INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESES AND PRIZE ESSAYS

AUTHOR Sol Goodman

TITLE "Selected Aggadic References to Death and Dying and Their Significance for the Counseling Role of the Rabbi"

TYPE OF THESIS: Ph.D. [ ] D.H.L. [ ] Rabbinic [X]

Master's [ ] Prize Essay [ ]

1. May circulate [✓]) Not necessary
2. Is restricted [ ] for ___ years.) for Ph.D.) thesis

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on theses or prize essays for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. ✓ yes ___ no

March 21, 1980
Date

Sol Goodman
Signature of Author

Library Record

Microfilmed Nov. 1980
Date

Moira Steinitz
Signature of Library Staff Member

SELECTED AGGADIC REFERENCES TO DEATH AND DYING AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE COUNSELING ROLE OF THE RABBI

Sol Goodman

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
CINCINNATI, OHIO
1980

Referee:
Prof. Robert L. Katz

DEDICATED

to

Lillian Z. Fried

without whose memory

this thesis would not have been written

I would like to express my thanks to the following people:

--to Professor Robert L. Katz, my mentor and my friend, for his counsel and his concern;

--to Michael and Sara Kagan for their comfort and moral support;

--and most of all, to my Diamond Among Rubies, Suanne, whose many facets are the secret of my life.

Sol Goodman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DIGEST i

INTRODUCTION iii

CHAPTER

I. DEATH: ITS ORIGINS, CAUSES, AND CHARACTER 1

II. MAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH DEATH 26

III. BEREAVEMENT, MOURNING, AND CONSOLATION . . 57

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNSELING ROLE OF THE RABBI 117

FOOTNOTES 137

BIBLIOGRAPHY 150

DIGEST

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the approach and the response of the aggadists to death and dying and to interpret their psychological dimensions. It classifies and analyzes the rabbinic materials bearing on the subject of death as well as steps in the grieving process. It then seeks to determine the relevance of rabbinic insights to such issues as counseling the bereaved, and to certain ethical aspects in the treatment of the dying.

The procedure consists of a classification of aggadic sources in terms of identifiable themes and major emphases. Selected texts are translated or paraphrased and then analyzed in the light of the psychological dynamics of death and mourning. The focus is on the meaning of the texts and their symbolic references with the view of indicating their relevance for the counseling of role of the rabbi, as well as his role as a consultant or resource in ethical issues such as the prolongation of life. The psychological frame of reference is defined on the basis of the insights of contemporary dynamic psychology.

The sources used consist first of passages culled from Aggadic collections and second of conceptual approaches in

the writings of specialists in the psychologic study of the grief process. The Aggadic passages include references in the Midrash Rabbah, Midrash Haggadol, the Tanchuma, the Peskita de Rab Kahana and others. The psychological sources will consist of observations by Freud, Kubler-Ross, Feifel and others.

Chapter I consists of a discussion of the origins, causes, and character of death as seen by the rabbis. Chapter II deals with man's encounter with the death experience, and the various issues which that encounter raises: the circumstances surrounding one's death; the reactions of those who know of their impending death; the dynamics which take place between the dying and the living. The issue of whether and how to inform the dying, as well as that of the right to die are raised. Chapter III discusses the problems of bereavement, the psychology of the mourner and the mourning process, and the ethical issue of benevolence towards the bereaved. Chapter IV considers how some of the texts mentioned in the preceding chapters may be used by the rabbi in his roles as counselor, eulogist, and role model.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with the poetry, myths, and symbols in the Midrashic literature. It is an attempt to plumb the imagery of dying, as found in the perceptions of Aggadists, from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries. It seeks the values and the insights woven into the imagery and symbolism created and embellished by Rabbis who mastered those arts over a period of 800 years.

The Rabbis conceived of, and confronted death in their own unique ways. They sought to explore its causes and its origins. They came to grips with its inevitability and harshness, as well as its finality. They dealt with such issues as informing the dying and the bereaved; mourning with its many implications and consequences; and the psychological reactions to the experiences of dying and bereavement. They even confronted as contemporary an issue as a person's need and right to be allowed to die, and in a humane, dignified manner.

The Rabbis' descriptions and perceptions of their encounter with death have taken the forms of myth, symbol, parable, folk tale, and adage. Woven into these diverse

forms and images are the themes and insights which comprise the philosophies and psychologies of the Aggadists concerning the experience of dying. It is precisely these upon which this thesis focuses.

Our concern is not with the Halachic prescriptions of laws, customs, or rituals. Rather, our intent is upon the descriptions of death, mourning, and bereavement which the Rabbis have provided in the Aggada, and we shall explore the relevance of those meanings for our contemporary experience, as we grapple with the same issues, and some new ones, as did our Rabbinic forebears.

The task of this thesis, then, is to identify the philosophy and psychology implicit in the various Aggadic themes on death and dying, and to consider their relevance for the contemporary rabbi, as he functions in his role of counselor to the dying and the bereaved. Toward that end we shall first classify the Aggadic sources in terms of identifiable themes and major emphases. We shall then focus on the meaning of selected texts and their symbolic references. Finally, we shall consider these meanings and references in the light of the conceptual approaches to death and dying of specialists in the grief process, with a view toward indicating their relevance for the rabbi's counseling role.

Chapter I considers the origins, causes, and character of death, as perceived by the Rabbis. Chapter II deals with the issues raised by man's encounter with death. These issues involve the circumstances surrounding one's death; the reactions of those who know of their own impending death; and the relationships and dynamics which occur between the living and the dying. It is here that the sensitive and important issues of whether and how to inform the dying, and the right to die are raised. Chapter III discusses the problems and impact of bereavement, the psychology of the mourner and the mourning process, and the highly valued ethical issues of benevolence towards the bereaved. Chapter IV draws upon some of the texts discussed in Chapters I-III, and considers how the contemporary rabbi may use them as he works with the dying, the bereaved, and the community as counselor, eulogist, and role model.

CHAPTER I

DEATH: ITS ORIGINS, CAUSES, AND CHARACTER

The Aggadists approached the nature of death from the standpoint of three major considerations, or questions. They questioned its origins, attempted to delineate its causes, and described its character.

In regarding the origins of death, three questions were dealt with: First, where did death come from? Was man originally immortal, or not? If he were originally immortal and subsequently lost that immortality, how and when did this happen, and why? Secondly, who is, or was, to blame for this loss of immortality? Finally, why was death decreed upon man? What purpose did, or does it serve?

The second major consideration of the Aggadists is the cause of death. That mortality is the fate of all human beings they realistically acknowledged. However, not everyone dies at the same age, or under the same circumstances. Why some people died young, and others died well sated with years, was a question for which answers were sought and proposed. As suffering was undoubtedly a result of sin,[1] it was believed that iniquity caused the shortening of a man's life.

Of course, that was not the only answer given. Unrighteousness, negative attitudes towards life and towards one's fellow man, and even the taking of unnecessary chances with one's own life--placing oneself in mortal danger needlessly--all contributed to shortening the life span.

The third consideration of the Aggadists regarding death was its character. In their explorations, they came to ascribe to it a number of characteristics. Death is, first of all, inevitable. No man can escape it. All men must experience it. It cannot be bought off, bargained off, traded off, or put off. No man can avoid dying.[2] Death is the end of every living being.

Of all the events in a man's life, death is the last one. It is his final passage, beyond which there can be neither growth nor change nor repentance. The finality of death means that one's existence as a human being upon this earth--and all which that implies: thinking, acting, growing, changing, experiencing--ceases. Dying puts an end to all of one's "human" activities.

Along with being inevitable and final, death is also mysterious, unknowable, unforeseeable. One never knows the day of his death. It is one of seven things concealed from man.[3] One reason for this is that otherwise man would have no impetus, no reason, to be constantly aware of himself,

and his life.[4] Hence, one is admonished to repent one day before his death[5]--that is, each day of one's life, with the full knowledge that any day might be his last day to live.

With this realization, that none can foresee, foretell, or forestall the day of death came the acknowledgment that life is a mixture of sorrow and joy. At any time tragedy may turn joy to sorrow. This knowledge led to some cynical statements about laughter, mirth, and rejoicing.[6] What was their value, it was asked, in view of the transitoriness of existence, when at any moment, happiness might be changed to grief?

The implication of these characteristics of death is that there is a point in every man's life when he should become aware that sooner or later he is going to die: his life is going to end, and there will be things he will not accomplish. He should, therefore, realize and prepare himself for the finiteness of his existence, the finality of his death, and the fact that it may come at any time. Two significant dates for this awareness to come are the age at which one's parents died[7] and age twenty.[8] Thus, the Aggadists recognized the significance of the awareness that life was bounded, and uncertain as far as knowledge of one's dying day was concerned. They emphasized this awareness by making it incumbent upon a person to contemplate his own death, once he reached the appropriate stage of life.

THE ORIGINS OF DEATH

The Aggadic literature contains several different descriptions of the origins of death. One view held that originally there was no death in the world. Life was not to be ended by death. In fact, there was no such creature as the Angel of Death. However, once Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and were punished, life became finite.[9]

Since death did not exist, Adam was immortal. As a result of his "sin" he lost that immortality, along with five other qualities and benefits which God had bestowed upon him. All of these things were created perfect, but lost their perfection with Adam's sin.[10] However, while the idyllic, deathless quality of life was lost with the sin of Adam, this quality is to be restored with the advent of the Messiah.[11]

Adam is thus clearly responsible for the presence of death in the world. We are told that he was forewarned of the tragic consequences of not following God's instructions; viz., that he would even cause the death of one as righteous as Moses.[12] This death was to be hereditary, passed on from Adam and Eve to all of their descendants.[13]

Yet there are some dissenting voices. When all the righteous men who die will accuse Adam of bringing death

into the world, and particularly, upon them, Adam will respond that while he sinned only once, they (the righteous dead) have at least four sins each.[14] Thus, Adam alone is not entirely to blame. Every man, even the righteous, has some responsibility for his own death.

Furthermore, had Israel not committed the sin of making and worshipping the Golden Calf, they would have had to suffer neither exile nor death. By observing the 613 commandments, the Israelites would have become Godlike, like Adam; but because of their sin at the foot of Mt. Sinai, they too were obliged to suffer the pangs of death, like the rest of humanity.[15] In fact, although death had already been decreed, and could not be revoked, the Israelites agreed that they would stand before Mt. Sinai only on the condition that the Angel of Death have no power over them. Yet, they themselves broke that agreement by the sin of the Golden Calf.[16]

It appears that while Adam's sin brought death into the world, the Aggadists did not agree as to whether he should be blamed for the deaths of all of the generations to follow. What is clear, however, is that according to this view death was recognized as having originated with the first human being and was to be the irrevocable fate of all men.[17]

While death is seen to be the fate of all men, it is not necessarily the result of the sin of the first man. In direct

contradiction to the view that the Angel of Death did not originally exist is the comment that the Angel of Death was actually created on the first day of creation, while man was created on the sixth day.[18] Thus, death was considered not only an integral part of the natural order, but actually preceded man in creation! Furthermore, it was considered "good" by Rabbi Meir and by Rabbi Samuel b. Rab Isaac,[19] who interpret the words in Genesis 1:31,"...and behold it was very good," to refer to death and the Angel of Death. Thus, death did not come into the world through the evil of man. Rather it was built into the very structure of existence. It was a necessary component of the natural order even before man appeared. As such, it becomes the fate of man, not because of his nature, but because it is the nature of all life to pass away.

Another reason for the decree of death upon mankind may be seen in the assertion of Rabbi Judah b. R. Simon that Adam should have been immortal. The reason for his mortality was to instill the fear of God in men.[20] In Seder Eliahu Rabba we read: "...were there no Angel of Death, what would we do for our Father in heaven?" "אלמלא לא היה מלאך המות מה היינו עושין לאבינו שבשמים ?"[21] Death becomes in this way, not a punishment, but an impetus to serve God. Man, by the very fact of his finiteness, is hereby challenged to reach beyond his grasp. Where there is no death there is no growth, no urge to live construc-

tively, no desire to invest life with meaning. A world in which death did not exist would be a museum where the exhibits never changed. The fact of death, however, gives mortal man the opportunity to truly live. It does this by providing man with desires and possibilities to do those things which make life worthwhile and meaningful. These are the achievements which enable one to look back at his life, and be assured that it was not wasted. They are finite man's extensions into the infinite.

