YHWH* ('the Lord') in Deut. 32:6 is spaced to indicate that it constitutes a separate word.³¹

The letter *yod* of the word *teshti*, ('You are mindful') in Deut. 32:18 must be smaller than the usual *yod* in the scroll.

The *yod* in the word *yigdal* ('be great') (Nu. 14:17) must be larger than any *yod* in the scroll.³²

The last word in the scroll, '*Yisrael*' must be spaced, and the last letter (*lamed*) must be exaggerated in height.

The Talmud and Midrash contain materials which explain, or which may account for calligraphic anomalies.³³ Exaggerated large letters and exaggerated small letters are to be found in a number of places.³⁴ Each of these cases is the result of some esoteric idea believed to be found in scripture.³⁵

28. See TB *Qiddushin* 30A.

29. *Contra* the *Massorah* which indicates verse 8 as the middle.

30. The *Massorah* enlarges the letters *ayin* and *shin* in this word.

31. See TJ *Megillah* I and Ex. *Rabbah* 24.

32. See *Yalqut Shimeoni*, Nu. 743, 945.

33. See J.E., XI, 411 ff. for sources in Rabbinic literature, and for material cited *infra*.

34. Exaggerated large letters are found in:

Gen. 1:1; 30:42; 34:31; 50:32; Ex. 2:2; 34:7; 14; Lev. 11:38, 42; 13:33; Nu. 13:31; 14:17; 24:5; 27:5; Deut. 6:4 (twice); 18:13; 29:17; 32:4; 32:6.

Exaggerated small letters are found in:

Gen. 2:4; 23:2; 27:46; Ex. 32:25; Lev. 1:1; 6:2; Nu. 25:11; Deut. 9:24; 32:18.

35. E.g., Ex. 28:9; 34:9; Deut. 9:26.

SUMMARY

We have surveyed the physical characteristics of Torah scrolls, and the methods of the scribes, emphasizing the care and precision with which this procedure was approached. Suffice it to say that we are dealing with 'labours of love.' The transcription of the Torah with accuracy and legibility was a holy task, and was done with a seriousness unrivalled by any other scribal tradition. It is largely thanks to the efforts of the scribes that we have today a Torah text in an excellent state of preservation.

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A Torah Scribe by Joseph Israels

TORAH DIALOGUES

BY HAROLD D. HALPERN

EXODUS

This series of questions and responses on the weekly Sidra is designed to encourage closer study of the text and to promote discussion. The dialogues are especially appropriate for the Shabbat table between parents and children or in the synagogue between rabbi and congregation.

The responses given are necessarily brief and should be regarded merely as starting points for fuller discussion. We recommend that these dialogues be kept for future reference.

QUESTIONS

MISHPATIM (Shekalim)

1. *What Jewish legal attitude can be learned about abortion from a verse in Chap. 21?*
2. *How does the passage on seduction (22:15) fit in logically with the other laws in Chap. 22?*
3. *What attitudes does the Torah express on majority rule and non-conformity? (Both are contained in one verse in Chap. 23.)*
4. *Why are the festivals reviewed in Chap. 23?*
5. *Why do we read a selection from Sidrah KiTissa (Shekalim) today? (Exodus 30:11-16)*

TERUMAH

1. *Which major objects found in most synagogues today are reminders of similar ones in the ancient Tabernacle?*
2. *Which appurtenances described in this Sidrah are not found in modern synagogues?*
3. *Why should a Tabernacle be built in the wilderness? It would have been much more convenient to wait until the Israelites were permanently settled. Besides, until this time they managed without a sanctuary.*
4. *All the parts of the Tabernacle were portable. Usually they were carried by means of removable poles. Why weren't the poles for the Ark ever removed (25:15)?*
5. *The Haftarah begins by citing Solomon's wisdom. Why is that mentioned here? How does he belie that reputation?*

Rabbi Harold (Chaim) Halpern is president of the Bergen County, New Jersey, Board of Rabbis. These "Torah Dialogues" grew out of discussions between the Rabbi and his congregants in Beth Tikvah Synagogue in New Milford, New Jersey.

