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GOD AND HIS KINGDOM IN THE TANNAITIC MIDRASHIM

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by  
Nahum Leon Freidless

Hebrew Union College.

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*ref. S. Cohen*

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INTRODUCTORY

God and His kingdom as used in the Tannaitic Midrashim may be conceived as a philosophic term for a positive outlook of life. The writers terminated by this phrase the future aim and perspective goal of mankind, achieved at a distant time, which shall happen at "the end of the days." This conception of life, springs out from the religious views and faith in the Will of God. It is therefore optimistic in the possibilities of its realization, as firmly convinced that a day of ultimate good and absolute justice shall be reached, in the long process of human perfection. Then shall come a time "when the Almighty, Himself, shall reign and His kingdom will endure forever."<sup>1</sup>.

But this ultimate aim of the Rabbis could not be shared without the necessary means of its accomplishment. In the midst of the discussions and statements of the Tannaitic Midrashim there is to be revealed the scheme as to how the Kingdom of God might be realized.

It is the purpose of this paper to describe the means and its functions for the realization of the Kingdom, viewed by the Rabbis, who have taken part in the writings of the Tannaitic Midrashim.

The material of this essay is based on the Mekilta, Sifre and Sifra, which are called the Tannaitic Midrashim.

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1. Mek. 64<sup>a</sup>

# I. Definitions of the Kingdom of God.

The phrase "Kingdom of God" מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים is used in Targum to Zech. 14:9. In the prayer מְלִכְיָהּ we find מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים and in Berachoth 2:2 מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים stand for the Kingdom of God. These phrases mean the reign or sovereignty of God as contrasted with the kingdom of the worldly powers.<sup>2</sup>

The Kingdom of God, or of Heaven מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים, מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיָּה or מַלְכוּת יְהוָה are Hebrew in their original meaning and phrasing. In order to avoid the expression of Jahweh's name in vain, the phrase was substituted instead of מַלְכוּת יְהוָה.<sup>3</sup> Josephus used the word "Theocracy" for מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים.<sup>4</sup>

S. Schechter<sup>5</sup> defines the Kingdom of God from Shema as bearing the idea where God is King and claiming authority on the universe.

Morris Joseph<sup>6</sup> states that the "acceptance of the Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven implies complete surrender to the divine decrees in every circumstance of life, ready and loving surrender by the free-will soul," or "the life in heaven is the bliss of conscious communion with the Highest."<sup>6a</sup>

By מַלְכוּת יְהוָה the Israelites conceived that what they expected to occur in the future under the sovereignty of God.<sup>7</sup>

Kohler<sup>8</sup> defines the Kingdom of God as follows, "The hope of Judaism for the future is comprised in the phrase 'the Kingdom of God' מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים or מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיָּה, which means the sovereign rule of God." He also states<sup>9</sup> that "God's Kingdom is the attainment of human perfection."

2. Jewish Enc. Vol VII, p. 502.

3. Klauzener : "מַלְכוּת אֱלֹהִים" p. 256.

4. Contra Apiona 215

5. "Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology" p. 65.

6. "Judaism as Creed and Life" p. 252.

6a. Ibid p. 111.

7. "Religion des Judéens" by Bousset p. 199, Ed. I.

8. "Jewish Theology Chp. XLIX, p. 331.

9. Ibid p. 491.

The writer of this paper defines the Kingdom of God as the ultimate state of the universe and man, which the latter will reach through the process of life in some indefinite future; and this state of life is the most perfect, the greatest goal of mankind's achievements, wherein God is the sovereign.

## II. The Real Spiritual Kingdom.

Under this title are included all those passages of the Midrashim dealing with the actual experiences and activities of human life, for the final goal of man is the establishment of the Earthly Kingdom. It varies from that conception of a kingdom which is beyond men's testing of its reality. Thus, the spiritual value of the real kingdom may be comprehended theoretically and its realization is the limitless possibilities of man's endeavors and achievements in the long run of human history. Though it may be considered as the "dream of the ages", yet it is a concrete vision of the real world, wherein man will live and look persistently for a better future than the present. The spirituality of the future Kingdom, shall consist not in material achievements of earthly pleasures, but in a spiritual and an intellectual relationship between men, wherein the Divine Glory may be experienced in its fullest meaning. Such a spiritual kingdom is real in the sense that it may happen in the days to come, provided that people will lay stress on their behaviors and activities, hopeful of its realization and the inevitable purpose of social process in human associations. It is also true in the sense that man's desire<sup>is</sup> to bring about a kingdom of spiritual life wherein God's name shall reign supreme in the human heart.

### A. The Kingdom is the Ultimate Reward

For the struggle and strife that man is undergoing daily he shall be rewarded with the realized Kingdom. The Midrash relates the following story:

When the Israelites were doubtful whether or not they would find the manna on the next day, since on the Sabbath they did not find it, they (the people) said, "since we were unable to get it to-day, probably we shall not get it on the next day." Then he (Moses) said unto them: "truly, at the present you do not get the desired things, but at the day to come you surely will get it."

Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Chasma, interprets the phrase: "you do not get these things at the present state of the world, but you shall be rewarded at the future time".<sup>1</sup> The fulfillment of man's refined wishes is a matter of time, but the reward shall be in future time; namely the Kingdom, where the people will get things not found at the present time.

Rabbi Eliezer, the Modinite, considers the reward of the Kingdom as the subsequent development of man's deeds. None can be rewarded unless one indicates his worthiness of a reward. It seems from such a view that Rabbi Eliezer states: "If ye shall keep the day of Sabbath, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will reward you at the future with six meritable gifts: Palestine, the Spiritual World, the World of Resurrection, the Kingdom of the House of David, the Priesthood and the Levites,"<sup>2</sup> or as R. Eliezer states in other words: "If ye shall keep the Sabbath

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1. Mech. 59 a

2. Mech. 67 a

you will be saved....in the struggle for the Messianic Age."<sup>1</sup>  
 Rabbi Joshua says: "When the Holy One, Blessed be He, started to reign, at the same moment there began the struggle for His Kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

In the sayings of God to Moses, when all the nations shall invoke His name, he should proselytise them by receiving the Kingdom of God, with the exception of the Amalekites. Rabbi Joshua interprets the words to mean that they cannot receive His Kingdom at the present, but they shall receive it on the day of the establishment of the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Or, as Rabbi Eliezer states, the complete acceptance of God's Kingdom shall be in the Messianic generation.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1. The Redemption is Universal

The final occurrence of a universal redemption by the Divine shall be shared not by a particular nation alone, but all the peoples of the earth shall share it. "I am the Lord your God" is expounded by the Rabbis to mean that the Lord dwells in all places, among the Israelites as well as among the non-Jews who inhabited the land.<sup>5</sup> According to the commentary "Midoth Sofrim" it has a direct bearing to a Universal Redemption. "Why does the sentence mention the word strangers, for we could have meant that the Redemption shall happen to the Israelites only;