In still another interpretation Adam is declared blameless altogether. Death was decreed upon him in order to remind man that he is not God, driving the point home by removing from Adam that which made him Godlike: his immortality. This was done to prevent despots of later generations from assuming the quality of deity. According to Rabbi Hama b. R. Hanina, Adam did not deserve the death penalty. It was decreed against him because God foresaw that Nebuchadnezzar and Hiram "would declare themselves Gods."[22] God saw that despots would assume the quality (deity) which Adam might have gained had he eaten from the Tree of Life.[23] Adam was already like "one of us" because he had eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. To prevent further arrogance, God banished Adam from the Garden of Eden. To prevent such arrogance on the part of future generations, God decreed death on Adam (removed

his immortality). This was not intended to punish Adam--for he deserved to be spared the death penalty--but to provide for man the most conclusive evidence that he is not, and never can be, God. This evidence was man's finity, his mortality. The message is clear. God is infinite and immortal. Man is finite and mortal. He may reach for infinity, but he will never grasp it. Thus, he can never aspire to arrogate to himself the position of deity. We see that the reason for death is not Adam's sin, but man's arrogance. Man will never be God. Therefore, he must be mortal and must ultimately die.

Thus, in the Aggadic material, death had its origins in the mythic past. It was decreed upon primeval Man (Adam), and the decree was irrevocable. In one view, the decree came about because of the sin of Adam, yet this view is contradicted by the statement that death existed from the first day of creation and thus was integral to the natural order. Still a third view emphasizes each individual's responsibility for his own death. A fourth explanation is that mortality was intended to instill the fear of God in man. A fifth is that death was not a punishment, but an impetus for man to serve God. Finally, death was decreed not because of Adam's sin, but to forever impress upon man that he cannot be God.

THE CAUSES OF DEATH

Aggadic pronouncements on the causes of death are a mixture of theology, psychology, and common sense. While firmly believing that suffering and death on the one hand, and sin on the other, are intimately and profoundly related,[24] the Aggadists noted other causes of death and danger to one's life. These causes are psychological in nature. They describe persons whose lives lack the qualities which make them satisfying and productive. These individuals are the alienated and embittered people whose lives have become so desolate and lonely that they have no hope of joy whatsoever. These are people whose attitudes toward life may be so negative as to bring them to death.[25] Finally, death may simply be caused by taking unnecessary chances with one's life--living in dangerous, dilapidated housing, travelling the roads alone, or undertaking perilous journeys.[26]

The notion that sin and death are linked is clearly expressed in Aggadic literature. We have already noted Rabbi Ammi's dictum that "there is no death without sin, and no suffering without iniquity."

" אין מיתה בלא חטא ואין יסורין בלא עון."[27]

If a person suffered, it was because of some misdeed in his past that required repentance. Similarly, if a person

died, it was, according to this principle, because of some sin. Man had the option to sin or not to sin. He was created of both celestial and earthly elements, so that sin would bring to him death, while righteousness would bring life.[28]

In fact, the idea of sin causing the death of a person extends to a concept of behavior determining the actual length of a person's life. Koheleth Rabbah[29] presents two views of the variables which affect one's longevity. Rabbi Akiba is of the opinion that a man's allotted number of years will be fully granted if he is worthy (righteous), but will be reduced if he is unworthy. Thus man cannot add years to his life; he can only detract from them. Therefore, the sinner dies before his "allotted" time. The Rabbis, however, claim that while the sinner's years are shortened, the righteous man's life is lengthened, being rewarded by an extra measure. Here, then, sin becomes a criterion for judging whether a man's life is to be extended or shortened.

Sin and guilt are not confined to the sinner himself. Unrighteous behavior has ramifications extending beyond the individual, even affecting the lives of his descendants. Sin causes not only the death of the sinner, but that of his children as well. The sages comment on "all the oppressions that are done under the Sun."[30] This phrase, they say, refers to "the children who are hidden away early in life

through the sins of their fathers in this world."[31]

" הקטנים הנענין בחייהן בעון אבותם בעוה"ז. "

These children suffer for the sins of their parents. The Rabbis thus confronted this most difficult of all deaths. They sought and found meaning in the death of a child by linking it to the actions of the parents. In such cases the parents must confront their own behavior, and determine what they did or did not do which contributed to the death of their offspring. That is not an easy task for bereaved parents. Guilt and self-recrimination are part of the grief reactions they feel, and must deal with. The Aggadic statement above indicates the necessity for that confrontation.

The Aggadists also considered psychological and emotional reasons for a person's death. There were things which, as Rabbi Joshua said, "put a man out of the world."[32] There are two versions of Rabbi Joshua's statement given. One version uses the term, " מוציאין את האדם מן העולם " which corresponds to the translation given above. The second version, however uses the Hebrew words " סורפין את האדם מחיי העולם הזה.... " which should be read,"wrench a man from the life of this world...." [33] The violence suggested by this latter translation indicates the serious implications of the three conditions mentioned: "an evil (grudging) eye, the evil impulse, and the hatred of one's fellow creatures (mankind)." These are the things which separate

and alienate a person from the rest of society. These are the conditions which cause people to "give up the hope of ever being loved,"[34] to commit suicide, and--when terminally ill--to actually want to die.[35] These are the conditions and consequences of alienation, or what Durkheim termed "anomie".

Rabbi Joshua's brief statement describes a person's outlook on life in terms of three qualities: how one sees the people about him, how he behaves toward them, and the mutual feelings which pass between them. A person who looks upon his fellows enviously or grudgingly, begrudging them their joys, successes, and accomplishments, or a person who sees in others only the bad, and not the good, builds barriers between himself and others. Similarly, one's behavior is an indicator of whether he feels part of society or not. Anti-social behavior separates individuals and fragments communities, and further alienates those who often already see themselves "on the outside". Thus, the "evil impulse," the negative, anti-social behavior, separates them from the life giving, life enhancing qualities which true community of others provides. The third aspect of Rabbi Joshua's triad is " שנאת הבריות, " hatred of one's fellows. The phrase is ambiguous, and could be interpreted in two ways. Either one hates his fellows, or he is hated by them. The ultimate development of such a condition is a situation in which both dynamics pertain: one hates, and is

in turn hated by his community. In ancient times one who was ostracized was one considered dead. He was unwanted by his own community, and could not survive in another community. The result was that, unless he took steps to rectify and ameliorate his condition, he could not survive. Contemporary jargon preserves this idea in idioms such as the "in crowd" or "an in with someone" and "being on the 'outs' with somebody." Each implies that one is part of a group or alienated from it. Hatred of one's fellows is another example of separation from the life-providing elements which being part of a community provides. What Rabbi Joshua has clearly and succinctly set before us is the idea that alienation, separation from those things which enrich and enhance life, tears a person from those qualities which he needs to survive as a human being, and ultimately hastens, if not causes, his death. We might consider this idea, when we think about the many people in our society who are placed in hospitals and nursing homes, put away and left to die.

In addition to setting forth both the religious and psychological causes of death, the Aggadists also set forth a common-sense approach to the causes of death. There are some things which a person simply should avoid doing, because he would be placing his life in danger, and would risk losing it.[36] When the condition of a person's dwelling is poor, when the roof, or the beams, or the walls are in danger of collapsing, that person is in danger of losing his life. A

man should not set out on the roads alone because, as Rabbi Simeon b. Abba said in Rabbi Hanina's name, "All roads are presumed to be dangerous."[37] We are told that when Rabbi Jannai left his house he left orders regarding the disposition of his affairs, in case of his death. And finally, travel by sea placed one in mortal danger. It was unwise to travel by sea after the holiday of Sukkot, during the rainy season. As Rabbi Hiyya b. Abba's brother said to him:

> "When you tie your lulab, tie your boat, and if you enter a Synagog and hear the congregation praying for rain, do not rely on my prayer."[38]

Clearly, the wisdom is sound and earthy and practical. When a man engages in activities which he knows are likely to cause his death "Satan is present to accuse"-- "השטן מצוי לקטרג."[39] Thus, in the conception of the Aggadists, dangerous housing and living conditions, traveling on the roads, and undertaking long, arduous, and perilous journeys were situations which caused one's death, and one would do well to avoid them.

The Aggadists indicated that death came about in many ways. Theologically, sin was the cause of death. It shortened life and caused people and their children to suffer early deaths. The righteous, however, would receive their full allotment of years, and according to one source, even more. There were also psychological and emotional causes of death. These were conditions which separated people from

the life-giving qualities which being part of a community provided. Lack of these qualities indicated or caused alienation and depression, ultimately hastening a person's death. Finally the Aggadists recognized some very practical causes of death. These were intrinsically dangerous situations such as poor housing and travel conditions which should be avoided.

THE CHARACTER OF DEATH

In the Aggadic literature we find a clear description of the nature of death, its inevitability, ubiquity, and finality. The recognition that all men must--sooner or later--die, and that dying means the end of their particular existence upon earth, compels man to be aware of and ultimately to confront his own mortality. At a certain point in his life, he must consider his own death. He must consider, too, that he does not know the day of his, or anyone else's death, and that each day might be his last. Hence, he must take the opportunity to grow, and change, and be aware of himself, every day of his life.

Death is inescapable and inevitable. In the words of a previous passage,[40] "...the decree (of death) has long ago been decreed." All men must die. "None can hope to escape death: all know it, and affirm with their own mouths that they will die...."

"אין מי יקוה שלא ימות, הכל יודעין ואומרין בפיהן שכן מתין."[41]

Man, whether he acknowledges it or not, knows of his mortality and will ultimately bear witness to it. The Rabbis mince no words in discussing and developing this theme. Death comes to all and is inevitable. Man must acknowledge and accept that fact. Lest he attempt to ignore or deny it, he is informed that he himself will

affirm and confirm the fact of his own mortality. The Rabbis' objective here, and in other passages, was to confront in the clearest possible manner the fact of death, and to emphasize the need to accept rather than deny it.

When death comes, no man can forestall it. There is no way, although the attempt is often made by the dying,[42] to bargain for more time, or to propose a substitution (let so-and-so go in my place), or to question and argue against the verdict.[43] No man can refuse to comply with death's call.[44] Even if a man were willing to risk losing his tongue and the power of speech in order to escape death, he would not be saved.[45] The inescapable reality is that death will come, no matter what man does, physically, or psychologically, to ignore it, deny it, or evade it. Furthermore, man will ultimately admit his own mortality.

Not only is death inescapable and inevitable, it is very democratic. All men, even the righteous, even those who seem to deserve it the least, are mortal, and must die. We read that the ministering angels questioned God's decree of death against Moses. Adam did not fulfill God's command, but Moses, they claimed, did fulfill God's commands. Why, then, was Moses sentenced to die? God's reply was that the decree of death fell "upon all men equally."[46] Mortality is the common denominator of all life.

Dying, like all other significant life-cycle events, or crises, is a significant passage. It differs from the other life events, however, in that it is a final passage--out of the world, as the dead person knew it. Beyond the portals of death "human" existence as we know it has no meaning. Death means that all "human" activity--thinking, growing, changing, acting, experiencing--as we conceive of it, ceases. It is the last event of a man's life, and beyond it there are no second chances.