ANSWERS

MISHPATIM (Shekalim)

1. In 21:22 we learn that the death of a fetus is not the same as that of a person. A fine or compensation is imposed in this instance which is not the case with murder.
2. Seduction is, in a sense, stealing one's mind (גניבת דעת). The chapter deals with cases of fraud and theft (Ibn Ezra).
3. The verse is 23:2. The literal meaning seems to be: Don't follow the multitude to do evil but the majority rules.
4. The chapter proceeding in logical order first emphasizes consideration for others. Then, that one's land is not his own but that its produce must be shared with the poor and the beasts (v. 10). After that the festival portion recalls other obligations of the agricultural yield, in these instances, to the Sanctuary.
5. The selection about the half-shekel tax is read on the Shabbat before the month of Adar. It reminded the Israelites of necessary donations for the communal offerings that were due before the following month of Nissan.

TERUMAH

1. Today's Torah ark parallels the "Ark of the Testimony." Also, the ark curtain (Parochet) and the Menorah are reminders of similar objects in the Mishkan.
2. Cherubim, the Table of the Showbread, and the altars.
3. The ark was made to contain the Tablets received at Sinai. The Tabernacle provided a proper setting for this Ark of the Testimony. Also, continuity was established by building the Tabernacle soon after the Revelation. Torah and divine worship could thus be more easily preserved.
4. There are a few possible reasons.
 - a) Since the Ark rested in the Holy of Holies, which no one entered, the poles were not obstructive.
 - b) It provided immediate transportability in the event of emergency.
 - c) It dramatized for all the fact of mobility; God and Torah are not confined to one place.
5. Wisdom includes architectural and construction skills needed in the building of the Temple. Solomon's imposition of forced labor was unwise since it was an important factor in splitting the kingdom.

QUESTIONS

TEZAVEH (Zachor)

1. Compare the wording in the commandment at the beginning of the Sidrah that deals with the Eternal Light with later commandments for constructing the Tabernacle (esp. 25:2, 8) and the altar (20:21). Can you detect and explain the differences?
2. Which name is conspicuously absent in this Sidrah? What reasons can you give for this?
3. Maimonides wrote in "Guide to the Perplexed": "All of us, the common people as well as the scholars, believe that there is a reason for every precept, although there are mitzvot for which the reason is unknown to us..." Can you deduce any reason for the Kohen's robes, breastplate and precious stones?
4. What is the connection of 29:46 with the passage preceding it?
5. Which expression used by Samuel in the Haftarah Zachor has become a Jewish slogan and the basis for the name of a Jewish espionage ring in World War I?

KI TISSA (Parah)

1. Why do you think the first two aliyot in this Torah reading are so lengthy?
2. Why was the worship of the Golden Calf regarded as such a grave violation when the Tabernacle also had various symbols and images?
3. In Chapters 32 and 33 there are dialogues between Moses and God. Martin Buber discerns a significant "theme-word" used frequently by them. Which word is it and how is its use instructive?
4. Why is the Maftir section, called Parshat Parah, added this Shabbat?

VaYAKHEL-PEKUDAY (HaHodesh)

1. Why is Shabbat reiterated at the beginning of this Sidra? What is the connection with the Tabernacle?
2. What special place does the building of the Tabernacle have in the Sabbath laws?
3. Where else have we encountered Hur, Bezalel's grandfather (35:30)?
4. What type of offering was made on the altar of gold?

ANSWERS

TETZAVEH (Zachor)

1. With regard to the Eternal Light, the commandment reads “unto thee.” The other mitzvot use the expression “for Me” and “unto Me.” Dr. Liebowitz cites the Talmud (Menahot 86b) which explains that the light was not needed by God but by humans. The light also had spiritual significance.
2. Moses. See for example 27:20, 28:1, 13, 15, 29:1 and 30:1. The usual reason given for the omission is Moses’ humility. It appears that this was meant to be Aaron’s Sidrah par excellence.
3. The Torah says that the garments were for “honor and glory” (28:2). Maimonides puts all the details of those priestly appurtenances in the category of *Hok* – statute, for which there is no explanation. The Torah also mentions that the twelve tribal names were for a *zikaron* – remembrance (28:12). Also, see 28:29 and especially v. 38.
4. The Torah appears to say that the aim of the Exodus was that God would dwell in the midst of Israel.
5. “*Netzah Yisrael lo yeshaker* – The Eternal of Israel does not lie.” The Aaronsohn family and their close friends formed a spy ring in behalf of the British which was called NILI – an acronym for the above phrase.