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- 1. Mech. 59 b.
  - 2. Ibid 64 b.
  - 3. Ibid 65 a.
  - 4. Ibid 65 a.
  - 5. Mech. 14 a.



so the sentence mentions the strangers, meaning that the Redemption shall be shared by all men.<sup>1</sup> That the blessings of God are upon all men may be inferred from the following explanation of the sentence "Thus, ye shall bless the children of Israel." Then, the Rabbis question: "is the blessing upon Israel only, or, how do we know that it includes the strangers, the slaves and the women too? How do we know? Because the Scripture says, 'I shall bless them!'"<sup>2</sup> "Every deed which shall be performed to the Israelites the Scripture also included the strangers."<sup>3</sup>

That the final Redemption was conceived to be a universal one embracing all the men of the earth may be supported by the statement that "all the national victories in the past resulted in failures and defeats; but there can never happen a disharmonious life among men after the final universal triumph, which will occur at the future time."<sup>4</sup>

The realization of the Universal Redemption by the Divine Will shall be brought about by invoking the Holy Spirit upon man. "How will He perform the deed? His performance of a deed will be by invoking the Holy Spirit."<sup>5</sup> A sanctified spirit will govern the peoples of the earth, then the Redemption will be accepted universally.

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1. Midath Sofrim "10,17
  2. Sifre 12 a.
  3. Sifre 32 b.
  4. Mek. 42 a.
  5. Mek. 52 b.

## B. God and the Kingdom.

This deals with the function of God in the long process of the cosmic evolution, and His relation to all the manifestations of the universe and life of man, for His purpose consists in the fulfillment of His Kingdom. God is looked upon as the powerful factor in the establishment of the Kingdom. "They are destined to receive the Kingdom through His strength."<sup>1</sup> The Lord will bring about the realization of the Kingdom after the struggles and strife between men have come to an end. The Rabbis identify the Kingdom of God as a palace of an earthly king. "Once murderers entered a king's palace, stealing his treasures and killing the royal family. Then, the king brought these murderers to his court for judgment. After sentencing them to be killed the king peacefully ruled in his palace. Following this event his kingdom was known forever."<sup>2</sup> God will chastise the wicked and purify the hearts of man before His Kingdom shall be known forever.

Moses, seeing the wickedness of the people, questioned God as to whether He would bring them into His Kingdom. "Doest thou intend to bring this congregation under Thy Kingdom"<sup>3</sup>

Another explanation of "the Lord our God, the Lord is One" is given by the Midrash as follows: "It has to be acceptable to all the creatures of the world. "The Lord our God" we proclaim at the present day, but we shall proclaim "God is One" on the day of the Kingdom. <sup>4</sup> The Rabbis asked: "what is the Parasha dealing with the acceptance of the Kingdom of heaven to the exclusion of the worship of idols?" The answer given is, "This is the Shema."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Mek. 50b.

2. Ibid 52a.

3. Ibid 63b.

4. Sifre 73a.

5. Sifre 34b.

# 1. God's Relation to the Universe

God is the only ruler of the universe. "Nobody else governs over you except I, Myself."<sup>1</sup> God created the universe "for His name has created all the Universe."<sup>2</sup> "There is not a thing in the Universe that God has not commanded."<sup>3</sup> "I am the Lord" the Rabbis interpreted, "I am the first and also the last."<sup>4</sup>

"אני ה' ראשון ואחרון"

They meant to express the idea that the Lord has been the first in the universe and He shall be the last. God created the universe through His lovingkindness.

"והצילם בחסדו"

5 God is the Lord of

all the creatures and created the universe through righteousness

6 "אני ראשון ואחרון בראשית וסוף הימים"

The Rabbis also conceived of Him as the judge of the universe, who will reward His creatures, and by Whose saying the world was established

7 "אני ה' שואגת והיה הצדק, אני צדק"

Or as this idea is expressed in another place: justice is never perverted from Him.

8 "אני ראשון וצדק"

God is looked upon as the Supervisor of all the places of His dominion

9 "אני ה' ראשון וצדק"

God created the world by His commandments. Therefore, every-thing is revealed unto Him

10 "אני ה' ראשון וצדק"

10

1. Mek. 71b.

2. Sifri 27 - Ibid 31.

3. Sifri 184- Sifre 85a.

4. Sifri 86a.

5. Sifri 92b. Mek. 50b.

6. Sifre 50b.

7. Sifri 85b.

8. Mek. 111a.

9. Mek. 14a - Ibid 12b.

10. Ibid 15b.

## 2. God's Relation to Man

God was not only the Creator of the magnificent universe, but also has a direct relation to His living creatures in it. The relation of God to man is as a father to his children. The interpretation of the word <sup>3/8</sup> consists of "for Thou art the helper and sustainer of all the creatures of the world."<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Josi, the Gallelite, says: "God's glory and praise are for all the nations of the world."<sup>2</sup> He is called by the name Jahweh, the Rabbis say, because "He harkens to the voice of all the creatures of the world,"<sup>3</sup> because "He sustains, feeds and provides shelter for all the creatures of the world, and He gives bread to all men."<sup>4</sup> "The Holy One, Blessed be He, unlike a human being harkens and responds to the prayers of all the creatures of the world."<sup>5</sup> God has the power over all the living souls. <sup>6</sup> "על כל המעשה אשר עשה ב' עולם הזה ובעולם הבא" God's deeds are proclaimed the world over. Rabbi Eliezer says, "When God divided the Red Sea for His people, the event was heard from one end of the world to the other."<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Eliezer also states that God said to Moses "I am the One who created the universe by my commandments, and I shall keep all the creatures near unto Myself."<sup>8</sup> God created the world with joy, just as He rejoiced when Aaron entered to minister to Him. <sup>9</sup> "שמח אלהים ביום שברא את האדם"

9. שמח אלהים ביום שברא את האדם

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1. Mek. 44b.
  2. Ibid 44b.
  3. Ibid 46a.
  4. Ibid 46a.
  5. Mek. 50a.
  6. Ibid 50b.
  7. Ibid 65a.
  8. Ibid 66b.
  9. Sifri 189.



Abba Chanin states in the name of R. Eliezer that God shows mercy even to those who do not perform His wish. *אם בן חם הולך*

1. *אז אביו, וזוהי רצונו, וזוהי רצונו.*

It is because the Lord wishes peace. "The greatest thing is peace, for the name of the Holy One, blessed be His name, is called through peace."<sup>2</sup> Not only wretched man cause the profanation

of God's name, but also harmful animals, "for an harmful ox profanes the land and causes the disappearance of the Schechina,"<sup>3</sup>

since *"עפ"י שם שמים נאמרה ית הולך ומשקר ית הלכין"*<sup>4</sup>

God's name is profaned through unjustifiable deeds. *"אם שוקר"*  
5 *במזבח קדש עולל שואל ומשקר, חים ומצדד גאלל השם ומשקר הלכין"*

Though the wicked must perish, yet the Lord does not rejoice in it, for "His countenance does not rejoice in the destruction of the wicked"<sup>5a</sup>, although the Lord has prepared the day of destruction for the evil doers *"קדש ומצדד"*<sup>6</sup>. Rabbi Joshua says that the wishes of God from man lie in the doing of good deeds. "The deed that they have to accomplish consists in doing good deeds".<sup>7</sup>

God is the savior of those men who fulfill His wish, as the Rabbis declared: "He shall not save those who rebel against Him, but He will save those who do not rebel against him forever."<sup>8</sup>

This rebellion consists in worshiping idols and forsaking the God of the universe. The heathens and the idolatrous are God's enemies and profane the Divine existence on the earth among men.