The implications of this statement in terms of the idea of repentance are very significant. Repentance, changing the direction of one's life, can only occur while there is a life to change. The feeling of the Aggadists is that the time for evaluating and redirecting the course of one's life is while one is living. No such opportunities exist after death. As death is the cessation of physical growth, so it is the cessation of spiritual and moral growth. The story of Resh Lakish and his two companions provides us with a vivid example of this idea. The three of them were brigands in the mountains, robbing all who passed their way. However, Resh Lakish gave up robbery as a living and turned to study. On the day that he and his two companions died, Resh Lakish went to heaven, while his companions found themselves in hell. When they protested God's "favoritism," saying, "give us the opportunity and we will repent very sincerely," they were told

that repentance was possible only before one's death.[47] If a man did not repent in his lifetime, he cannot repent after his death. The same message is contained in Hillel's dictum that if one is unworthy during his lifetime, no one will make him worthy after he dies.

" אם אין לי לי מי לי וכשאני לעצמי מה אני?"[48]

Along with the opportunity to redirect one's life, death puts an end to the possibility of having children. We are told that if a person has not married by a certain age and has not begun to raise a family, that opportunity will slip away into old age, and he will have nothing to look forward to except dying. He will have missed his chance of extending himself, through his children, into the future. Death will put an end to his hopes and dreams of children and grandchildren.[49] He will die lonely and unfulfilled.

To the Aggadic authors, death presented three realities. It is inescapable and inevitable; it comes to all men--and no man, try as he might, can deny or ignore or prevent his own death; and thirdly, death is the ultimate finality of man's existence--after death, opportunity and possibility cease.

To these three, the Aggadists added a fourth quality--that of mystery. Death is unforeseeable and unknowable. No man knows the day of his death. It is one of seven things concealed from him.[50] Indeed, knowledge of one's

dying day would probably be more harmful than beneficial. One would have no reason to be self-aware; no reason to consider his life each day that he lives it; no reason to grow, change, reach for possibilities; no reason to "repent one day before his death"--that is every day, when one lives with the realization that any day he might die. Life would become meaningless and goal-less. This latter idea is clearly and succinctly expressed in the Rabbinic statement that "had God not concealed the day of death from man, no one would build a house, nor plant a vineyard. For one would say, 'Tomorrow I die. Why should I struggle for others?' Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, hid the day of death from man--in order that he build and plant. If he be worthy (and live) it shall be his. If he be unworthy (and die before it comes to fruition), it shall be for others."

"אלולי שהעלים הקדוש-ברוך-הוא מעיני האדם את יום המיתה
לא היה אדם בונה בית ולא היה נוטע כרם, שהיה אומר: למחר אני
מת, למה אני עומל ומתיגע בשביל אחרים? לפיכך העלים
הקדוש-ברוך-הוא מעיני האדם את יום המיתה, שהוא אדם בונה ונוטע,
ובסוף הוא לוקח לאחרים." 51

Thus, knowledge of one's death prevents one from leading a productive existence, and worse, encourages a selfish and cynical attitude towards life and the future. The realization that death may come at any moment should cause one to become increasingly aware of the transitoriness and

ephemerality of existence. Man's days on earth are like a "passing shadow." He is a stranger, a sojourner, alive one moment, a corpse the next.[52]

This shortness of existence, this uncertainty, also gave rise to some cynicism about attempting to enrich life with those activities which were inherently life-affirming. With death constantly looking over one's shoulder, so to speak, there seemed to be little value in any constructive forms of existence, particularly life celebrations such as weddings. An example of this attitude appears in the following story. Bar Kappara, who was inadvertently not invited to the wedding feast of Judah Ha-Nasi's son, wrote above the door of the banquet hall: "After all your rejoicing is death, so what is the use of rejoicing?"[53] That is, what is the point of making merry and being involved in the future (the incident took place at a wedding--a future-oriented event), when sooner or later all and everything dies. We might note here the contrast between Bar Kappara's attitude and the tone of the statement mentioned earlier that death provides an impetus to serve God; or the comment by R. Benjamin that God set the love of the world in man's heart, followed by that of R. Nathan: "A dread of the Angel of Death He set in their heart."[54] The juxtaposition of the "love of the world" and the "fear of death" seems to indicate that the love of the world induces in man a fear of

death. Hence, he will do things to ensure his grasp on the world as he knows it, by engaging in activities which are future oriented, and "immortality ensuring," such as marrying and having children. Thus, the reality of death and the fear of it, lead man to act in positive ways, in future oriented, life enhancing ways--rather than succumbing to the cynicism of a Bar Kappara.

Life, under these conditions of uncertainty, was a mixture of joy and grief. One never knew when joy would turn to anguish. The story is told of the man whose son died at his own wedding feast. The anguished father waited until the guests were about to say the Grace after meals, and informed them that the circumstances no longer called for the bridegrooms' blessing and wedding canopy, but for the mourners' benediction and the cortege.[55]

Death was real; it was present; it could strike at any moment, reminding everyone of the finiteness of his existence. One knew that it was inevitable; but one did not know when it would strike.

The implication of these realities was that every man was obligated--compelled--to consider his own death many times in the course of his life. Lest such opportunities escape him, the Aggadists seized upon a crucial point in his life to urge him to do so. That crucial period was the age at which his parents died. At that age, said

R. Joshua b. Karha, "...for five years before and after he must fear death...."[56] This period is crucial precisely because a person is at the age when his parents died. Death stares him in the face. There is no one between him and the stark finality of the end of his life. It is time that he come to grips with the fact that his life is bounded, and finite, and uncertain as far as his dying is concerned.

The Aggadic literature paints a clear, realistic picture of the nature of death. It was seen then much as it is realistically seen now--inevitable, ubiquitous, final, and unforeseeable. This reality compels man to an awareness of life's transitory character, and to consider his own death as he moves on in years.

SUMMARY

The discussion in this chapter has revolved around three basic questions: First, what were the origins of death, and why was it decreed on man? Second, what are the causes of death? And third, what is the character, the nature, of death?

Death originated in the mythic past. And it will be abolished in the Messianic future. For the present it has come about for various reasons: the sin of Adam, to instil the fear of God in Man, to remind man that he is not, and never will be, God. Originally, death did not exist, but since Adam, it is hereditary, a fate decreed upon all mankind and their descendants.

The explanations of the causes of death are theological, psychological, and practical in nature. Death is caused by sin, a negative outlook on life and one's fellow man, and simply taking chances with one's life. The Aggadic statement that children die for the sins of their parents may find a response in the anguished feelings of parents who have lost a child, and suffer guilt for things they might have done or not done to prevent the death (sins of commission or omission).

Lastly, death is described, clearly and realistically. It cannot be foregone, forestalled, nor foretold by anyone. It is final; after death, human activity ceases. These realities cause man to see life--particularly one's own life--as transitory, and a mixture of joy and sadness. Man is compelled to consider his own death and its implications for him as he grows older. This is particularly important when he reaches the age at which his parents died.

CHAPTER II

MAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH DEATH

The Aggadists were aware that man did not approach death with equanimity. They indicated that it is not an easy thing for a person to die, even though some people wish for death. The soul does not wish to leave the body. It must go against its will.[1] The dying person leaves this world as he entered it, weeping, in love, devoid of knowledge.[2] The Aggadists vividly portray how man comes into the world greedily with aspirations of attaining it all, yet he departs empty handed, unable to take anything with him.[3]

The Aggadists indicated several key components involved in the meeting of Man and death. First, there were the circumstances of one's death. When, where, and under what conditions a person died were judged to be good or bad signs, portents, or omens.[4] A person's age[5] and mental/emotional state were considered indicative of the quality of his death. The Aggadists did not hesitate to describe a particular death as good or bad, kind or unkind, premature or timely. There were 903 kinds of death created. The worst of them was death by choking, and the best of them "by a kiss of God"-- " נשיקה."[6]

The second component in man's encounter with death is the relationship between a person who is to die, and the one who must inform him of his impending death. We know that terminally ill patients are often aware of their conditions even before they are told.[7] We are also aware that the prospect of informing someone who is to die is very distressing at best, and at worst avoided at great emotional cost to both informant and patient.[8] These feelings are portrayed in the Aggada with great intensity. God does not wish to tell anyone that it is his time to die. Had such righteous men as Abraham or Moses not "asked with their own mouths for death"[9] they never would have died.[10] The paradigmatic experience for these feelings is found in the description of the death of Aaron,[11] which sensitively and compassionately describes the anguished dilemma of those faced with the task of informing others of their deaths.

Still a third component of the encounter with death involves the reaction of the person who has learned that he is to die. The Aggadists indicated that these reactions were never totally ones of acceptance and resignation. Absalom preferred to hang by his hair rather than face death and retribution which were spread at his feet.[12] Some sages refused to die until they had seen their place in paradise.[13] Others were filled with fear and wept.[14]

Still others accepted their fate with resignation.[15] The best example of the psychological process of denial which a person undergoes is found in the story of the death of Moses.[16] Moses denies that he will die. He refuses to allow the Angel of Death to take his soul. He attempts to bargain with God for one last opportunity--to cross the Jordan. He begs and he argues. Ultimately he must face the fact of his own mortality and resign himself to his fate. This story can be seen as a paradigm of the dying process.

Finally, the Aggadists describe the interaction between the dying and the soon-to-be-bereaved. One is told how to take leave of the dying,[17] and an anecdote is given which points up the importance of "letting go" and allowing a dying person to die peacefully.[18] We are told that those who wish to die may do so by ceasing the life-giving activities in which they formerly engaged.[19] The death of the righteous is met with an "all is not lost" attitude, because no righteous man dies until another is ready to take his place.[20]

Following the discussion of these various components in the encounter of man with death, we shall explore the preparations, requests, and bequests of people who are about to die. Aggadic comments in this area include an

awareness that certain diseases are likely to be terminal and one should prepare for that possibility.[21] In addition one may find bequests to children[22] and burial instructions.[23]

The Aggadists were sensitive to the heavy emotional and psychological price which death exacted from both the dying and the living. They approached these taxing experiences realistically and provided those facing death with means of dealing with their experiences and emotions. The best examples of this are the descriptions of the deaths of Aaron and Moses. In addition, they attempted to provide some comfort by emphasizing that no righteous man dies unless another is ready to take his place.

HOW A PERSON DIES

The Aggadists portrayed death as the most difficult experience in the world to face. No person dies totally willingly. No soul leaves the body in which it resides without protest. When the time comes to die a soul sends forth cries which resound from one end of the universe to the other, but to no avail.[24] The Angel of Death will remind the soul of something which it has known all along: "Against your will you were born and against your will you die...."[25] The soul knows that ultimately it will have to leave the body despite all its protests.

The Aggadists point out that when the soul leaves, when the person dies, he leaves this world essentially as he entered it.

"כמו שבא לעולם כך ילך."[26] As a child's birth is heralded by its first cries, so a person's death is marked by the wailing of mourners, not to mention the cosmic wailing of the soul itself. As the birth of a child is preceded and accompanied by love, so is one's death marked by expressions of love. A child comes into this world devoid of knowledge. He must be taught to understand it. He must learn the skills necessary to make his way in the world. When that person dies, his death is accompanied by an inability of the bereaved to understand.

They are faced with the task of finding meaning in that death, and with the task of finding continuing meaning in their own lives. Lastly, as a child comes forth into this world "lean and frail"[27] so does he leave it lean and frail, ravaged by time and hard work. Often a person dies after a protracted illness which has caused him to lose weight and become as a child, dependent upon the goodwill and services of others. The theme which thus brings itself to our attention is the helplessness of the person at birth and at death. The processes of life which provide growth, vigor, and accomplishment are bounded at either end by dependence and helplessness. Life ends essentially as it began.

Another similar expression of this realization is found in an observation about the clenched hands of the newborn and the open hands of the dead. It was taught in R. Meir's name that the infant is born with clenched hands, as if to say that the entire world belongs to him. He leaves the world with open palms, as if to admit that there is nothing of worldly value that he can take with him.[28] As the fox who enters the vineyard through a narrow break in the fence and gluts himself must ultimately leave it as lean as he came in, so the person may glut himself during his stay on earth, but must ultimately leave this life as lean and as empty as when he entered it. Man returns to

the womb of earth from whence he came exactly as he emerged from the womb of his mother: frail, wailing, and uncomprehending as the day he was born--naked but for the shrouds which provide his swaddling cloth.