KI TISSA (Parah)

1. The verses included in the first two aliyot, usually assigned to a Kohen and a Levite, relate the sin of the Golden Calf. Since the tribe of Levi emerged as the heroic resister, these verses are assigned to their descendants. Also, the Israelite called afterwards will not be embarrassed by his tribes’ poor behavior.
2. Yehudah HaLevi in his “Kuzari” explains that the sin was not the creation of a physical symbol per se. True, many symbols were permitted but this one was unauthorized.
The calf was a popular pagan object of worship but it doesn’t seem that this was the intent here. Aaron says to the people: “This is your god who brought you out of Egypt,” implying that this was meant to be a symbol of the true God of Israel. Some believe that the building of the Tabernacle *followed* the Golden Calf episode because it became evident that the people needed visual reminders.
3. The “theme-word” is Am – nation or people. God refers angrily to Israel as “your people” and this (stiffnecked) people. Moses, in his prayers, usually calls them “your people.” See especially 32:7, 9, 11 and 33:1, 13, 14.
4. To emphasize the need for purification before preparing the Paschal lamb on Pesach.

Answers to VaYakhel-Pekuday on page 106

TESTING GOD: A MIDRASH ON THE AKEDA

BY JOEL B. WOLOWELSKY

Bereshit 22: And so it was after all these things, after all that Abraham had done to prove himself, that God had the temerity to test him even one more time (v. 1). "Abraham!" he called, "Bring Me your son." Feel the pain of My request: "Your only son." All that matters to you. "Take Isaac whom you love and offer him up as a sacrifice to Me." (v. 2).

How should Abraham respond to such a request? What is expected of him? He knows that all he must do to prove himself is to *refuse*. He is not fooled; his God is not the god of the pagans who demands child sacrifices. "Will the Father of all be unfatherly to my son?!" he could shout. "You can't fool me. I can pass this test. I know when to refuse."

But Abraham refuses to be tested. At least he refuses to take this test. "After all I have gone through, after all I have done, if God feels that He must test me, He should not trifle with my innermost feelings. My whole life I have longed for Isaac. He is the beyond the limits of Your tests!"

So Abraham insists that the request be withdrawn. But to say anything is to acknowledge the decency of the request. God will have to admit His error. And so without responding, without saying a word, Abraham gets up early, loads his mule and goes where he was told (v. 3).

Will God let Abraham go through with this? Even Isaac senses that something is wrong. "What's going on here," he questions (v. 7). "This situation is God's problem," answers Abraham (v. 8). "He will have to take care of things."

And so Abraham picks up his knife. He has faith that God will stop him (v. 10). God is not so petty as to stand on his *koved* and let Isaac be killed. If He lets him go through with it, then Abraham was wrong. And if Abraham was wrong, then nothing – even Isaac – counts any more.

So God, measuring up to Abraham's faith in Him, withdraws His request. A bit embarrassed though about the whole thing, He sends an angel to speak to

Mr. Wolowelsky teaches Math. and Jewish Philosophy at the Yeshivah of Flatbush in Brooklyn, N.Y., and is a member of the editorial Board of Tradition.

Abraham (v. 11). Never again will He be able to speak to Abraham to his face.

And Isaac. How did he feel about being used by God and Abraham as a means for their respective tests?

He went up the mountain together with Abraham (vs. 6, 8).

But he let Abraham return alone (v. 19).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

May I bring one comment to your attention on the article by Miriam Y. Shrager on "Hammurabi and Biblical Laws." First there is a typographical error in the citation on page 93. The reference should be to Exodus 21:28-, not Exodus 22. But more seriously there is an error in her interpretation of 21:29.

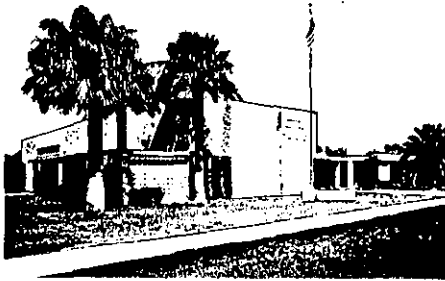
There Mrs. Shrager states that if an ox that has an established record of goring kills a man or woman then "he (the owner) *and* the ox are killed." She then concludes that in 21:30 the Bible specifies (this to be) "the one case . . . where monetary payment is an acceptable penalty in a case of homicide." Here she is wrong.

When the Bible says in 21:29 that "its owner shall also be put to death" it is not legislating an equal penalty for the owner and for the ox. Mrs. Shrager implies that they are both killed by direction of the court. This would establish the death penalty for what she herself terms "contributory negligence." Rashi on the subject quotes Sanhedrin 33 to differentiate the death penalty imposed on the ox (death by stoning as decreed by a judicial tribunal) from the death penalty applicable to the owner (מיתה בידי שמים) (see also Mechilta, Mishpatim 108).