The nations are punished because they are idol worshipers.

"Judgment was taken against them for they were idolators."<sup>9</sup>

"In the future the nations of the world will repent for their idolatrous creed and praise the Lord, saying, "Who is like Thee

1. Sifre 5a.

2. Sifre 13a.

3. Mek. 92b.

4. Mek. 95b.-110a.

5. Sifri 91a.

6a. Mek. 42a.

6. Mek. 57a.

7. Mek. 67b.

8. Ibid 70a.

9. Mek. 49b.

among the gods."<sup>1</sup> Punishment comes upon those who are ignorant of the Living God, "for plagues come upon the ignorant."<sup>2</sup>

The only relationship which can truly exist between man and God is the true faith in one God. He has to be worshiped with love and reverence. "Remove ye your evil inclinations from your heart and worship Him in fear, and with a pure mind serve the almighty for He is the one God in the universe."<sup>3</sup> R. Judah defines evil as idolatrous worship. He asks: "What is evil? Evil is idolatry."<sup>4</sup> To serve God through love causes other people to love Him. "Love the Lord, Thy God, and cause others to love Him."<sup>5</sup> Through the heart men have to love God for "through the heart anyone can recognize the Holy One, Blessed be He, and thus it is possible to *follow* His ways."<sup>6</sup> The path of life for man has to be God's ways.

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- 1. Mek. 49b.
  - 2. Sifri 304.
  - 3. Sifri 187.
  - 4. Sifre 23a.
  - 5. Sifre 73a.
  - 6. Sifre 74a.

### 3. God's Relation to the Righteous

The Divine ideal is a righteous mankind, and the individual pious man has to be considered as the pattern upon which men have to look for the government of their conduct of life. The righteous man is a partner in God's continuous creative power.

"Those who utter a truthful judgment for its own sake, the scripture considers as being in partnership with the Holy One, Blessed be His name, in the creation of the world."<sup>1</sup> Faith in the Lord is the characteristic of a righteous person, *אמונה ביהוה* "אמונה ביהוה" *אמונה ביהוה* 2

The righteous is God's true servant and the performer of His desired deeds on the earth. R. Akiba interprets the passage ~~אמונה ביהוה~~ "the people beheld God. They believed in God and in His servant Moses," to mean that "the belief in a righteous leader is like the belief in Him who created the world by His commandments."<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Eliezer says, "God gave unto Moses the power of vision which enabled him to behold the universe from one end to another; likewise all the righteous men behold the world from one end to another."<sup>4</sup> The Divine Glory dwells supremely in the midst of the righteous, for "says the Holy One, Blessed be He, at the place wherever the righteous lays his hands, there I cause My glory to dwell upon."<sup>5</sup> Since the righteous is looked upon as the performer of God's will on the earth, therefore the life of the righteous is everlasting. R. Joshua states, "when the Lord calls upon the righteous, the latter's life is an everlasting one."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Mek. 67b.
  2. Mek. 41b.
  3. Ibid 41a.
  4. Sifre 51a.
  5. Sifre 146b.
  6. Mek. 24a.



Those men who perform the will of the Lord are the righteous men. They can never perish from the world.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
 "הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לֹא יִשָּׁחַד וְלֹא יִשְׁחָד וְלֹא יִשָּׁחַד וְלֹא יִשְׁחָד" 1

R. Simon b. Mennasah compares the righteous to the heavenly stars. "The righteous people are like the stars of the world. Just as the stars are above the creatures, so the righteous people are above the ordinary human creatures. Just as the light of the stars is to be seen from one end of the world to the other, likewise is the light of the righteous people. Just as the stars are sometimes visible to the eye and sometimes invisible; likewise are the righteous people. They are like the stars, which exist forever".<sup>2</sup>

How may the righteous test their righteousness? The Rabbis emphasized that the fulfillment of the commandments in practical life testify for the righteous conduct of the righteous. Why carried Moses, the greatest prophet, the corpse of Joseph, the righteous leader? It is because he "fulfilled the ten commandments,"<sup>3</sup> or, *כִּי הָיָה מֹשֶׁה זָכוֹר לְעֹשֶׂת הַמִּצְוֹת*

The true and faithful religious person is a righteous one.<sup>4</sup>

"Those who obey the commandments of the All-powerful One are the ones who serve the living God, who exists forever and ever."<sup>5</sup> The righteous has to deal faithfully with man as well as with God. "He who deals with man faithfully, the people will love, and such a man may be considered as the one "who fulfills all the precepts of the Torah."<sup>6</sup>

1. Sifri 92b.

2. Sifre 83a.

3. Mek. 30a.

4. Ibid 41b.

5. Ibid 54b.

6. Ibid 54b.

God accepts the righteous, even though the latter's prayer is short

"וְכִי יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֱלֹהִים וְיִתְפַּלֵּל וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְיִתְפַּלֵּל וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְיִתְפַּלֵּל"

The Rabbis define the characters of the wicked and the righteous in the words, "the righteous control their evil inclinations, while the wicked are slaves of their evil inclinations."<sup>2</sup>

Though the wicked must perish, the righteous man will be rewarded.

"וְכִי יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֱלֹהִים וְיִתְפַּלֵּל וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְיִתְפַּלֵּל וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְיִתְפַּלֵּל"

The reward of the righteous lies in the future life of the social development. This is because the righteous man establishes peace in human associations. "A man who makes peace between husband and wife, between families, between cities, countries and nations shall never perish."<sup>4</sup> The task of the righteous is great and his influence is universal. "We may deduce, says R. Judah b. Hananya, that the righteous man influences the world all over."<sup>5</sup> R. Eliezer the son of Simon, quotes R. Josi, that the righteous task is for the divine sake; therefore, "whenever there are righteous men in the world there is a blessing, and whenever the righteous disappear from the world the blessing ceases simultaneously."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Mek. 53b.
  2. Sifre 74a.
  3. Mek. 57b.
  4. Sifri 92b.
  5. Sifre 131a.
  6. Sifre 77a, Ibid 77b.