According to the Rabbis, however, two things were gained in dying which the individual did not have in life. One was the privilege of seeing the Shekina and having it "pass over him."[29] The other was a knowledge of one's reward. We read in Bereshith Rabbah[30] that "...when the righteous are about to die, God shows them their reward." Similar, and perhaps even more profound, is the statement that a man knows himself if he is entitled to the world to come or not: "ויודע אדם בעצמו אם בן עולם הבא הוא אם לאו."[31] A person himself--"be-'atzmo"-- knows the course his life has taken and what his future is to be, even before death. This is the final realization of what he has accomplished. Some people die knowing that their life has been good and worthwhile; others tragically spend their final hours regretting all that has happened to them in their lifetime. Each person dies with that very personal, profound realization.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH

In addition to seeking meaning in the analogy between the person at birth and at death, the Rabbis considered the actual circumstances under which death occurred. These circumstances include the time of day or the season of the year at which one died; the weather;[32] the geographic location; the person's age; and quite significantly the person's mental or emotional state at the time of death. To the Rabbis, these conditions were good or bad omens--indicators of whether a person died a "good" or a "bad" death, and whether his death boded good or ill for him. These conditions also enabled the Rabbis to classify different kinds of deaths and place certain values upon them.

Time and Place

Certain days were more auspicious for dying than others, in the opinion of the Rabbis. Thus, dying on the Sabbath Eve was a good omen as it marked the beginning of the day of rest, and it was fitting that a soul should go to its eternal rest on that day. Similarly, the end of the Day of Atonement was an auspicious time for dying, because on that day one's sins were presumably forgiven and he began with a fresh slate. Dying at that time meant that a person died sinless and would surely find himself in paradise.[33]

Conversely, dying at the end of Sabbath--after the day of rest--was a bad omen. Symbolically this meant that a soul would not find eternal rest soon. Dying on the Eve of the Day of Atonement was similarly a bad sign because that meant that one died before his sins were forgiven, increasing the likelihood of punishment for the soul.[34]

The place of death was similarly important. It was considered unfitting to die in the marketplace "like an animal."[35] R. Sheshet refused to allow such an outrage. When the Angel of Death appeared to him in the marketplace, R. Sheshet demanded that he come to his house and take his soul there.[36]

R. Sheshet clearly recognized the inevitability of his own death. The fact that he did not protest against dying is indicative of his acceptance of his own mortality. He did not react to the appearance of the Angel of Death with either fear or denial. What he refused to accept, however, was the degradation of dying in the marketplace, as some beast. As a human being, he insisted upon a death which was accompanied by dignity, not degradation, and acted to achieve that end. His aggressive confrontation of the Angel of Death in this image indicates the importance which the Rabbis placed upon a humane and dignified end to life.

Age

The Aggadists also found meaning in the age at which a person died. We have noted before that the Rabbis considered long life a result of righteous behavior and short life a result of sin. They perceived this link between behavior and longevity and expressed it in terms of the age at which a man died. Death at certain ages, in fact, indicated punishment for certain types of sins. We are told that death under the age of 50 meant 'kareth', excision, which was the punishment for certain sins.[37] Death at 60 was death 'by the hand of heaven'. Death at 70 meant that one had attained 'sevah', ripe old age. Death at 80 was the death of 'a vigorous old man', called 'gevurot'.[38] Beyond 80, a sudden death was like dying by the kiss of God.[39] According to the Tractate Aboth[40] life is a blessing until the age of 100. After that, one is considered as "dead, having passed and ceased from the world-- בן מאה כאילו מת ובטל מן העולם."

The implication of the statement of Aboth is that for each person there is a point in life where life itself is "not a blessing." Life no longer is valued for its own sake. It is not productive. There is little that can be done to enhance it. At such a point people are ready to die. They may even consider themselves dead already, to a great extent having "passed and ceased from the world."

The Aggadists were aware that death did not mean just the cessation of bodily function. They knew that existence could only be called life when it was enhanced by "blessing" --life affirming activities. Otherwise, it could not be considered life at all, and one in such circumstances could only consider himself--and be considered--dead. The same idea is expressed in the Aboth de Rabbi Nathan[41] where, included among those whose life is "no life at all--חיים אין מהם," is one who is dependent for his sustenance upon another, and one whose body is racked by suffering. The idea expressed here is that under certain conditions life is simply not worth living. These conditions may be the humiliation of complete dependence or the agony of constant suffering. They indicate the lack of those qualities which give life value. Thus, death at a ripe old age means that a person's life has been filled with life affirming and life enhancing activities, with blessing and meaning.

Psychological Conditions

Of all the circumstances surrounding a person's death, the Rabbis chose to comment most explicitly about the dying person's mental health. They considered the behavior of a dying person to be indicative of his response to his impending death. Thus they drew certain conclusions about the

behavior of the dying. For example, if an individual seemed to have a positive outlook, if he responded to people, if his face were "bright (פניו מאירות)" or if he were engaged in life affirming activities, it was considered to be a "good sign" for him. He had accepted the fact of his death and was going to live until death overtook him. He was successfully dealing with the reality and crisis of his own death.

On the other hand, if he "turned his face to the wall" --ignoring human contact, and refusing to confront his death--or if he were "deranged (את פניו מתוך הטירוף)" [42] it was considered a "bad sign" for him. He was not weathering his crisis well. His denial, depression, and extreme emotional response all indicated that he was having difficulty confronting the problem of his own death.

The Rabbis' keen awareness of the psychological implications of a patient's behavior is illustrated by the following examples. The first of these considers a person's response in terms of his relations to other people. The second comments on how he conducts his affairs in the face of his imminent death.

"If a man dies with his face to people it is a good omen, towards the wall it is a bad omen."[43] If a dying

person has the desire and the capability to continue to relate to other people, it is a good sign. His own death will not be as difficult for him as it might be for the man who simply turns his face to the wall, builds a cocoon around himself, and shuts off the world until he dies. Human relationships are a sign of life. Death comes to one who continues to relate to people, but it comes only in its due time, and dying is peaceful. The man who turns his face to the wall has declared himself no longer willing to live. Death may come even faster for him, because he has given up. Life is no longer worth living. His is not a good death.

"If one dies while words of Torah are spoken, it is a good sign for him; if in the course of a business matter, it is a bad sign for him."[44] A dying person who is engaged in Torah study is symbolically connecting himself with life. The Torah is the Etz Hayyim, the tree of life, the source of life. By studying the Torah a person has arrayed himself with the forces of life against the forces of death. He who is still engaged in business at his death, however, indicates that he has not yet totally settled his affairs. He still has unfinished business to attend to. He has refused to make his peace with the fact of his mortality and wind down his life in such a way as to leave it with a feeling of

closure and accomplishment. He has not been able to admit that there are goals he will not accomplish and financial affairs he will not conclude.

The observations of the Rabbis concerning the behavior of the dying indicate their sensitivity to the emotional upheaval engendered by knowledge of one's own death. This emotional turmoil was expressed in many different ways. By observing the behavior of the dying the Rabbis were able to comment upon these various expressions and discern which behaviors were positive and healthy responses as well as those behaviors which indicated that a particular person was not confronting reality. These Aggadic descriptions of the behavioral responses of the dying emphasize the need for sensitivity to the different messages--verbal and non-verbal--communicated by the dying to those about them.

Kinds of Death

The Aggadists classified a number of different kinds of death, particularly after illness. Thus a person who died suddenly had been "snatched away"--a "mitah hatufah (מיתה חטופה)."[45] Death after one day's illness is called being "hustled away". After two days illness, the death is "precipitous." After three, "reproof;" after four, "snubbing." After five days, it is the "ordinary death of

all men." In all, say the Rabbis, 903 different kinds of death were created.[46] The worst of these is death by coughing or choking. The best of these is death by the "kiss" of God. This was the way Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam all died.[47] The Angel of Death had no power over them. Rather, God took their souls Himself. This is the ideal kind of death, and all righteous people will be entitled to it.[48]

The Aggadists were aware that death was incomprehensible for the dying and the bereaved alike. This caused them to seek meaning in all of the circumstances surrounding a person's death. How a person died, where and when, at what age, under what conditions, even how long was he ill--all of these were questions to which the Rabbis sought answers and through which they sought meaning in the experience of death. Their search for meaning gained them some profound insights into the psychological processes which accompany dying. Some of these insights are presented in classifications of "good signs" and "bad signs" for the dying. Other insights will be presented in the following sections.

BREAKING THE NEWS

More than one contemporary student of death and dying has described how difficult it is to inform a patient that he or she has a terminal illness.[49] Often the subject is avoided or glossed over. Often a picture of false hope is painted by a doctor. Many times consideration for the emotional state of the patient is given, but the fears and anxieties of those upon whom the burden of informing the patient rests are not given sufficient consideration. These anxieties are expressed in the Aggada in all their intensity. There are Aggadic portrayals of attempts to soften the harshness of the bad news,[50] statements of the intensity of the anguish involved in informing a person of his impending death,[51] and even the attempt to avoid the responsibility of imparting the information.[52] The most dramatic portrayal of these emotions is the Midrash on the Death of Aaron[53] in which God Himself cannot bear to tell Aaron and delegates Moses to do so.

Behold Thy Days Approach

One way of breaking bad news is to soften the language or to use a euphemism. We are told that when it came time for God to inform Moses of his death, God was so grieved over the demise of one of His saints that He "softened" the

language which He used.[54] God, we are told, finds it hard to decree death upon the righteous, so in the case of Moses, to whom He should have said, "Behold you are about to die," He said, "Behold thy days approach (their end) that thou must die." In this way, say the sages, God spared Moses hearing the decree in all its harshness. Thus, in sparing the feelings of Moses, God is also soothing His own anguish.

God's anguish is evident from the following passage. Again and again in the Midrash on Psalm 116 we read the statement, "Precious (grievous) in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."[55] Each passage describes how difficult it is for God when one of His righteous ones must die, considering all of the great things they did to sanctify and glorify Him on earth. In fact, had each of these righteous not asked with their own mouths for death, they never would have died,[56] even though each had to die in order to make way for his successor.[57]

Thus, the Aggadists indicated a solution to the agonizing dilemma of having to inform someone of his impending death. This solution is expressed in the statement that the righteous from Abraham through Daniel asked for death with their own mouths. Somehow they realized that they would die, and it was this "request" which gave God His solution. He could now tell these men of their deaths be-

cause they themselves had raised the issue. They already knew what God was so hesitant to tell them.

These observations mirror contemporary experience closely. It often happens that dying patients do know what their doctors and families are having such a difficult time telling them. Whether this is due to the overt behavior on the part of significant attendants or innate knowledge is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is not uncommon for such patients to relieve doctors and relatives of much anxiety by letting them know that they (the patients) are aware of their terminal condition.

The most anguished and sensitive portrayal of having to inform a loved one of his death is in the description of the death of Aaron.[58] God is so upset that Aaron must die that he tells Moses: "Do Me a favor and inform Aaron of his death, because I am ashamed to do so."[59] Moses protests.[60] He is unworthy of telling his older brother to climb mount Hor and die there. God tells him to speak to Aaron softly and pleasantly, and Aaron would eventually understand. Moses still was very anguished. He "raged in his heart (היה צועק בלבו.)."[61] Finally, he went to Aaron and told him that God had commanded him (Moses) to tell Aaron something. Moses took Aaron outside the camp and up to the mountain, changing the order in which they

usually walked. All the while he delayed telling Aaron, not knowing how. At the mouth of the cave Moses induced Aaron to remove his priestly garments and then enter. At this point Aaron saw the couch, the candlesticks, and the ministering angels. He begged Moses to tell him what God's message was--"...even if it is death I will accept it with equanimity." At this point Moses was relieved of his terrible burden. Aaron had mentioned the idea himself, and all Moses had to do was confirm it, admitting at the same time his fear of having to tell Aaron.