Her subsequent conclusion is therefore unacceptable when she writes: "Verse 30 specifies the one case in the Bible where a monetary payment is an acceptable penalty, in a case of homicide. The owner of the ox may 'ransom' himself and he may redeem his life." The commentators make the point that there is no "redemption" for a homicide which is punishable by death at the hands of a human court. The "redemption" applies only to the case of the negligent owner who did not himself perpetrate the homicide but became vicariously liable through the act of his animal only. In that case the divine punishment of מיתה בידי שמים may be commuted by the redemption money.

Cordially yours
Rabbi Gilbert Klaperman

temple Beth Israel



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Dec. 6, 1978

Mr. Louis Katzoff
World Jewish Bible Society
18 Abarbanel Street
Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Mr. Katzoff:

Words cannot express the joy I received in reading your marvelous publication, Dor El Dor. I find each issue to be a challenging invitation to learn more about the Bible. I use it so often for my sermons, and especially for our Bible study group.

Here in the desert of Arizona your publication comes like rain for it waters the plants of our heart, and makes our spirits blossom with enthusiasm and love for Torah. How often as we study the Book of Genesis that your dealing with the topics we study adds new enjoyment and enrichment, especially your last article in the Fall issue dealing with the laws of the Sabbath. I have distributed copies of the society's three year calendar of Bible readings for we find it to be of great value.

Your issues are on display in our Temple library and we encourage people to read them. I pray that your good work will go from strength to strength. All our best from house to house.

Shalom.


RABBI ALBERT PLOTKIN

AP:ss

שיחות במקרא TALKS ON SCRIPTURE, vol. 2, THE LATTER PROPHETS,

Edited by Benjamin Zvieli, published by the Broadcasting Authority and the Israel Society for Biblical Research, by 'Kiryat-Sepher', Jerusalem 1979, pp. 386.

Daily, at 7:47p.m. on the Radio, Second Programme, there is a Bible reading which completes the Nach, from Joshua to II Chronicles in a year.

From its daily Radio Talks, the Broadcasting Authority has selected a complete cycle. The first volume (The Former Prophets and Chronicles) appeared some time ago. The second volume, The Latter Prophets, has just been published. The Editor, in a short introduction, explains that "no attempt has been made to give a uniform exposition of the various chapters and subjects. They rather reflect the many-coloured approach in interpretation of Scripture described by Jeremiah (23:29) 'as a hammer splitting rocks,' with its various different opinions. The talks cover beliefs and opinions, language and style, history, geography, the animal and vegetable world, manners of life and customs, peoples and cultures, characters and personalities; they shed light on obscure passages and vague concepts, and clarify the historical and social ideas in the words of the Prophets, and, in general, the idea of God in the Book of Books".

The 66 chapters of Isaiah are rightly

treated as one book, in 42 talks; 30 are devoted to Jeremiah; 28 to Ezekiel; and 40 to the Twelve, so-called Minor Prophets.

Thirty five experts in their various fields are represented in the talks, several of them appearing as many as seven to twelve times. Among the famous figures are, in alphabetical order (the late) Michael AviYona, the renowned archaeologist; Shemuel Abramski, the historian of Bible Times; Haim Gevaryahu of the World Jewish Bible Society; Moses Goshen-Gottstein, the Semitic philologist; Ze'ev Vilnai, the incomparable guide to Israel; Amos Hacham, who won the first Biblical Quiz in Israel in 1958; Ben-Zion Luria, Chairman of the Israel Society for Biblical Research; Judah Feliks, the well-known botanist; and Louis I. Rabinowitz, whose column on Tora and Flora in the Jerusalem Post attracts such a very large readership.

This is a book one should have at one's side constantly when studying a chapter of the Prophets.

Joseph Halpern

AFTER THE YOUTH BIBLE CONTEST

The question has been raised: Beyond the excitement of preparing and entering this international Youth Bible Contest, has this event left some more lasting impressions on the youth who participated?

We have only a partial answers to this question which is contained in the two short articles sent to us, unsolicited, by two previous contestants.

BY DAVID CEDOR

Extending the connection between the Jews of the Diaspora and the Jews of Israel, the International Bible Contest for Jewish Youth has also had the effect of strengthening the will of young Diaspora Jews to return to Zion and/or intensify their efforts at helping to promote Jewish activities in their own communities. The experience of being in the contest has been magnetic in attracting former participants to Israel in order to further their studies there. It has also increased the chances that they will eventually immigrate to Israel. As such, the contest has been extremely successful in promoting Zionism, and is a major accomplishment of the Department of Education and Culture of the Zionist Organization.