#### 4. God's Relation to Israel

The philosophical outlook of the Rabbis that there must be righteous individuals through whom the group may be influenced and guided— Parallel to this conception runs the idea that the Divine has chosen a collective group, which has to be sanctified for the fulfillment of this ultimate purpose. This collective group is Israel. The Rabbis ask, "how do we know whether God chose Israel as His chosen people, or Israel chose God?" They replied that the former must be true, "since it is written in the scripture 'the Lord, Thy God, has chosen you'".<sup>1</sup> God chose Israel as His holy congregation from the genesis of creation.

"וְיָבֹרַךְ אֶת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרָא" <sup>2</sup> "וְיָבֹרַךְ אֶת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרָא" <sup>3</sup>

The relation between God and Israel is like between a king and his beloved companion. The Midrash compares this relationship in the following story, "once a king went on a journey taking along his beloved friend. When the king started on his journey he said: "I shall not step out unless my beloved friend will be with me."<sup>4</sup> Though all the world belong to God, He chose Israel as His people. "Though all the world belong to Thee, nevertheless Israel is Thine chosen people."<sup>5</sup> R. Josi in the name of Rabbi Judah relates how God has chosen Israel and what is the tie between them. "God came at Sinai to receive Israel just as a bridegroom approaches his bride."<sup>6</sup> Not only the Israelites as a people are regarded as a holy people, but the existence of a single Israelite is regarded by the Lord as the value of the creation of the world. <sup>7</sup> "וְיָבֹרַךְ אֶת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרָא" <sup>7</sup>

1. Sifre 134b.  
2. Mek. 36a.  
3. Ibid 35b.

4. Sifre 22a.  
5. Mek. 51b.  
6. Mek. 73a.  
7. Mek. 73b.

Israel can never become an idolatrous people for it is God's wish, "Just as I (the Lord) live and exist forever, so ye Israelites and your children's children shall not be idolators till the end of all generations."<sup>1</sup>

Israel is considered as the only chosen people by God, though He is the God of all creatures

"אלהים ה' אל בשר ודם" <sup>2</sup> The mutual reaction between God and Israel is stated by R. Eliezer, who says: "I shall dwell in the

midst of the Israelites for they may become holy through My glory, and in turn I shall reign in the future forever and My name shall be holy through them."<sup>3</sup>

"והקדשתי את שמתי בארץ ישראל" <sup>4</sup> Or as Rabbi Ishmael states, "If ye make My name holy then I shall

be holy and through you alone can My name be sanctified."<sup>5</sup>

"If you become profaned you also shall be laid astray from Myself; then of what use are you unto Me; moreover you cause my disappearance from the world."<sup>6</sup> God favors Israel when they perform His will. "When the Israelites fulfill His will, then

the Lord cares for thee."<sup>7</sup> The reason why God chose Israel as His chosen people is because they believed in Him intensely.

"כי צדקה היתה להם" <sup>8</sup>

Or, "the reward of the Holy Spirit resting upon Israel is due to their deep conviction of faith in the Holy One, Blessed be He."<sup>9</sup>

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1. Mek. 75b.
  2. Ibid 108a.
  3. Sifri 2b.
  4. Sifri 234-Ibid 235.
  5. Sifri 86a.
  6. Ibid 86b.
  7. Sifre 12b, Ibid 20b.
  8. Mek. 41a.
  9. Ibid 41b.

The enduring existence of Israel depends on Man's faith in the Lord. #Had Israel mingled the name of the Holy One with idolatrous worship, they would have been doomed to destruction."<sup>1</sup> Israel's devotion to the Lord is tested <sup>by</sup> his unselfish sacrifice for God's will. "If you perform the deeds voluntarily I (the Lord) consider it as doing charity, but if you are performing involuntarily, it is considered as a selfish benefit."<sup>2</sup>

Though Israel is God's chosen people, still the former undergoes the miseries of life; nevertheless the Lord dwells in his midst. The troubles and agonies of Israel are due to the purification of the chosen people to the task of its mission. God dwells in the midst of Israel, even when the latter is oppressed by other people. "Even when Israel is oppressed God's glory abides in the midst of them."<sup>3</sup> R. Akiba affirms this statement "whenever they were exiled the Schechina was with them."<sup>4</sup>

It is because all the inflictions upon Israel are conditional

"*הנה נקדש לה' ונחיה לו*"<sup>5</sup> that Israel receives these various inflictions with joy with the expectation of their final reward. R. Josi, the Galilite says: "If you (Israelites) will receive the inflictions with joy you are destined to be rewarded, otherwise your troubles are persistent; and the Israelites met the inflictions joyfully."<sup>6</sup> Since Israel accepted God's kingdom unconditionally, God reigns upon them under any condition *הנה נקדש לה'*

"*הנה נקדש לה' ונחיה לו*"<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the spirit of the Lord is resting upon Israel whether they are pure or impure. "The Israelites are beloved by God. His glory abides in the midst of them even though they are impure."<sup>8</sup>

1. Mek. 10la - Sifre 81a.

2. Sifri 58

3. Mek. 20a - Sifre 22b.

4. Ibid 20b.

5. Mek. 63b.

6. Ibid 72a.

7. Ibid 74a.

8. Sifre 1b

Then why should God punish His chosen people? The Rabbis answer was "whenever Israel performs the will of God none of the nations and foreign vernaculars will rule upon them, but only when Israel does not perform the will of God, then they are subdued to a base people, moreover suppressed<sup>by</sup>/the feet of their cattle."<sup>1</sup>

Though the dreadful punishment on Israel is horrible per se, yet its purpose is to revere and love God. Rabbi Nathan says: "These plagues caused him (Israel) to love the heavenly father."<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the horrors of life brought upon Israel, he praises and gives thanks unto the Lord. Rabbi Akiba says: "They (the Israelites) do not do as the others (the nations) are accustomed to do in their countries - When they prosper they praise their gods; when troubles come about they curse their gods - but Israel praises God whether he brings upon them a prosperous period or a period of suffering."<sup>3</sup> Israel is always safe when he fulfills God's will. "Thus said unto Israel the Holy One, fulfill ye the commandments in order that I shall favor you."<sup>4</sup>

The synthetic view of Israel as the chosen people, and the acceptance of God's name by all the peoples clarified the perplexing problem as to why Israel is scattered among the nations. In the Midrash it is stated: "The Lord, thy God, scattered you (Israel) to enlighten the nations, but never have I commanded that the peoples should be subdued unto you."<sup>5</sup> "It is because though all the peoples of the earth praise the glory of God, but still the praise of my chosen people is more pleasant."<sup>6</sup>

1. Sifre 130a - Ibid 130b.  
2. Mek. 76a - Ibid 76b.  
3. Mek. 80a.

4. Sifre 75b.  
5. Mek. 20a.  
6. Mek. 44b.

Since the other nations which He has created also praise God it is expected that the nations should love Israel, for he is the chosen messenger of the Lord. "Thus, the Holy One, blessed be He, declared unto the peoples of the earth, that they have to love Israel, for He, Himself, goes with the Israelites. Therefore, the nations have to respect the Israelites."<sup>1</sup> But if the nations return to become Israel's enemies, then God, Himself, will fight the righteous case of His people. "Forever shall He fight against your enemies."<sup>2</sup> Or, "God will fight all the oppressors of Israel in every generation."<sup>3</sup> Israel's enemies are powerless to destroy them for "when Israel performs God's Will their enemies have no power over them."<sup>4</sup> The enemies of Israel are the foes of the Lord. "Those who fight against Israel are similar to those who fight against the Holy One" <sup>5</sup> Or, as the Rabbis put the same idea in a positive statement, "Those who help Israel are like those who help the Holy One."<sup>6</sup> God takes an active part in Israel *"וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשֵׂה לְפָנָיו כְּשֶׁעָשָׂה לְפָנָיו"*<sup>7</sup>

The performing of the Will of God by Israel, upon which their very existence depends also includes that all their deeds be executed for the sake of God. "For all their deeds have to be done for the sake of Heaven."<sup>8</sup>

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1. Mek. 30b.