The mythic tale mirrors life. People fear to tell others of their impending death. Even God cannot bring Himself to tell Aaron and must enlist Moses as his proxy. The request is not a command--it is a "tovah," a favor to God. Moses, upon whom the burden falls is anguished and tormented. He attempts, in several ways, to signal to Aaron that conditions are not normal, but Aaron does not comprehend and Moses cannot tell him the blunt truth. He delays until, at the very last moment, Aaron himself relieves him of his terrible burden by announcing that he is ready to hear even the decree of his own death. He who is about to die relieves the tension of the living.

THE PROCESS OF DYING

Along with the emotions of those who must break the news, the Rabbis dealt with the emotions of those who were informed of their own deaths, or who had to face their own destruction. Each soul, when informed that it must leave the body, sends forth a wail from one end of the universe to the other.[62] It leaves the body only against its will. R. Joshua b. Levi refused to die until he had been shown his place in paradise. This was a ruse to try to steal the knife of the Angel of Death.[63] The result of this would be to symbolically deprive death of its power over mortal men. The ruse failed, and although R. Joshua b. Levi saved himself, he could not save the rest of mankind.

Some people are seized with fear and trembling, and weep. One of the greatest fears of the dying is the fear of the unknown, of what lurks on the "other side" of death. For many death is a frightening experience, particularly if one believes in a doctrine of divine retribution. Rabban Johanan Ben Zakkai was dying. His disciples could not understand why he began to weep.[64] His response to them was that now he was facing Eternity. Whatever lay for him beyond death would be his lot forever. He did not know, he said, whether he would be rewarded in Paradise or punished in Gehinnom. This was enough to cause him to fear what lay beyond death, and to weep in terror.

There are those who would wish to live at any price, to suffer any disability in order to escape death. Perhaps, as in the case of Absalom, it is vanity which keeps man from confronting the fact of his own death. Absalom[65] preferred to hang from a tree by his hair, rather than cut himself down and face the reality of his own destruction spread out at his feet.

Finally, there is resignation. Often, along with this resignation comes a sense of meaning to dying. Trajan sought to kill Lulianus and Pappus his brother.[66] They reacted with great equanimity, saying that they would die anyway, sooner or later. The reason that they would die at the hand of Trajan was so that God would have all the more reason to punish him for his wickedness. They found a reason for dying, and a purpose beyond themselves which sustained them in their final hours.

The knowledge that they are about to die affects people in different ways. This can be seen by the handful of foregoing anecdotes. Reactions include refusal to die, tricks and bargaining as in the case of R. Joshua b. Levi, fear, the refusal to confront the imminence of one's death, as in the case of Absalom who preferred to hang by his hair rather than confront his own death, and the resignation which comes from finding a meaning beyond oneself in one's own death.

The most complete description of a person's struggle with the knowledge of his own death occurs in the description of the death of Moses.[67] In a dramatically staged series of episodes the Midrash portrays Moses as he experiences many of the emotions of one facing death.

When Moses learned that he would die without setting foot in the land of Canaan, he made light of the decree. When God saw that Moses was not taking the fact of his death seriously He swore that under no circumstances would Moses enter the land of Israel. Upon seeing that this decree had been sealed against him, Moses drew a circle around himself and refused to move until the decree be annulled. God commanded that under no circumstances should Moses' prayer be accepted. Moses then complained to God that such a fate was not fair and fitting for all the labor and pain which he went through. After that Moses asked simply to be allowed to live, even as a "beast of the field" or as a bird. This request was also refused. When Moses saw that it was no use to try to save himself from death he recited the verse known as "tziduk ha-din": "The Rock, His work is perfect; for all his ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and righteous is He (Deut. 32:4)."

God then sent Samael, the Angel of Death, to take Moses' soul. Moses drove him away. When the moment of death came,

Moses begged not to be handed over to Samael. God promised Moses that He Himself would attend to him and his burial. God descended with the ministering angels to take Moses' soul. It too refused, begging to be left with the body of Moses. God then took Moses' soul with a kiss.

At different times in the dialog Moses refused to take his death seriously. At another point he begged for an annulment of the decree. He railed against God that it was not fair that this should be his reward, and later attempted to bargain with God for extra life, if only as a bird or an animal. When he realized that nothing could save him from death, he accepted his fate. However, he refused to allow the Angel of Death to take his soul. God had to do it, symbolically indicating that death had not vanquished Moses.

Moses' reactions included denial of his fate, attempts to bargain for more life, and final resignation. His reactions find their counterparts in many patients who must face their own death, and react to that situation with responses similar to those portrayed by Moses. Those responses illustrate the Aggadists' keen awareness of the emotions felt by people encountering death. They knew that man would experience many or all of those feelings as his death approached. They incorporated those feelings into a paradigmatic example of the death of a righteous man.

The Aggadists were clearly aware of the reactions of those who had to inform others and of those who knew that they were going to die. They knew that it was as hard to tell someone that he was dying as it was to be told. They were cognizant of the fact that both the living and the dying attempted to deny the reality of the situation. As a result, their messages and descriptions were crystal clear. There could be no denial of death's reality. Ultimately even Moses had to resign himself to death.

LETTING GO AND TAKING LEAVE

There is a fourth component in the way people encounter death. It involves the relationship between those who are to die and those who are soon to be bereaved. The Aggadists saw that people often refuse to allow a loved one to die, even though his time has come. They indicated that it was necessary at some point to sever the ties which bind the dying to the living and allow the dying to die. On the day that Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi died, the entire community began fasting and praying that he be kept alive.[68] They forbade anyone to announce that the venerated teacher had died, on pain of death. Rabbi Judah's handmaid saw his agony and anguish. She took a jar and broke it, disturbing the ceaseless praying of the community. At that moment Rabbi Judah's soul departed.

What Rabbi's wise handmaid realized was that the community was praying to keep Rabbi alive more for <u>their</u> benefit than for his. It was necessary for them to let him die. Since their incessant praying bound the sick teacher to the living, it was necessary to cause them to stop. By interrupting the prayers she allowed Rabbi to die peacefully.

The Aggadists thus insisted that dying meant severing the ties that bind one to life and the living. Rabbi's

community refused to allow that process to happen. The situation required the handmaid's intervention. The importance of the need to be allowed to die is reiterated by R. Jose b. Halafta.[69] A woman came to him and said that her life was no longer worth living; she wanted to die. His response to her was give up going to the synagog--that activity which was precisely the most life-giving activity for her. She died three days later.

The issue raised by the two foregoing vignettes is that of a person's right to die. In the view of the Rabbis, this involves not only a right, but a need to be allowed to "let go" of whatever ties still bind one to life, despite the anguish that "letting go" might cause for those left behind. When life-giving and life-enhancing activity ceases life stops. It was this fact that the Rabbis impressed upon their community. They conveyed the message that when the point is reached at which such life-sustaining activity ceases, a person should be allowed to die in peace.

The Aggadists confronted death with an attitude which proclaimed optimism and hope for the future. When a righteous man died, all was not lost. There was another to take his place. In fact, no righteous man died until there was another to succeed him.[70] Conversely, as we have seen

earlier, every righteous man from Abraham to Daniel had to die in order to make room for his successor. Death was thus seen as something positive--bringing new leaders, new ideas, new greatness into the world. In addition, people were comforted with the knowledge that leadership and righteousness would not be lacking, and that the world would not be destroyed because of the sins of the wicked.

FINAL PREPARATIONS

Once a person knows that his death is imminent, he will want to make preparations for his burial and for his surviving family. The Aggadists pointed out that in certain circumstances a man should be aware of the possibility of his dying, and be certain to attend to those arrangements. They noted for example, that certain kinds of diseases are liable to cause death.[71] This information is important because one must make arrangements to have the burial shrouds prepared. Once Adam realized his mortality he decided to prepare a mausoleum for himself.[72] Finally we are told that R. Jeremiah gave explicit instructions for the preparation of his remains.[73] He wanted to be laid by a road, staff in hand, ready to respond to the call of the Messiah.

These final preparations indicate that death was to be approached realistically and practically, despite the strong emotions involved. People had to be informed that they were going to die, and they had to ultimately resign themselves to their fate and arrange for their survivors and the disposal of their remains.

SUMMARY

The Aggadists were keenly aware of the conditions surrounding a person's death. They emphasized that man leaves this world much as he came into it: helpless, frail, crying, uncomprehending, and emptyhanded. Yet at his death, man knows even without being told, the value of his life and what lies in his future.

The circumstances of a person's death gave the Rabbis opportunities to find meaning in an incomprehensible experience. Certain times were more auspicious times to die than were other times. Certain ages were more auspicious than others; the older a person was at his death presumably the better life he led. However, there was the added recognition that people do reach a point at which life is no longer a blessing and no longer worth living. It is at that point that people are prepared to die. Of all the indicators of good and bad deaths, however, the most significant and the most clearly spelled out are the Rabbis' descriptions of the psychological states of the dying. They were aware that depression and isolation were bad signs for the dying, while those patients or ill people who still engaged in life-enhancing activities would have an easier death. Finally the Rabbis noted many kinds of death. The worst was death

by choking. The best, to which the righteous are entitled, was death by the kiss of God.

The Aggadists were clearly aware of the emotions involved in facing the imminent death of another person. Even God grieves and does not want to inform the righteous of their death. However, the righteous must die to make way for succeeding generations of righteous people. Thus they must be told. Mercifully, they relieve God of the burden by bringing up the subject of their own deaths themselves. Similarly, Aaron relieved Moses of his burden by mentioning his own death at the last moment. There is an indication that the Aggadists felt that the dying are aware of their condition, even without being told.

A person confronted with his own death undergoes many emotional responses. Some of them are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance.[74] Many of these responses are mirrored in Aggadic statements on those reacting to their own impending death. The most detailed example of this is the description of the death of Moses. Moses denies his fate, begs and bargains, and finally becomes resigned to it. However, he symbolically defeats death by not allowing the Angel of Death to take his soul.

It is important to allow a person to "let go." The Aggada tells how Rabbi's handmaid enabled him to die when

the rest of the community were attempting to keep him among the living--even though it was time for him to die. This points up the necessity for the living to allow a person to sever those bonds to life and die peacefully when his time comes. Doing otherwise is selfishness on the part of those who do not wish to part with a loved one.

Finally, once death is imminent one should make arrangements for funeral, burial, and care for his survivors. Certain diseases were thought to be fatal, and a person was advised to make his final arrangements when confronted by them.

The Aggadists approached the entire death experience practically and realistically. Their search for meaning can provide an awareness and sensitivity for those confronting the final crisis in their lives.

CHAPTER III

BEREAVEMENT, MOURNING, AND CONSOLATION

In this chapter we consider the Aggadists' thoughts on the three major themes of bereavement, mourning, and consolation. Each of these themes raises significant questions and issues to which the Aggadists responded.

The first of these themes is bereavement. The Rabbis noted that the loss of a significant member of any group--family or community--produces several significant responses on the part of the bereaved. The Aggadic comments on these responses to bereavement fall into two groupings. First there is the search for meaning. One who has been bereaved experiences the need to make sense out of the loss of an integral part of his life. The Rabbinic response to that need is that no "logical" explanation is satisfactory. One can only trust in the greater wisdom and kindness of God.

In addition to the search for meaning, the bereaved feel the impact of death in different ways. We find in the Aggada vivid descriptions of the impact of loss on a spouse and a community. The loss of a spouse is seen to be particularly tragic, in light of the special intimacy which the couple once shared.