Among cases of participants furthering their studies in Israel, there are three young students who are studying at Yeshivot in Israel. One of them is Danny Mond, the son of a Rabbi from Melbourne, Australia. He is currently studying at ישיבת הכותל. Another Yeshiva bocher is Chaim Hutterer. He is from Antwerp, Belgium. Chaim is also

studying in Jerusalem. The third Yeshiva student is Bernie Wise of Cincinnati, Ohio. He is continuing his studies here after having completed the program of study that is offered at the Yeshiva of Skokie, Illinois.

Nehama Domb, the daughter of a prominent British scientist, who is a Professor of Astrophysics at Cambridge University, spent last year at the מכללה. She lived with her family in Jerusalem, since her father was on a year's sabbatical. Active as a leader of the Ezra Youth Movement in Britain, Nehama is making her contribution to the Jewish Community of Greater London. Although she is now studying chemistry and mathematics at the University of London, Nehama cannot wait to return to Israel, where she plans on settling.

Another former participant in the Bible Contest, who lives at the other end of the globe, in Argentina, is as active as Miss Domb. She is Susan Bokler of Buenos Aires. She is currently studying Economics and Accounting at a university in Buenos Aires. Besides this, Susan is also studying in a Midrasha by nights,

in order to expand her religious knowledge. But that is not all — she is a teacher at one of the local Jewish schools. At this time, in addition to her regular teaching duties, Susan is preparing Argentina's participants for this year's International Bible Contest, as well as the two young sons of the school's director. Indeed, Susan is deeply involved with service to her people and improving Jewish life in Argentina.

Benny Finzi, who is from Turin, Italy, made עליה several months ago, having decided that he could not wait any longer (his parents are planning on immigrating to Israel within a short period of time). Benny is currently training to be in one of the צה"ל paratrooper units.

Two students who are active in their own communities, Heidi Walzer and Avigdor Pavel are busy with their college studies, as well as Jewish activities. Heidi, who is studying law, is from a town that's close to Johannesburg, South Africa. She helped her younger brother to prepare for last year's contest. Avigdor is from Stockholm, Sweden, where he is active with B'nai Akiva. He studies computer science and would like to study further at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, after he immigrates.

Naomi Suberi, since she last participated in the International Bible Contest, has studied at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan. She lives in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, New York, and is currently studying at Brooklyn College. Naomi is planning on immigrating

as soon as she receives her degree. (She is the daughter of רב תמני). I, too, another former competitor, am studying in the one-year program שנהיח החר at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in connection with the School for Overseas Students. A student of International Relations at Stanford University in Northern California, I live in the Southern Californian Community of Anaheim, and am active in Jewish Community Work, including the United Jewish Appeal and בית הלל at Stanford. After completing my studies, I want to immigrate to Israel and work in the Foreign Ministry.

David Glatt, who lives in Princeton, New Jersey, is a student at Yeshiva University High School in New York City. After he graduates, David would like to study Bible and political science at the Hebrew University or at Bar-Ilan. He is interested in promoting immigration and a commitment to "Torah-True" Judaism. David believes that the best way to promote עליה is to make עליה, and thus serve as an example to others.

No matter from which angle one views the activities of these former contestants in the חידון התנ"ך one sees a firm commitment to the Jewish People. This is a commitment that is expressed in its highest form: action. The תנ"ך has definitely kept strong the connection between Jews throughout the world and in Israel, but this is not at all surprising, since it is our link with the past, the present, as well as the future.

טוב ורע במקרא

מאת: חיים וורנר

לבככם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זונים אחריהם" (במדבר ט"ו, לט). זאת אומרת שהבן יכול ללמד לעשות מעשים רעים רק ממה שהוא רואה סביבותיו. ומשום שהדור החמישי עוד לא נמצא בחיים, הבן לא יכול לגבות את החוב הזה, שהוא אינו יכול ללמד לחטא (שעתיד להביא ענש) מאנשים מתים.

אדם רשע אף פעם לא יאמר שהוא סר מדרך האמת בגלל שהיה משהו במשפחתו לפני אלף שנה שהיה רשע והוא הושפע ממנו. אבל הענין שונה לגבי הטוב בעולם משום שכל נפש האדם משתוקק לטוב.