2. Ibid 35a.

3. Ibid 39b.

4. Ibid 44a.

5. Mek. 47a.

6. Ibid 47b.

7. Mek. 64b.

8. Mek. 10a.





Though God favors all men at any time, yet His Kingdom may come speedily if men will live in peace. "Peace between men is the peace of the Kingdom." <sup>1</sup> The realization of the future aim is tied up with the observations of the past deeds. "Purify yourselves of your past transgressions and be holy for the future day."<sup>2</sup>

### 1. The Effect of Prayer and Worship

Prayer and worship were not considered as an end in itself, but, as the means through which men reach to the kingdom. They effect the purpose of mankind, its ultimate goal as well as the social relationship of men. During the performance of religious rites men are lifted up in a manner that could not otherwise be effected. Every kind of worship serves the purpose of the Kingdom except idolatrous worship. "What does it mean 'worship of strange gods'", asked the Rabbis? "Because people call them Divine beings, and through the worship of them the goodness of the Kingdom is delayed."<sup>3</sup> But the true Divine worship is for everyone. There are no differences between men, when they worship the one true and living God. This kind of worship is included in the Law. Therefore the Law's commandments have to be obeyed by all men, without consideration of their racial origin. "חוקה אחת" <sup>4</sup> "יהיה לכם בא הכהן / הלה / ואלו / חזק / ששנה / בן / אלל / עזר / כהן"

Prayer and worship affects the character of the individual. Thru them a man gets a refined personality. "Through prayer your speech becomes pleasant, through studying the Torah your personality becomes more refined."<sup>5</sup> Or, "the personality becomes refined thru righteous deeds." <sup>6</sup>

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1. Sifre 12b.
  2. Sifri 81b.
  3. Mek. 75a.
  4. Sifre 18b.
  5. Mek. 34b.
  6. Ibid 34b.

Prayers have a mutual effect on both the individual member and the congregation as a whole. A person's prayer for the community is accepted by the Divine, just as the prayers of the group for an individual member. "The prayer of a single man for a group is accepted by God, as the prayers of the group for a single person."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The Individual and the Group

The eternal gift to man given by the Divine is the Kingdom. It is the precious life that people will enjoy in the remote time. Such a reward as the kingdom is fostered through the relationship between men. There can never exist a harmonious association between people as long as men shall not perceive the immense value of service. Any spiritual reward is conditioned by man's social service. "כל מי ש'אין לו חברה" אין לו חיים<sup>2</sup>

Service is the mutual activities among men. It is the social responsibility of every man to live with and serve all human creatures, otherwise the isolated man is considered a selfish creature, and such a man is unjustified in looking for the service of others. Rightly, the Rabbis assert that people will separate themselves from an unsocial being. "Said the Holy One (to Nebuchadnezzar) 'you desire to be separated from man, the end will be that people will separate themselves from you.'<sup>3</sup>

Though people endeavor to avoid the bad influence of the wicked, nevertheless they may be led astray by wicked companions.

Therefore the sages say: "none shall come into contact with wicked people, even to return them to the performance of the law."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Sifre 71a.

2. Mek. 6b.

3. Mek. 48a.

4. Mek. 65b.

The wicked may be considered as a contagious diseased person.

"*וְיָרֵם מִן הַיָּד הַזֹּאת*"<sup>1</sup> Not only does the wicked suffer of his indecent deeds, but also the wicked's neighbors, for the Midrash states "*וְיָרֵם מִן הַיָּד הַזֹּאת*"<sup>2</sup>. In contrast to the status of the wicked, the learned and righteous man should be welcomed heartily, for "those who welcome the learned man are like those who would have welcomed the Schechina."<sup>3</sup> Pious and righteous people are merited in bring peace into the world. Thus men should honor the righteous. By doing so people cooperate with the righteous in the establishment of peace upon earth." Men who pay homage to the righteous have the merit in bring peace upon men in the world."<sup>4</sup> Among the virtues of the group and the individual prayer is of great importance, either the former for the latter, or the individual for the group as a whole. Life may be a paradise, when all pray for one, or one for all. "It is a great virtue when a person prays for the good of the group, all the more so when the group prays for the individual."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Sifri 305.

2. Ibid 307.

3. Mek. 67b.

4. Sifri 85b.

5. Mek. 102b.

#### D. Israel and the Kingdom

As has been stated above, Israel has been regarded<sup>as</sup>/God's chosen people and through them the Kingdom will be realized. The life of the Israelites has to be a pattern for all the nations among whom they are scattered to enlighten them of God's ultimate purpose. Through the learning of the Torah, the fulfillment of its commandments, Israel apprehends the means for reaching the unalterable divine purpose. Not only the learning of the Torah, but also the past experiences of Israel's ancestors are his guides to the glorious universal future of mankind. All the nations of the earth will participate in the life of that glorious day achieved through Israel's efforts and moral life. There is a divine Will that this people should establish the Kingdom of God on earth. "I do not appoint any one of the nations, but you alone to realize the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup> Israel accepted this eternal proposition conscientiously. "He said (the Lord) I shall reign upon you (Israel). They replied, 'yes, yes'" Jehudah Hanasi says, "When Israel stood before Sinai to receive the Torah, they directed their hearts, accepting the Kingdom of Heaven joyfully."<sup>2</sup> After Israel had given his consent to the acceptance of the Kingdom of God, then they received the necessary instructions to fulfill it through God's laws. "There shall not be other gods beside Myself, because it is said, 'I am the Lord your God. I am the one from whom you accepted My Kingdom at Sinai'. They replied: yes, yes. 'Since you have accepted My Kingdom then too you will receive My decrees.'"<sup>3</sup>

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1. Mek. 71b.

2. Ibid 74a.

3. Sifri 85b.

The acceptance of the Kingdom of God is pre-eminent to the observance of God's laws and commandments.