Mourning, the second theme discussed in this chapter, is seen as a natural and desirable response to death. The Aggadists commented on the subject of mourning in terms of three major ideas. First, they considered the course and psychology of mourning, discussing the need to mourn for an appropriate length of time and cautioning against an overly long mourning period which they regarded as harmful. They also commented upon the psychological needs of the mourner and his emotional condition at various points in the mourning process. Secondly, they elaborated upon the image of God as a mourner. God suffers bereavement, and mourns in the same way as a human mourner would. The idea that God Himself would mourn indicates the value which the Rabbis placed upon that activity. Finally, the rabbis turned to a consideration of the origin, relevance, and symbolism of various mourning acts and rituals. These include the eating of certain foods and the performance of certain customs.

The third theme of this chapter is consolation and benevolence. These are acts of kindness toward the bereaved which are so highly regarded by the rabbis that they are considered to be one of the cornerstones of community survival as well as being of paramount ethical importance.

BEREAVEMENT

The Rabbis considered two major issues raised by the experience of bereavement. First, what meaning could be found in the death of a loved one? How could the bereaved interpret such a death so as to find comfort or consolation? Secondly, what impact did death have upon the bereaved, upon his or her spouse, family, and community?

In answering the question of "making sense" out of death the Rabbis provided two touching images, each with its own message. The first image is that of the death of Rabbi Meir's two sons. The distraught Meir can find comfort only in his wife Beruriah's gentle comparison of their children to a trust given them by God, who now calls for the return of that trust. No rational explanations are given for the boys' death, for none would be relevant. Man must be satisfied with the knowledge that life is ephemeral; the soul is on loan for a short time only. This theme is also developed in references to the death of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai's son. The second image is provided by Aaron's response to the death of his two sons. Informed by God that death was a kinder fate than leprosy, Aaron thanked God for such kindness to him (Aaron). The incident points up the feeling that death can be "a blessing." The bereaved can take solace in the fact that their loved one

did not have to suffer any longer. What is also expressed is the feeling of relief that the survivors no longer have to suffer, watching someone they love die.

Commenting on the impact of death, the Rabbis described the particularly intense effect upon the spouse, saying that only the spouse felt the partner's death. This is due to the strong feelings of loss of self, or part of self through the death of the other. Loss of a spouse is compared to the loss of the Temple. He or she, is irreplaceable. The survivor's world is darkened, he feels depression, lack of vigor and goals. He finds that many of his prior held convictions now fall short. The family and community too feel the death of a member. They are like archways out of which a stone has fallen. They are shaken, but if they are strong they do not collapse. For a community however, one loss is irreplaceable; that is a scholar.

The Search for Meaning

The Aggadists did not conceive of anyone's death as being meaningless. They sought to find a rationale for even the worst kind of grief--that caused by the death of children. In two poignant and touching images they describe the reactions of grief-stricken parents to the deaths of their children. The first of these two is the story of

the two sons of Rabbi Meir.[1] While he was in the synagog on the Sabbath his two sons died. His wife Beruriah waited until he came home, ushered out the Sabbath, and ate his meal. Evading his inquiries about his sons, she asked him whether she were obligated to return a trust deposited with her earlier. Rabbi Meir replied in the affirmative. Thereupon Beruriah showed him the bodies of their sons, soothing his anguished cries by reminding him: "...did you not say I must return the trust to its owner?"[2] Her words "comforted him and his mind was set at ease."[3] Another reason was given for these seemingly senseless deaths: the boys were wastrels, spending their study time eating and drinking. But this is only incidental. Only in the gentle words of Beruriah could Meir find some solace. Only then could he pronounce the דין הצדק , the declaration of submission to the will of God. Only then could he find meaning in the deaths of his beloved children.

For her words, Beruriah was called an אשת חיל , a woman of valor. This tribute was paid to her because she knew that for the bereaved reasons provide no meaning. Death is senseless and unreasonable. Even if a person were to know why a loved one has died that knowledge would do little to bring him solace. There are no explanations which would satisfy. Telling Meir that his sons died because they were

wastrels would only have exacerbated his anguish. Beruriah's words, however, were of a different tone and conveyed a different message. That message was that we do not know the reason for these deaths. No explanations are given, and none can be expected. We do know that these children were a trust, given to us for a brief period of time. God now wants to reclaim His trust and we cannot refuse. We can only submit to His will, and return the trust to Him. It is this message of acceptance of the unfathomable which brought Meir the comfort he so badly needed.

An elaboration and variation of this theme is found in the description of the grief of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai over the death of his son.[4] None of his disciples or colleagues were able to comfort him until Rabbi Eleazar ben 'Arak came. He told of a man with whom the king deposited a precious object. Every day the man wished to be quit of the trust in peace. Similarly, Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai received a son in trust from God. When the child died he was without sin. His father had returned the trust unimpaired (שלם) and in peace (בשלום),[5] and therefore should be comforted. Here, too, comfort comes not from the reason for the child's death but from the acceptance of the fact that God has claimed what is rightfully His and given to man only in trust. It is God's right to reclaim His

trust and man's responsibility to return it unimpaired. If he fulfills this responsibility he may take comfort in that knowledge.

This theme of the soul being a trust is found in Koheleth Rabbah.[6] This passage portrays the child as being the product of three partners--his mother, his father, and God. Each contributes a portion to the child's existence. However, when God wishes to take His portion--for whatever reason--the child dies, for God's contribution is the soul, and when the soul leaves life ceases. The parents have no recourse. They can only weep and mourn and accept the fact that when God wants His "deposit" back, there can be no refusal. Rabbi Judah the Prince likened the situation to a king who had a vineyard. An arrangement was made with a tenant-farmer[7] to cultivate the vineyard for a portion of the crop. When the king decided to take back his portion of the vineyard, the tenant-farmer cried that while the king's portion was combined with his, his (the tenant-farmer's) portion was safe from theft, but now that the king has taken away his own portion, the tenant-farmer's portion is defenseless. In this image, God is the king and the tenant-farmer represents the parents. As long as God leaves His portion in the child, the child grows and thrives and blossoms. When God decides to remove His portion (the soul) the child dies. There are no explana-

tions given. God is the supreme king, and He may take His deposit back at any time. The only comfort and meaning come from the realization that the life given to man is temporary and ephemeral--a "portion" given in trust for a limited time. When that trust is recalled one can only hope to have returned it in as pure a state as he received it.

The second image depicts Aaron's reactions to the death of his two sons.[8] In response to his protest against God's taking their lives, Aaron is told that the alternative to their deaths would have been leprosy. God could have afflicted them with the vilest of all known human diseases and caused them to remain forever isolated outside the camp. Apparently the humiliation and suffering that this decree would have entailed was felt to be worse than death itself. Aaron's response became one of gratitude to God for the kindness which God showed him (Aaron) in having his sons die. Aaron is thus not told God's reasons for the destruction of his offspring, but that their fate should have and could have been much worse, save for God's "loving kindness." The Psalm verse cited in the paragraph is from Psalms 63:4,

" כי טוב חסדך מחיים שפתי ישבחונך ".

"For Your loving-kindness (hesed) is better than life; my lips shall praise You."

The death of Aaron's sons is thus considered an act of kindness. He is told, in effect, "Why do you protest? Their fate could have been worse than death." Because Aaron therefore submitted to God's will and was silent--even grateful--in the face of his loss, God instructed Moses to comfort him.

What is of particular interest about this passage is that Aaron is the beneficiary of God's loving kindness, not his sons. In his statement of gratitude to God Aaron speaks of himself as the recipient of God's mercy. It is as if God's striking Nadab and Abihu with leprosy would have been a greater hardship and disgrace on Aaron than on Nadab and Abihu themselves. Aaron says:

"מודה אני לפניך על כל מה שעשית עמדי
שטוב היה לי, בחסד שעשית עמי שיותתו ולא
שיהיו חיים מצורעים על כן אני חייב להודות
לך ולשבחך."

> "I thank You for what You have done for me, for it is good for me; for the kindness (hesed) which You have done for me, that they die and not live as lepers. Therefore I am obliged to thank You and to praise You..."[9]

Five times in one sentence Aaron uses the first person to define the recipient of God's kindness. His sons' deaths were good for him. Therefore he submitted to God's will.

The idea which presents itself in this text is that death may actually be seen as a "kindness" to the living. It is difficult to watch a loved one suffer for extended periods of time. This suffering involves not only the physical agony, but the humiliation of feeling dependent, helpless, or totally reliant on others for the most basic of human needs. In addition there are the feelings of isolation which critically or terminally ill patients experience. In many cases those closest to the patient hope for his speedy death, as a release from suffering. When death comes, it is a "blessing," ostensibly for the person who has just died, but also for those about him, who no longer must witness his suffering. This vignette of Aaron's reaction suggests that the living hope for such a speedy death as much for their own sakes as for the sake of the dying. They cannot bear to watch the suffering. It takes its toll upon the living as well as the dying. Thus when death does mercifully come, the bereaved loved ones are grateful that their ordeal--as much as the ordeal of the deceased--is over.

We have been presented with several possibilities for putting the loss of a loved one into perspective. One is acceptance of the fact that life is fleeting, a trust granted only temporarily. There can be no solace in asking why someone died. Man must simply find what comfort he can in

the fact that when that trust is due it must be returned. The second thought is that often death is far kinder than months or years of agonizing pain, humiliation, and isolation. What is not to be denied, as the experience of Aaron indicates, is that such a death is also a "kindness" to the living, who no longer must endure witnessing the agonies of the dying.

The Impact of Bereavement

A second theme which is illustrated in the Aggada is the impact of bereavement on various people. Here too, we are provided with several vivid images, briefly worded but powerfully expressing the feelings of the bereaved.

A Spouse

The death of a spouse is described in a cluster of sensitive insights. We are told that a person's death is felt only by his or her spouse.[10] This brief statement descends directly to the core of grief. When a couple has spent significant amounts of time developing and deepening the kind of intimacy which creates of the two a single unity, each becomes an integral part of the other. Each has an investment of self in the other. A common language develops: responses, reactions, patterns of thought and behavior, all unique to that one particular relationship.

These cannot be duplicated. Nor can the tones and rhythms of that relationship be duplicated. Thus when one partner dies, the spouse experiences the loss of an integral part of himself or herself. An irreplaceable piece of the life-structure is gone. Part of one's self in which so much was invested is lost.

The uniqueness of the relationship between a man and his wife lends emphasis to R. Samuel b. Nahman's dictum that "all things can be replaced, except the wife of one's youth."[11] What this seems to refer to, once again, is the uniqueness of the marital relationship. A couple who have spent decades together as husband and wife share a unique, irreplaceable bond. Each has become a unique part of the fabric of the other's life. Once torn, that fabric can only be mended, or patched--never replaced. Thus it is that R. Johanan said: "He whose first wife has died (is grieved as much) as if the destruction of the Temple had taken place in his days..."[12] His most precious and prized possession has been lost to him. As the Temple was the center of the life of the community, so a man's wife is represented as the center of his life. As the loss of the Temple shattered and irrevocably changed the life of the community, so the loss of a man's wife shatters and irrevocably changes his existence. As the mourners for Zion

were obligated to make basic changes and rebuild their lives, so must the bereaved husband come to grips with the changes he must now make and begin to rebuild his life.

We may extend the analogy one more step. The first Temple was eventually rebuilt. There was a second Temple. But the two were not the same. Nor was the Jewish community the same community which had watched the first Temple fall. The two relationships were qualitatively different. Similarly, in the spirit of R. Johanan's remark, the relationship between a man and his second wife will be different from the relationship between himself and his first wife. In addition to building a new and satisfying relationship, the couple will have to contend with vestiges of the previous union. The Rabbis recognized the difficulties involved when they commented that effecting such a union "is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea."[13]

The last images in the cluster consist of a triad of brief statements describing the physical effects of such a loss upon a person. R. Alexandri states that "the world is darkened" for the bereaved husband.[14] The "light of one's life"--husband or wife--has gone out. The significant other who has brought brightness and joy and love into one's life has died. His world has become dark, empty, at times hope-

less. Where his world was once bright and full it is now void and dark. "His steps grow short...."[15] R. Jose links his metaphor to a verse in the book of Job:[16]

". אונו צעדיו יצרו "

"The steps of his vigor shall be straitened."[17]

We behold the image of a man whose life has lost it purpose. Where he once walked proudly with a vigorous pace, he now plods along, bent by grief and sorrow. He has become lethargic. He has lost that which gave meaning and purpose to his life. His life now seems bereft of goals, devoid of meaning. His "shortness of step" describes a state of depression in which there is little energy for any forward motion, psychological or physical. He cannot progress; he cannot continue with his life as he did before his loss. Finally, along with symbols of the bleakness and depression which death brings in its wake is the comment that "his counsel falls(' עצתו יפלו)"[18] Death has a way of shattering platitudes and preconceptions. With the death of a significant other many preconceived notions and ideas held to be truths can no longer maintain their validity. Advice which was glibly and casually dispensed no longer provides solutions. Counsel once held to be good suddenly becomes irrelevant. The mourner must seek other words, other images, other counsel which will not fall--which will not fail him.