אדם צדיק יכול להשפיע לטובה על העולם גם לאחר המוות. למשל, כשאיש קורא בתנ"ך על חיי אבותינו, אברהם, יצחק, ויעקוב ועל מעשיהם הנפלאים ותמימות נפשותיהם, האיש מושפע לקיים את מצוות ה' ומקבל שכר והאיש (בדרך לא ישיר) מקבל שכר על מעשי אבותינו ועליו נאמר "ועשה חסד לאלפים לאוהבי ולשומרי מצוותי" (שמות, כ', ו).

הרעיון המובא לעיל עוזר בהבנת הרבה פסוקים במקרא. למשל, כאשר התנ"ך מציג אישים טובים כגון מרדכי (אסתר, ב', ה), אלקנה (שמואל א', א', ט), קיש (שמואל א', ט, א), התנ"ך מספר את שמות אבותיהם עד ה' דורות או יותר משום שהתכונות הטובות עוברות גם מהמתים משום שהטוב עמוק בנפש כל אדם. אבל אין רשימה גדולה של אבות אצל הרשעים — אצלם נזכר רק האב ואביו האב ולא יותר.

כתוב על יורם בן יהושפט "וילך בדרך מלכי ישראל כאשר עשו בית אחאב כי בת אחאב היתה לו לאשה ויעש הרע בעיני ה'" (מלכים ב', ח', יח). זאת אומרת, שהתנ"ך מביא סבה להסביר למה מלך מיהודה עשה הרע בעיני ה', כשאביו וסבו היו צדיקים. והכתוב מתרץ

בדברה השלישית שנתן הקב"ה לבני ישראל, ה' קבע את ההבדל היסודי בין הטוב והרע בעולם. הוא אמר "כי אנכי ה' אלקיך אל קנא פוקד עון אבות על בנים על שלשים ועל רבעים לשנאי. ועושה חסד לאלפים לאוהבי ולשומרי מצוותי" (שמות, כ', ה, ו). יש לשאל, במה שונה הטוב מהרע שה' מעביר זכויות עד אלפי דורות, ולעומת זה הוא רק נותן לרשע את הענש של חטאי אביו עד ד' דורות ולא יותר? כדי להסביר את ההבדל בין הטוב והרע שאמרו חז"ל, "נמצאת מדה טובה יתרה על מדת פורענות אחת על חמש מאות שזו לארבעה דורות וזו לאלפים" (תוס' סוטה ד'); אפשר למצא תשובה אם אנו מתרצים את הבעיה השנית — למה דוקה ה' מעניש עד דור רביעי ולא למשל עד דור חמישי או ששי או יותר? ויש לומר, שיש חשיבות מיוחדת לארבע דורות משום שאדם בדרך כלל זוכה לראות את האבא של הסב שלו, ולא יותר, כי הדור הרביעי לפניו מת כבר. אמנם זה אפשרי שאדם יזכה לחיות עד שיוולד הנכד של הנכד שלו, אבל "דבר הכתוב בהווה". וראיה לדבר, נאמר "וירא יוסף לאפרים בני שלשים" (בראשית, נ', כ"ג) כסימן ברכה.

לכן יש להסביר את "פוקד עון אבות על בנים וכד'" ככה: אם הבן רואה את מעשה אביו הרעים, והבן ממשיך בדרך אביו הבן יענש בדרך לא ישיר על עונות אביו משום שהבן למד ממנו. ולא יתכן לומר שהבן נענש על חטאות אביו עצמם "כי אם איש בעונו ימות" (ירמיהו ל"א, ל). ואין לומר שהבן נענש על עונות אביו ממש כשהבן רשע כאביו, כי אם הבן רשע יש לו מספיק "צרות" מחטאות ועונות עצמו, ולמה נשליך עליו את עונות אביו? ועכשו, קל להבין למה התורה מפסיקה בדור הרביעי. כל הרשע בעולם נובע משום "ולא תתורו אחרי

וכן נבין למה ה' בוחר לשרש את ממלכת
יהוא דוקה בדור הרביעי (מלכים ב', ט"ו, יב)
ולמה נאמר על זרע אברהם "דור רביעי ישובו
הנה כי לא שלם עון האמרי עד הנה"
(בראשית, ט"ו, טז). שהרי הדור הרביעי של
רשעים במגע ישיר רק עם רשעים, שכבר מתו
כל הצדיקים לכן הסכויים הם שכל הדורות
הבאים גם יהיו רשעים.