### 1. Israel's Relation to His Ancestors

Israel is considered a separate people from all the nations. Upon this people lies the task to fulfill the future purpose of the Divine. It is impossible to accomplish such a task at one generation, but it is rather a continuous process of many generations. The spiritual achievements of Israel's past progenies are embodied in this people's cultural heritage. From those treasures of experiences of Israel's best spiritual leaders the coming generations will enjoy its fruits. There is an hereditary spiritual connection between Israel's past and future achievements. Not only has Israel much in common with his past, but his forefathers have sacrificed their lives for the accomplishment of Israel's goal. All the efforts of the prophet to prophesy is for Israel's sake.

*"שלא, לו כלל כלל משה ואהרן וכל ישראל"*<sup>1</sup>.

R. Simon b. Azai says: "Not only did God discourse with Moses for the sake of Israel (Zachuth), but also for the same Zachuth he spoke with all the prophets."<sup>2</sup> Israel's existence depends upon the righteous deeds of his ancestors. Their prayers and deeds keep Israel alive as a group. R. Achai says: "what is the meaning of 'Why do you pray unto Me?' 'For your sake I perform My task', said the Holy One. 'Had it not been for your (Moses) prayers I would have wiped them (the Israelites) out of the world."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Mek. 3a.  
2. Ibid 3a.  
3. Ibid 36a.

It is the wish of Israel's patriarchs and prophets that their children should revere God, just as they performed God's Will."The patriarchs and the ~~pharise~~ prophets did His Will and revered Him, in whose words the world has been created, all the more so that all men have to revere Him."<sup>1</sup> The forefathers believed in God, therefore the Schechina rested in the midst of them.

"הא גצילא זאגט אפן הקדוה געזיכר  
זאגט שוין אלעס נאך הקדוה זיכר"

The reward of faith in God is the joyful spirit between men.

"This joy is the reward of the faith of our fathers, who believed faithfully in Him on this world."<sup>2</sup> There ought to be a mutual brotherly relationship between the Israelites. The joy, or

the sorrow of one of them affects the others respectively. "מבטין"   
 "זכר ושלילת אדם נפיק וזכר מהן כלל מבטין ומבטין וזכר ושלילת אדם נפיק כן"

## 2. Israel's Relation to the Torah

The greatest token that God gave unto Israel is the Torah for "all that God could have done unto Israel His people is giving the Torah"<sup>1</sup> His chosen people has received the Torah, because Israel had a collective agreement in its acceptance. "Israel having a collective heart, therefore received the Torah."<sup>2</sup> Israel exists because he has a Torah. All the life of this people depends upon it. "The Holy One said unto Moses that he should tell the Israelites that the commandments of the Torah, that I have given unto them, are the healing matter for them, it is life itself for them."<sup>3</sup> If the existence of Israel depends upon the Torah there is a vital necessity to study the law continuously in order to live rightly. R. Akiba says: "what does it mean 'Ye shall be unto Me'. It means you shall be my possessions in order that you shall study the Law and occupy yourselves with no other futile things."<sup>4</sup> Through the study of the Law Israel's sustenance is secured by God. R. Eliezer states: "Your forefathers have studied the Law and sustained themselves, likewise, if you will study the Torah, The Holy One, Blessed be His name, will look for your sustenance."<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Israel and the Nations

Israel accepted joyfully the Torah, through divine inspiration and it keeps him alive with whomever and wherever Israel is located. The nations can never destroy or assimilate the Israelites as long as they hold the Torah as their tree of life. The convincing goodness of the Law and its observance have to be embodied into the minds and souls of the non-Jew.

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1. Ibid 67a.
  2. Ibid 48b.
  3. Ibid 54b.
  4. Ibid 71a.
  5. Ibid 60a.

It is Israel's task to teach the non-Israelites the estimated value of the Law for the progressive step toward the establishment of the Kingdom in this world. "For, they (The Israelites), seat like the Sanhedrin, and are the expounders of the words of the Torah."<sup>1</sup> The nations have to receive the commandments of the Law, but the Israelites besides fulfilling them, as the gentiles, have to do, also have to expound the law. In this respect Israel differs from the non-Jews. "Just as a colored man differs from the white man in his skin, so Israel differs from the nations of the world in these commandments."<sup>2</sup> A gentile who becomes a proselyte, by committing himself to the faith in one God, is considered a true Jew. "The one (the gentile) who says 'I believe in one God' is called by the name of Jacob. The one who signs with his hand 'I believe in one God' is called by the name Israel. The former one belongs to the group of the pious proselytes, and the latter are those who have repented. Both of these men are called *"ישראל"*<sup>3</sup> The Midath Sofrim<sup>4</sup> states that by the term *"גוי"* is meant those non-Jews who have embraced the Jewish faith. Israel's associations with the gentile ought to be on good terms. In his activities with them he must deal righteously and walk humbly. The Midrash states: "The Lord has commanded Israel to act rightly and walk humbly with the gentiles."<sup>4</sup> Israel has to accept those of the gentiles who want to become Jews. "You shall not shut the door from those who come to embrace the Jewish faith."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Sifre 20b.

2. Ibid 27a.

3. Mek. 102a.

4. Sifre 21a.

5. Ibid 21a.



In contrast to the admirable and humanitarian conduct of the Jews toward their fellowmen is the oppression of Israel by all nations. Those who desire to destroy Israel will irresistably perish by the divine power. The first Elder said: (The Midath Sofrim <sup>1</sup> states that the term "Elder" was a name applied to a special sect in Israel) <sup>following</sup> the / proverb goes on for generations: Those who smote Israel with a whip in the end will be smitten with the same whip. Men should learn a lesson from the Amalekites, who wanted to destroy Israel. The Holy One, Blessed be His name, destroyed them, and they shall not enjoy the present and the future life."<sup>2</sup> "All the nations and dominions that desired to destroy Israel with the same rod they were judged forever."<sup>3</sup> Those nations are Israel's enemies and their animosity is due to the fact <sup>are</sup> that they/idolaters. "We may deduce that the idolaters are called Israel's enemies."<sup>4</sup> Israel is oppressed by the idolatrous non-Jews because they do not serve God conscientiously for the realization of His Kingdom. R. Jochanan b. Zacai states: "Since you did not serve the Kingdom of Heaven, therefore you serve the gentiles."<sup>5</sup> Thus, Israel is subdued by the nations for not serving the cause of His Kingdom truly.

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1. Mek. 63a.
  2. Ibid 63a.
  3. Ibid 63a.
  4. Ibid 105a.
  5. Mek. 69b.

### E. The Torah and the Kingdom

The Torah is considered as the guide of man, which leads him toward the spiritual conception of life. It is the spiritual tool through which man inherits the Kingdom of God. The humanitarian laws of the Torah lift men up to comprehend the priceless value of man's purpose to establish the golden age, which is the Kingdom of God. Through it alone man can never fail, hoping for the ultimate achievement of mankind. Bound up in the Torah is the great spiritual power to unite men in the struggle of the eternal social process. In a sense the Law is the divine strength, leading men upward and onward. It may be looked upon as a means to the embodiment of God's Kingdom on earth, but it is just as estimable as the Kingdom itself. It is God's spiritual strength for *למנוח לנו ללכת בדרך*

*ללכת בדרך*<sup>1</sup> The most significant value of the Torah to man is that it expresses the idea of the acceptance of the Yoke of Heaven. "What did the Torah say unto them? 'Receive upon you the Kingdom of My name, make contest one with the other in fearing God, and act one toward another righteously and with kindness.'"<sup>2</sup> The greatest achievement of man in this world is through the study of the Torah. By studying the Torah one shares in the glory of the future life of the coming generation. "For gold and silver lead men astray from this world and from the future life, but through the Torah man shares in the life of the world to come."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Mek. 44b.