Family and Community

The death of a person has been seen as the loss of a vital and irreplaceable piece of his or her spouse's life-fabric. The loss of a family or community member is seen in a similar light. Each of these members is like a stone in an archway. Should one of these stones be removed, the entire structure is shaken.[19] Thus the death of one person affects his entire family and his entire community. Each person is vital to his family and community, and his death is the concern of all. Community participation in grieving for the death of a member signifies that concern. It also indicates that although the archway has been shaken it has not fallen. The stones are still holding together. That community is strong which can be shaken but not shattered.

The Rabbis felt that one loss was indeed irreplaceable. That was a sage.[20] There are many things which are of service to the world, but all can be replaced. But no one can bring a substitute for a wise man. Each wise man, each scholar, each sage, is unique. Each is a treasure unlike any of the others. Each has his own unique commitment and contribution to make. True wisdom is the treasure of a few. When a wise man dies, all that remains is the wisdom he has

imparted to others. It is for this very reason that such people are irreplaceable.

The Aggadists, as we have seen, used a number of images to describe the impact of death on spouses, families, and communities. A person's death is felt to have the most intense impact upon his spouse, because of the nature of the bond between them. Loss of a spouse means loss of oneself, or part of oneself, which can never be duplicated or replaced. The death of a spouse is considered to be as tragic in its implications as the destruction of the Temple. The relationships between community and Temple and husband and wife even bear certain resemblances in the sense that both community and individual undergo certain similar grief and loss experiences, as well as similar needs to reconstruct their life-fabrics. It is recognized, however, that the new structure is not identical with the old in either case. The images used to depict the bereaved spouse's sense of loss describe the sense of bleakness and darkness of existence, the depression and loss of vigor and purpose, and the shattering of platitudes and the need for new counsel--a revised, more relevant world view. Finally, the impact on the community is described as the loss of a stone from an archway, which is shaken but which does not collapse. The implications

of that statement for the strength of a community and the need to share life crisis events are noted. Finally, it is noted that in the view of the Rabbis, a sage can never be replaced. This is due to his uniqueness as both a human being and a wise man.

MOURNING

The second theme discussed in this chapter is that of mourning. The most basic Aggadic comment on this subject is that of Rabbi Meir: "Shall a man lose something that is precious to him and not weep?"[21] Mourning is clearly seen as the response to bereavement--to the loss of something precious. In considering the subject of mourning the Aggadists developed three major themes. The first is the course and psychology of mourning. Recognizing that there was a need for mourning, they also cautioned against protracted mourning. Unreasonable mourning was described as harmful to the individual mourner and to the community. In addition to discussing the course of the mourning experience the Rabbis commented on the emotional state of the mourner at various points in the mourning process. They pointed out the mourner's need to accept the fact of his bereavement, in order to achieve a healthy resolution of his grief. They also distinguished between "internal" and "external" mourning.

Secondly, they affirmed that where there is death, God Himself mourns. They portrayed God taking a human king as a model of mourning. God mourned the destruction of His world before the flood. He was about to lose something

precious: the world which He had created. Here, too, He was engaged in very human mourning activity. Finally, after the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judea, God calls the mourning women to take up a lament. This lament is seen to be not only for the devastated populace but for God Himself. Again it is noted that the mourner weeps as much for himself as he does for his loss.

The third idea to which the Rabbis devoted their attention was mourning behavior. They conceived of mourning and burial as originating with the first human beings, in the mythic past. They commented on the relevance of eating certain foods during mourning. Lentils were symbolic of the mourner himself and of the nature of life's griefs. Just as the lentil is round, so too does grief roll around to everyone. Finally, there is a detailed enumeration of various mourning customs as exemplified by a human king. What they have in common is the fact that they symbolically reenact the mourner's loss in terms of his own person and his environment.

The Course and Psychology of the Mourning Process

The Aggadists commented upon the mourning process in terms of its chronology and psychology. They stated that there is clearly a time for mourning, as there is a time for

the expression of other emotions. This time for mourning, however, has a terminus. The greatest intensity of grief lasts three days. The next four days are of lesser intensity. It is stated as a "fact"[22] that grief lessens in intensity from the first day to the seventh. While the Aggadists stated that no labor should be done during this seven day period, they made allowances for people whose economic conditions would make such a moratorium difficult. Thus, a punctilious poor man, an "ani medukdak," might perform whatever labor was necessary to support himself and his family after the first three days of intense mourning. They also insisted that mourning have its limits. Too much mourning was an unreasonable hardship on the community, and those who grieve too much allow grief to become a permanent part of their lives. In addition, too much weeping is bad for the eyes.

The Aggadists accurately portrayed the emotional state of the mourner. They described two different kinds of mourning, one "internal" and the other "external." They distinguished between the mourner's condition before and after he has buried his dead. They pointed out that mourners weep not only for the dead but also for themselves. Finally, they described an important prerequisite for successful grief work. That prerequisite is the acceptance of the fact that the one who is being mourned is actually dead.

The Chronology of Mourning

The clearest statement of the idea that all things have their appropriate time is found in Ecclesiastes.[23] Every human action and emotion has its proper place, including death and mourning. In eight expressions which constitute the clearest literary parallelism in the passage, mourning is given its appropriate venue in the affairs of men. The Aggadists caught the significance of the fact that in the Biblical verse mourning precedes joy:[24]

" A time to weep and a time to laugh - "עת לבכות ועת לשחוק
" A time to mourn and a time to dance - "עת לספוד ועת לרקוד

Weep, say the Rabbis, when weeping is appropriate. Cry when crying is called for. Mourn when mourning is in order. But when the mourning is done and the crying is over there is a place for joy and laughter. Mourning is the time for crying and eulogies. When the time of mourning has passed, however, laughter and dancing and lightheartedness again become appropriate:

"עת לבכות בשעת האבל ועת לשחוק אחר האבל
עת לספוד בשעת האבל ועת לרקוד אחר האבל."

"A time to weep--at the time of mourning
and a time to laugh--after the mourning

A time to mourn--at the time of mourning
and a time to dance--after the mourning."

This Aggadic statement conveys several messages. First it recognizes that grief and mourning are significant and have their place. Second, though they have their place, their duration must be limited. Once mourning is over, one may be joyful. Third, there is hope for the bereaved that his grief will ultimately give way to the joy which will come at the appropriate time. It is a message of hope and comfort as well as an emphatic statement that no emotion--not even grief--can or should last forever.

In describing the chronology of the mourning period the Rabbis made the observation that while mourning is most intense during the initial seven days, it constantly diminishes during that period and during the ensuing twelve months.[25] The first seven days are further subdivided. The first three days see the most intense grief[26] while the latter four days are a period of lesser intensity. During this period the mourner is to do no labor.[27] An exception was made, however, for those whose economic condition made this injunction impossible. The "ani medukdak"--the punctilious indigent--could resume labor--to support himself and his family only--after the three days of intensest mourning.

The delineation of periods of three or seven days of intense mourning seems to bear a relationship to a concep-

tion of the soul mourning for the body. According to this image, until the body begins to decay and is no longer recognizable, the soul mourns for it[28] or lingers between heaven and earth without rest.[29] After this period of three or seven days, the soul concludes its mourning and is "at rest."[30]

This image of the soul refusing to rest or being unable to find rest until the body begins to decay mirrors a need of mourners which we shall discuss shortly. That need is to know that the one being mourned is actually dead. Without that acknowledgment, one can never be comforted. The example is given of Jacob who was never comforted over the "death" of Joseph.[31] He could not accept the reality of his son's death.

The behavior of the soul is seen to parallel the reactions of the mourners. The soul itself is bereaved over the loss of the body. It is distraught and for a distinct period of time can find no peace. It must be convinced that the body is actually dead. It therefore waits until the flesh begins to decay. Only then, when there is no longer any hope for revival, does the soul depart in peace and find comfort. This takes a certain amount of time to happen, and that interval is the period during which the loss is felt most intensely. It is the

time necessary for the mourner to acknowledge that a loved one is dead and begin to confront that reality. There was no unanimity among the Rabbis regarding this interlude. However, they did make clear that the coming to terms with the reality of death had to take place very early in the mourning period. Otherwise the soul would drift between heaven and earth, torn between illusion and reality, and unable to be ultimately comforted. This conception of grief work done by the soul as mourner models the same process in the human mourners. It is a unique and vivid analogy.

Limits to Mourning

The image of the mourning soul and the statement that mourning takes place over twelve months are indications by the rabbis that grief work involves both a process and a general time frame during which that process takes place. In addition they indicated that there are limits beyond which mourning is actually excessive. They express their feelings about excessive mourning in several ways. One comment is the simple and straightforward statement that while not to mourn is impossible, excessive mourning is also impossible because it would work a hardship on the community.[32] While this statement is made in the context of mourning for the destruction of the Temple it is useful to examine its implications for the individual mourner. Asking an

entire community to show expressions of grief and mourning would impose upon its members an unbearable burden. There are several reasons for this. First, if the community is to rebuild itself and begin to take measures to ensure its continued survival, its energies must sooner or later be redirected toward those goals. Continuing to focus the energies of an entire community on mourning for what is lost would only serve to delay its reconstruction and possibly prevent it altogether. The grieving must come to an end and the business of sustaining a community must begin again. Second, the imposition of excessive mourning upon the community means that vital energies would be diverted from those very basic, mundane needs which every person has for feeding, housing, and clothing his family and himself. Excessive mourning might take a shopkeeper from his business or a farmer from his fields and result in the neglect of the day to day sustenance of his family. Thus excessive mourning by a community is frowned upon because it diverts important energies away from the essential activities needed to sustain the community on a day to day basis and to ensure its survival.

Excessive mourning by an individual might be approached on the same terms. The mourner must ultimately re-involve himself with life-giving and life-sustaining activities.

After the withdrawal which normally accompanies mourning there is a need to redirect one's energies from grieving to living. Too much mourning, prevents the individual from putting his life back together after the loss. In addition it prolongs the personal neglect which often accompanies mourning. Excessive mourning makes the process of personal reconstruction that much more difficult. Thus the individual, like the community, needs to refocus his energies from mourning the loss to renewing and reshaping his life.

A second expression of the Rabbis' opposition to excessive mourning occurs in their statement that a limit has been set for the amount of tears one may shed, lest he damage his eyes.(33) Among the kinds of tears which are harmful are those shed by grief, particularly grief from the death of an adult child. Such a loss is particularly grievous because it appears to violate the natural order of events. As the parent mourned for his parents, he naturally expects to precede his children in death and be mourned by them. The death of one's "kaddish" destroys that expectation, leaving the parent bereft of his past (his parents for whom he mourned) and of his future (his child, for whom he must now grieve).

Thus, while mourning is necessary and beneficial up to a point, excessive grief is definitely harmful. It impairs one's vision.

We need not take literally the image of excessive mourning impairing vision. Such mourning impairs more than the physical sense of sight. It reflects the inability to see past one's immediate loss and look to the future. It indicates that the mourner cannot or will not refocus his energies on the new directions his life must now take. It prevents the mourner from seeing anything else but the past and his own loss. Excessive mourning not only hurts the eyes: it keeps the mourner from seeing anything beyond his own grief, and from moving forward from it.