בסכום אנו רואים, שהרע מעבירים רק על
ידי ראייה ישירה. לכן הרע תלוי בזמן, במקום
ובתנאים. אבל הטוב עובר תמיד במשך כל
הדורות, מעל הזמן, מעל המקום ומעל התנאים.
לכן אנו יכולים להיות בטוחים שעולם הבא,
שגם מעל לזמן ולמקום, כולו טוב ונעים.

שיוורם הושפע מסביבתו (מאשתו). לכן שוב
רואים שהרע רק עובר במגע ישיר (לא כמו
הטוב). אבל אצל חזקיהו כתוב "ויעש הישר
בעיני ה' ככל אשר עשה דוד אביו" (מלכים ב',
י"ח, ג) שחזקיהו הושפע מצדקות דוד הרבה
שנים לאחר שדוד שכב עם אבותיו.

גם יכולים להסביר את הפסוק "זכר צדיק
לברכה ושם רשעים ירקב" (משלי, י', ז)
שהצדיק מקיים את שמו לנצח משום שהוא
מעביר את תכונותיו ומעשיו הטובים עד אלפי
דורות שכלם מושפעים ממנו. אבל הרשע רק
יכול להעביר את שמו בחייו משום שאנשים רק
לומדים ממנו כשרואים בפועל את מעשיו
ונמצאים במגע ישיר אהו, וממילא כשהוא מת
נשכח שמו ונאבד זכרו.

In 1975, Leonard Warner of Downsview, Ontario, then a lad of 15 years of age, took part in the World Jewish Bible Contest in Jerusalem. Today he is a college student who has kept up his Bible interest. We take pleasure in presenting here an original biblical idea of his — in Hebrew, as he wrote it.

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TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

TO OUR READERS

Beginning with the year תש"ט (1979-1980) we have correlated our Bible Reading Program with that of the Israeli Radio "Kol Yisrael." For years we have been conscious of the need to coordinate our world wide calendar with that of the Israel radio which covered Neviim and Ketubim each year with daily readings of two chapters. We have finally prevailed upon them to reduce their schedule to one-chapter-a-day, like ours, thus enabling us to publish a unified calendar for all of us. This necessitated the publication of a new edition of our Triennial Bible Reading Calendar.

Mr. Irwin S. Field, National Chairman of the United Jewish Appeal of the United States, wrote the following about the Triennial Bible Reading Calendar:

I do appreciate being able to get back on schedule in reading the daily portion of the Tenakh. It is somewhat difficult, at times, to discipline one's self to maintain a schedule of reading over a long period of time, and I find that the calendar helps to impose that discipline. Additionally, studying the Tenakh always appeared to be such a massive undertaking that it was easily put off in favor of other reading. The calendar makes it possible to chew a little piece at a time and avoid mental indigestion.

(continued from page 97)

VaYAKHEL-PEKUDAY (HaHodesh)

1. To emphasize that Shabbat was not to be desecrated even by labors necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle. See also the next question and answer.
2. Jewish law lists 39 tasks prohibited on Shabbat. The Talmud derives these from the various labors needed to prepare all the appurtenances of the Mishkan and to erect it.
3. He assisted Moses at the battle with Amalek (17:10). He is suddenly absent right after the Golden Calf incident and the Midrash assumes that he was killed when he resisted the sinful people.
4. Incense (קטורת). There is an interesting, modern sidelight to this incense altar. According to the Wellhausen school of Bible critics (19 c.) incense-burning was a feature of highly sophisticated worship. Because of this and other "anachronisms" the entire structure and ritual of the Tabernacle was considered by the followers of Wellhausen to be a post-exilic invention. This theory is now completely discredited, thanks to archaeology and other scientific research.