2. Sifre 138b.

3. Sifre 40a.

The study of the Torah is available to all men, whereas all the material gifts are not to be gotten by those who desire them. "The crown of the Torah is free to every creature of the world."<sup>1</sup> The Torah is available to everyone, for through it alone men will achieve the brightened days of the Kingdom.

#### 1. The Law and Redemption

The redemption of man can be approached through the fulfillment of the divine commandments. For, the practices of the law are the prelude to the romantic life of the future of mankind. The glory of the Schechina abides in the midst of man in the present as well as in the days of the Messianic age. At the Messianic Age the performance of the universal precepts of the divine spirit will be practiced. The spirit of God reveals itself gradually and surely <sup>by</sup> the continuous adherence to His Law. Thus, the redemption will be achieved in practicing daily the eternal Mitzwoth of the Torah. "The Holy One, blessed be His name, gave commandments that they should practice them, in order that they shall be redeemed."<sup>2</sup> The severe adherence to the Law and its practices during the lifetime of a man permits him to share in the life of the Messianic Age. "The sages said: 'during the days of your life' means that man shares in the present life, but in practicing the Law during all the days of your life you share in bringing about the Messianic Age."<sup>3</sup> To practice the precepts during "all the days of your life-time" is clearly expounded by R. Joshaiya.

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- 1. Sifre 40a.
  - 2. Mek. 6b.
  - 3. Mek. 24a.

He says: "And you shall keep all the precepts in such a way, that you shall not delay the practice of even one of them. If the time of practicing a mitzwa has been reached you shall perform it immediately."<sup>1</sup> For in the continuous performance of the divine precept God's spirit is revealed majestically. "But I reveal Myself unto you as the reward for the Mitzwa, that you perform."<sup>2</sup> By the daily revelation of God unto man may be understood the partial redemption of man. However, the repentance of unfulfilled practices causes men to be redeemed forever. "Rabbi Jehuda Hanassi states: The Holy One, blessed be His name, said: 'If you will do penance then I shall redeem you for generations, and if not I redeem you for several years.'<sup>3</sup> The piety and wisdom of man is recognized most emphatically thru the practices of the divine Law. "To reckon the wisdom and piety of Moses...for he practiced the Mitzwoth."<sup>4</sup> So we may deduce that the conception of the Rabbis was that the great achievements of humanity are through the eternal practice of Law.

## 2. The Effect of the Torah on Man

Though the Torah was given to Israel, its practice in the cause of historical development ought to be by all men. The chosen people have to introduce the ethical laws of the Torah to all the peoples of the earth, because the glorious days ~~of~~ of mankind will be reached through the Torah and the adherence to the practice of its eternal commandments. The teachings of Torah has to become the universal guide of man.

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- 1. Mek. 13b.
  - 2. Mek. 11a.
  - 3. Mek. 19b.
  - 4. Mek. 29b.

The purpose of the teachings of the Torah is to love God.

" Probably one will say 'I shall study the Torah with the purpose of becoming rich, or to become a Rabbi or to get some other reward.' The Scripture meant to say to love the Lord your God. All things that you are doing should be done out of love."<sup>1</sup>

Through the Torah men may reach eternal life *מה טוב ח"מ אצל אלהים*

*הוא* <sup>2</sup> The study of the Torah may bring to the world eternal bliss and happiness. "Just as the world is happy to see the dew, so the whole universe rejoices in the words of the Torah."<sup>3</sup> The Torah directs man's life. "The words of the Torah lead man out of the ways of death unto the paths of life."<sup>4</sup>

The goodness of the world is in the Torah. "Rabbi Judah says: Goodness is the Torah itself."<sup>5</sup> Or as the Midrah states *הטובה*

*הטובה* <sup>6</sup> The best counselor for people is the Torah, for "there is no counselor as the Torah itself."<sup>7</sup>

The study and performance of the Law has to be performed voluntarily and for all the generations. *ענין חייב אצל כל* <sup>8</sup>

Peace among men may become a reality when all peoples perform the laws of the Torah. "Rabbi Eliezer said: the Book and sword came down together from Heaven. Then God said unto them (man): if you will fulfill the laws written in that Book, you will be saved forever from the sword."<sup>9</sup> There is no difference in practicing these laws between the chosen people and the strangers.

*הוא* <sup>10</sup>

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1. Sifre 80a.
  2. Sifre 131b.
  3. Ibid 131b.
  4. Ibid 79b.
  5. Ibid 82b.
  6. Ibid 82b.
  7. Ibid 138a.
  8. Sifri 179,180.
  9. Sifre 79a.
  10. Sifre 30b.

As far as the laws of the Torah and its practices are concerned there is no difference between princes and commoners. *וְלֵךְ* "לֵךְ" *לֵךְ*<sup>1</sup> But the preliminary of the practices of the Torah is its study. Therefore, "He rewards men much more for the study of the Laws than its fulfillment."<sup>2</sup> Idolaters deny the truth of the laws of the Torah. "The Rabbis state: Those men who consent to idolatry deny the truth of the Torah, and those who disbelieve in idolatry are like those who believe in the truth of all the laws of the Torah."<sup>3</sup> Thus the Torah prompts man to a higher standard of morality through which he may accomplish the divine purpose in establishing the perfect society.

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1. Sifre 105b.
  2. Sifre 79b.
  3. Sifre 86b.

### III. The Supernatural Kingdom

Unlike the Real-spiritual Kingdom, which stands for a positive outlook on life and the universe, some individual leaders have surpassed the limits of the natural laws, have visioned life in an indefinable world in supernatural ways. Their imaginative faculties carried them as far as to belief in an established kingdom under the supervision of the divine power, wherein such events might occur as man's senses have not experienced in the past. Though these Rabbis have described the life of the hereafter in accepted human forms of language, yet the activities of this life may only occur in a miraculous way. For all the positive information of the enriched human knowledge argues against its possibilities of realization. The Supernatural Kingdom has to be conceived as an indefinable ideal which may, or may not, work beyond the scope of the established laws of the universe. It is therefore an unsystematic and an obscure idea based on subjective desires that miraculous things shall happen in an invisible world.

#### A. The Unreal World.

Though the Unreal World is illustrated in picturesque objects that are suggested to us from this world, yet they are unreal because they belong to the invisible world. Just as we cannot comprehend that a world hereafter is in existence, so its relative objects are unreal to us. "All the faithful men will pass through this gate (of the hereafter)". This world is looked upon as the upper-world in relation to this known world, as a nether-world. It is located somewhere in the heavens or beyond the heavens. "When a man builds a house, first he lays the foundation and thereupon builds the house, but the Holy One,

blessed be His name, first builds the upper-house and then the nether-house."<sup>1</sup> Men are granted to find things in the world hereafter, which are not found in this world. Namely, things that are unreal in their nature and form. "Rabbi Eliezer b. Chasma says: you cannot get it at this world, but you will surely get it at the hereafter."<sup>2</sup> Even the commandments and the statutes of the Law have to be kept up at the world of hereafter. "He (man) has to keep up and perform all the laws and commandments so that he may live with them in the world hereafter. It must not be said that a man has to keep them only in this world, since he perishes when he dies, for you live with them in the world hereafter just as I the Lord exist and live forever in the next world."<sup>3</sup> "This world, where God is represented in an anthropomorphic form is called wherein thousands of creatures are at His services."<sup>4</sup> In this gathering of creatures there are angels who serve him in various ways, just as the servants fulfill the commandments of their master. "They did before the Lord."<sup>4a</sup> The Rabbis raised the question whether the sons of Aaron fell dead in the Temple or outside. "R. Josi says: The angel lead them out of the Temple and they fell outside the Temple."<sup>5</sup> The righteous people will inherit the world hereafter, they too will receive the face of the Almighty. It will cause them to enjoy the festivals, so that the faces of the righteous shall be joyful.

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1. Mek. 50a.

2. Mek. 59a.

3. Sifra 85b.

4. Sifre 13a.

4a. Lev. 9:3

5. Sifre 13b.



Rabbi Simon b. Jochai says

כל עולם וכל עולם  
 "כל עולם וכל עולם"

כל עולם וכל עולם  
 "כל עולם וכל עולם" 31. All

events portrayed by many Rabbis in the Midrashim about the world of hereafter are unreal because they will occur in a supernatural world.

# 1. God and the World to Come.

Just as the Lord is the central factor of the cosmic process for the perfection of the universe, so He is presented by the Rabbis as the absolute ruler of the World to Come. God is the only one who shall perform all the wonders that shall astonish the human mind. "When a man creates a statue he begins either from the head or from one of its limbs, finishing it thereafter. But the Holy One, blessed be His name, creates the whole at once. He is performing prodigies."<sup>2</sup> God owns all the universe and rules over all the spheres and is to be found everywhere. "I am the Lord, your God. I am upon the seas, I am upon the continents. I have been in the past. I shall be in the future days. I am in this world. I am in the world to come."<sup>3</sup> He manifests Himself in all the phenomena of life, and consequently in the next world. The life of the hereafter is so full of bliss, goodness and happiness that there is even no need for the personal favor of God. "One scriptural text reads: 'He will lift up His countenance toward you, and another reads: 'He will not lift up His countenance'. How can there exist two contradictory statements in the scriptures? It means that He will lift up His countenance in this world, and He shall not lift up His countenance in the world to come.

1. Sifre 83a.

2. Mek. 50a.

3. Mek. 74b.

The people in the next world are so righteous and pure from sins that there is no need for God to favor anyone of them."<sup>1</sup> This world is full of sickness and disease, therefore it is a miserable world. But in the hereafter there are no miseries since there are no diseases. "Rabbi Israel says: all the sicknesses are in this world, but in the next world there are none, but I Jahweh, am your healing God."<sup>2</sup> In His invisible Kingdom there is an overwhelming treasury of goodness, and if men enjoy some of it in this world it is because He sends it from heaven. "The Lord will open unto you His treasury of goodness."<sup>3</sup> "Rabbi Eliezer, the Modinite, says: His treasury of goodness comes from heaven."<sup>4</sup> Just as the wicked people will be destroyed in this world, He also will lay waste upon them in the next world. "I shall cause them (the wicked) to perish in this world and in the world to come."<sup>5</sup> God alone has the power over the creatures in the next world.

## 2. Man and the World to Come

The World to Come is considered to be a part of the real-universe, and no other objects or creatures beside man will have the Zachuth to inherit the glorious life of it. The human race though mortal will through the performance of the divine commandments on earth enjoy the precious life of the next world. Only human beings are privileged by the Universal Ruler to become resurrected in the hereafter. Not in vain is man laboring and struggling in the visible world, for he will surely be rewarded with an actual eternal life in the invisible kingdom.

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- 1. Sifre 12b.
  - 2. Mek. 54b.
  - 3. Dt. 25.
  - 4. Mek. 56a.
  - 5. Mek. 64b.

Through righteous deeds and ritual observances man will inherit the life of the hereafter. "Rabbi Isaac asks: how do I know that reading the Torah necessitates the making of a blessing before its beginning and at its conclusion? Rabbi Ishmael replies: food, which causes man to live a temporal life, requires a blessing before its eatings and its finishing. The Torah, which causes man to live in the world to come, requires all the more so a blessing before its reading and its ending."<sup>1</sup> Just as the Torah causes man to live in the world to come, so the faith in the oneness of God leads man to the everlasting world. "Thus you find that Abraham, our father, enjoyed the life of this world and the life of the world to come, because he believed in God."<sup>2</sup> Unlike the portion of the righteous man, which consists of the eternal life, the wicked cannot inherit the life of the next world. The latter's destiny is destruction and ruin. "The Holy, blessed be His name, will destroy (the wicked) in this world and in the next world."<sup>3</sup> The righteous man shall not be disappointed if he suffers in this world for he is destined, due to his sufferings, to inherit the life of the next-world. "Rabbi Simon b. Jochai says: what leads man to the life of the next-world? You have to reply, that through sufferings (will he be led)."<sup>4</sup> Not only does the human species exist forever, but also every righteous individual lives everlastingly. "You will live long in this world; you will behold you own children and your children's children, and you will inherit the life of the next-world."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Mek. 24b.
  2. Mek. 41a.
  3. Mek. 63a.
  4. Ibid 80a.
  5. Ibid 102b.

Man's death is only a temporal phenomenon, because there will come a time, when the dead will be resurrected. "פניו חיים" <sup>1</sup> Or, "Today I (God) shall resurrect the dead."<sup>2</sup> The leaders of Israel will serve their people through all generations. "All the leaders are destined to serve Israel from the day that they went out of Egypt until the day of the resurrection of the dead."<sup>3</sup> The life of the next-world is the reward of their faithful leadership. "The reward of Israel's leaders is the life of the world to come."<sup>4</sup> The commandments guide the Israelites through all stages of existence. "The Torah walks with you in this world. It keeps you at the time of death. Also when you will be resurrected in the Messianic Age it will guide you to the next-world."<sup>5</sup> Thus, man's life is regarded as endless and exists in the nether-world as well as in the next world.

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1. Sifra 189.
  2. Ibid 86a.
  3. Sifre 52b.
  4. Ibid 52b.
  5. Ibid 74b.