עשה תורתך קבע

TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

November 1979	כסלו תש"ם		December 1979	טבת תש"ם
W 21 Judges 4	א		F 21 מקץ	א
Th 22 Judges 5	ב		Sa 22 Haftarah: שבת חנוכה	ב
F 23 תולדות	ג		I Kings 7:40-50	
Sa 24 Haftarah Malachi 1-2:7	ד		S 23 I Samuel 5	ג
S 25 Judges 6	ה		M 24 I Samuel 6	ד
M 26 Judges 7	ו		T 25 I Samuel 7	ה
T 27 Judges 8	ז		W 26 I Samuel 8	ו
W 28 Judges 9	ח		Th 27 I Samuel 9	ז
Th 29 Judges 10	ט		F 28 ויגש	ח
F 30 ויצא	י		Sa 29 Haftarah:	ט
			Ezekiel 37:15-28	
December			S 30 I Samuel 10	י
Sa 1 Haftarah:	יא		M 31 I Samuel 11	יא
Hosea 12:13-14:10(A)				
Hosea 11:7-12:12(S)			January 1980	
S 2 Judges 11	יב		T 1 I Samuel 12	יב
M 3 Judges 12	יג		W 2 I Samuel 13	יג
T 4 Judges 13	יד		Th 3 I Samuel 14	יד
W 5 Judges 14	טו		F 4 ויקחי	טו
Th 6 Judges 15	טז		Sa 5 Haftarah:	טז
F 7 וישלח	יז		I Kings 2:1-12	
Sa 8 Haftarah:	יח		S 6 I Samuel 15	יז
Hosea 11:7-12:12(A)			M 7 I Samuel 16	יח
Obadiah(S)			T 8 I Samuel 17	יט
S 9 Judges 16	יט		W 9 I Samuel 18	כ
M 10 Judges 17	כ		Th 10 I Samuel 19	כא
T 11 Judges 18	כא		F 11 שמוח	כב
W 12 Judges 19	כב		Sa 12 Haftarah:	כג
Th 13 Judges 20	כג		Isaiah 27:6-28:13(A)	
F 14 וישב	כד		Jeremiah 1-2:3(S)	
Sa 15 Haftarah: שבת חנוכה	כה		S 13 I Samuel 20	כד
Zechariah 2:14-4:7			M 14 I Samuel 21	כה
S 16 Judges 21	כו חנוכה		T 15 I Samuel 22	כו
M 17 I Samuel 1	כז חנוכה		W 16 I Samuel 23	כז
T 18 I Samuel 2	כח חנוכה		Th 17 I Samuel 24	כח
W 19 I Samuel 3	כט חנוכה		F 18 וארא	כט
Th 20 I Samuel 4	ל חנוכה			

TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

January 1980		שבט חש"ם	February 1980		אדר חש"ם	
Sa	19	Haftarah: Isaiah 28:13-24:23(A) Jeremiah 1-2:3(S)	א	M	18 II Samuel 15	א
S	20	I Samuel 25	ב	T	19 II Samuel 16	ב
M	21	I Samuel 26	ג	W	20 II Samuel 17	ג
T	22	I Samuel 27	ד	Th	21 II Samuel 18	ד
W	23	I Samuel 28	ה	F	22 תרומה	ה
Th	24	I Samuel 29	ו	Sa	23 Haftarah: I Kings 5:26-6:13	יג
F	25	בא	ז	S	24 II Samuel 19	ז
Sa	26	Haftarah: Jeremiah 46:13-28	ח	M	25 II Samuel 20	ח
S	27	I Samuel 30	ט	T	26 II Samuel 21	ט
M	28	I Samuel 31	י	W	27 II Samuel 22	י
T	29	II Samuel 1	יא	Th	28 Esther תענית אסתר	יא
W	30	II Samuel 2	יב	F	29 פ' זכור תצוה	יב
Th	31	II Samuel 3	יג	March		
February 1980				Sa	1 Haftarah: I Samuel 15:1-34	יג
F	1	בשלה	יד	S	2 Esther יד פורים	יד
Sa	2	Haftarah: Judges 4:4-5:31	טו	M	3 Esther טו שושן פורים	טו
S	3	II Samuel 4	טז	T	4 II Samuel 23	טז
M	4	II Samuel 5	יז	W	5 II Samuel 24	יז
T	5	II Samuel 6	יח	Th	6 I Kings 1	יח
W	6	II Samuel 7	יט	F	7 פ' פרה כי חשא	יט
Th	7	II Samuel 8	כ	Sa	8 Haftarah: Ezekiel 36:16-38	כ
F	8	יחרו	כא	S	9 I Kings 2	כא
Sa	9	Haftarah: Isaiah 6-7:6	כב	M	10 I Kings 3	כב
S	10	II Samuel 9	כג	T	11 I Kings 4	כג
M	11	II Samuel 10	כד	W	12 I Kings 5	כד
T	12	II Samuel 11	כה	Th	13 I Kings 6	כה
W	13	II Samuel 12	כו	F	14 שבת החדש ויקהל — פקודי	כו
Th	14	II Samuel 13	כז	Sa	15 Haftarah: Ezekiel 45:16-46:18	כז
F	15	משפטים פ' שקלים	כח	S	16 I Kings 7	כח
Sa	16	Haftarah: II Kings 11:17-12:17	כט	M	17 I Kings 8	כט
S	17	II Samuel 14	ל			

דף יומי

We add here the daily Talmud page followed by the Jewish Community

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