A third plea against excessive mourning is that of R. Levi,[34] asking those whose lives are filled with grief and gloomy thoughts to avoid allowing their sorrow to "entwine itself permanently"[35] in their lives. Otherwise they will become grief-mongers, spreading gloom wherever they go. The image of grief entwining itself around one's life is a powerful one. Not only does excessive mourning completely envelop one in grief, making it extremely difficult to break free, but it also has a negative effect on all about the mourner. Excessive mourning becomes in this image an insidious, debilitating trap, imprisoning the mourner in a crippling depression which he carries with him wherever he goes and communicates to all about him.

The Psychology of the Mourner

In addition to describing the mourning process and providing emphatic admonitions against excessive mourning, the Aggadists portrayed several other facets of the mourner's psychological state. Their observations provide us with a number of valuable insights. First, there is the statement by R. Simeon b. Elazar that one not attempt to comfort a mourner whose dead lies before him.[36] At that moment, when a person has just been bereft, or has just been notified that a loved one has died, there can be no words of comfort. The mourner at that moment feels such an acute sense of loss that words are simply inadequate. He "sees his grief before him"[37] and "his mind is distraught."[38]

"כיון שרואה צערו לפניו צעק מפלגתי."

He is even forbidden to recite the Shema and the Tefilla,[39] because his faith has probably suffered a shattering blow. Only after the dead has been buried may he resume his normal religious duties. There is great wisdom here. At the moment of a person's most acute sense of loss, when life has suddenly become devoid of meaning, he is not open to words of comfort. He is not to be confronted with religious duties requiring expressions of faith. At his own personal moment of loss he is more likely to blaspheme than praise. Once the dead has been buried, once he has had a chance to begin

to confront the reality of his situation and start to work through his grief, words of comfort are then in order, as are the routines of daily prayer and religious duties.

A second observation by the Rabbis came from the refusal of Jacob to be comforted for the reported death of Joseph. From the grief of Jacob the Rabbis concluded that one "can be comforted for the dead, but not for the living."[40] The psychological reality which the Aggadists were pointing out is the need to be utterly convinced the person being mourned is actually dead. Once the reality of that death is acknowledged the mourner can begin to accept and work it through. A death not acknowledged is a death not accepted, and when one cannot or will not accept the death of a loved one, there can be no comfort because the grief process continues indefinitely. Since there is no death, there is nothing for which to be comforted. Reality has been met with denial. Where there is "nothing" for which to mourn successful mourning cannot take place, and the mourner flounders between his anguished denial of what he knows is true and the ultimate comfort which could be his.

A third comment describes the anguish of the mourner. No mourner, says R. Simon, may bring peace-offerings (שלמים). Only he whose heart is at peace (שלם) may bring such an

offering. A mourner is not at peace.[41] He is in emotional turmoil. He feels angry, guilty, depressed. He may feel lonely, abandoned, lost. He may act out in any number of ways, all indicating his reactions to grief. Such a person may not bring an offering which represents calmness of spirit and serenity of heart.

A fourth image draws upon the custom of beating the breast at funerals to convey the message that people do not weep for the dead only. They also weep and mourn for themselves, knowing full well that they too are mortal and destined to die:[42]

"אמר ר' מנא למה כותשין. על לב? לומר כולה לתמן."

"Rabbi Mana said, 'Why do the mourners beat on their hearts? To indicate that all are destined for that place.'" This knowledge forces itself into a person's awareness particularly at funerals, especially the funerals of parents or close friends. The mourner becomes painfully aware that he is a step closer to his own death. Fewer barriers stand between him and the grave. His denial of his own mortality has lost another prop. We find in the phenomenon of the mourner wailing for himself an attempt to bring into consciousness the realization that when one mourns, it is in great part his own death that he mourns. Losing part of oneself through the death of another becomes a prelude to

the ultimate and total loss of oneself through death. The grief and the wailing and the "beating on the breast" is, according to R. Mana's observation, the anguished preface to one's own death, and since all are destined to travel the same road one would do well to be aware of the personal implications of grieving. The Aggada minces no words. This psychological undercurrent of mourning is bared in all its starkness. No attempt is made to blunt the intensity of the fact or soften the blow. We are told simply and straightforwardly that people who mourn mourn for themselves as well as for the dead.

Perhaps it is this phenomenon which the Rabbis had in mind when they commented upon "internal" and "external" mourning.[43]

"אונינה מבפנים ואבלה מבחוץ."

Isaiah[44] observes how the gates of Zion shall "lament and mourn (ואנו ואבלו)." The two terms for mourning are taken to mean internal mourning (ve-'anu) and external mourning (ve-'avlu). Each has its own characteristics. The external manifestations of mourning are the weeping, the lamenting, the beating of the breast. All of these acts of mourning are ostensibly for the person who has died (אבל). However, an internal component of these actions exists. That component involves the grieving for

one's own self (אבל)--a grief which lies hidden and unrecognized beneath the surface of the external mourning behavior.

R. Abbahu's conception of internal and external mourning can be seen in a second way. "Evel," external mourning refers to the entire range of mourning behavior: ritual activity, weeping, beating of the breast--any behavior which outwardly identifies the person as a mourner or in which he engages in the course of the mourning process, including delayed grief reactions. Internal mourning, "aninut," can be seen as representing the mourner's psychological/emotional state--what he is feeling, thinking, or sensing. This may be anger or guilt or loneliness. The mourner's emotional state may give rise to much of his external behavior. On the other hand, there may be no obvious connection between the two or possibly some contradiction.

Perhaps the most profound interpretation of R. Abbahu's insight into the psychological inputs to the mourning process comes from the use of אבל --internal mourning--to describe the mourner during the period between death and burial. His grief and anguish are most acute at this time. There is nothing that makes any sense to him. He is in shock, and can only react with numbed silence. It is this

silence, this shock, this numbness to which the passage refers. This is the "aninut," the internal, private, profound grief and sense of loss which is incomprehensible, and which finds no expression in word or action. This is internal mourning, felt most acutely. Only after the dead is buried, and the mourner begins to come to terms with his loss does external mourning ("avelut") find its place. After the burial the mourner is ready for the therapeutic effects of the mourning rituals and the catharsis of weeping. Only after the passage of that first intense interval can he begin to give expression to his grief and search for meaning in the death of his loved one.

God Mourns

The image of God mourning is one of the most evocative in the Aggadic literature. The knowledge that even God mourns the slain brought a measure of comfort to the bereaved. The Aggadists presented several depictions of this theme, including one in which God consults the ministering angels regarding the mourning practices of human kings and decides to model His mourning after theirs.

The death of Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, gave the Aggadists an opportunity to portray God as a mourner.[45] Although He slew Aaron's sons God did not remove His pre-

sence, leading the Rabbis to conclude that God remained with the ark and in the vicinity of the Tabernacle as a mourner.[46] The mourning God is a touching figure. Even the Deity is not immune to the impact of death. Even He who allowed death to enter the world suffers bereavement and mourns the death of His creatures. The message conveyed to man is that God shares his sorrows. This message finds its fullest expression in a scene which finds God in consultation with the ministering angels. God questions the angels regarding the mourning practices of a human king.[47] As they describe each act of mourning God responds, "I shall do likewise," ("אעשה כמוהו") God is seen to share the suffering and the sorrow of Man. As man wears black and dons sackcloth, so does God. As man dims his lamps the celestial lights become dim. As man goes barefoot, so does God. Man sits silent; God does likewise. Man overturns his couch; God's throne is overturned. Man rends his garments; God does likewise. Man sits and weeps; so, too, does God. God laments the dead along with the human mourners. He becomes a part of the mourning experience. We see here a conception of a God who, far from being detached from the affairs of man, is a participant in them. He is affected deeply by man's suffering. He mourns the dead just as the bereaved do, imitating man in performing those acts which symbolize mourning. The image of the mourning God conveys to man the message that his life

and death do not go unnoticed. God is present even at the moment of greatest sorrow--even at that moment when man would sooner curse God than praise Him. God is present and takes His place among the mourners.

A third image is that of God mourning the destruction of His world for seven days before the flood.[48] God, says the Midrash, was grieving for the impending loss of his creation. It is as if God were preparing Himself for the death of his creation, breaking His bonds with it, saying farewell. The feeling expressed here mirrors human behavior. Man faces his own impending death and the impending death of loved ones with a form of mourning. What underlies this anticipatory mourning is the realization that what is about to be lost is part of oneself. Thus the mourning is a way of coming to terms with that loss, gradually severing the ties to loved ones and community and bidding farewell.

A fourth image of God in mourning provides us with another familiar insight. After the destruction of both Israel and Judea God requests that the mourning women be called to "take up a wailing for us..."[49] ונשאו עלינו נהי. Of significance to the Rabbis is the fact that God requests a lament for "us." This is interpreted by the Rabbis to mean "בשבילי ובשבילן" --"For Me (God) and for Them (Israel, the slain, slaughtered and exiled)."[50] The

wailing women are asked to lament not only for those who have been lost, but also on behalf of God who has suffered that loss. God requests a "wailing" not only for the dead but also for the bereaved, namely Himself. The mourning women cry for the dead. Here they cry for the living as well.

These depictions of God mourning provide a description of human mourning via images of the Divine. The experience of God is a model of the experience of man. God suffers bereavement and mourns for himself as well as the slain. He mourns the impending loss of the world--part of Himself. He engages in mourning behavior, imitating the human experience. All of these images serve to convey the message that God is a partner in man's bereavement and that God actually shares man's sense of loss.

These images of God mourning also serve to demonstrate the value which the Rabbis placed upon the act of mourning. The very fact that God is seen to mourn indicates that it is important for human beings to mourn. It is included as one of those acts which the "living shall lay to his heart," and which God Himself will repay.[51] We shall discuss such acts of benevolence further on in this chapter.

Mourning Behavior

A third major theme relating to the subject of mourning concerns the rituals and behaviors of the mourner himself. The comments of the Aggadists relating to this theme fall into four categories: the question of the origin of mourning practices, burial, food, and signs of mourning. These images provide an insight into the thinking of the Rabbis on the origins and rationales for mourning customs and behaviors.

The Origin of Mourning

The practice of mourning originated in the mythic past with the death of Adam.[52] We are told that when Adam died he was buried with great honor by Cain, Seth, Enoch, and Methusaleh. The entire population of the world took up a "great wailing"[53] for him. This practice became a "statute among men ("חוק הבין האדם"),"[54] setting the pattern for all of mankind for the rest of time.

This image of mourning portrays that institution as beginning with the death of the being who brought death into the world. This mythic mourning of the very first members of the human race became the prototype of the practice of mourning for all mankind. Each mourner is a link in a chain of grief extending back to the beginning of time. He be-

comes, as all must, a participant in the universal experience of death.

Burial

The origins of burial also were located in the mythic past. Man did not originally know about burial. He had to be taught. The first person confronted with this dilemma was Cain.[55] After he killed Abel, Abel's corpse lay upon the ground where he had fallen. Cain had no idea what to do with the body. God brought two birds into view. One bird killed the other and buried the carcass. This demonstration showed Cain what to do with Abel's corpse. He dug a pit in the earth and buried his brother's body in it.

Man had to look to nature for an appropriate way of caring for his dead. He had to be taught what to do. However, the "lesson" did not come from outside of the natural world. It came from a milieu with which man was familiar. Since no man had ever before experienced the need to bury a corpse, Cain had to take his model from nature, from the environment of which he was a part. It is possible that we see here a statement concerning the transmission of culture and customs in a society. Man learns his responses from those about him who have already experienced what he must now undergo. They provide the model from which he fashions

his life. Cain thus becomes the human proto-practitioner of burial, a response which he himself learned from the natural world of which he was a part.

Burial of the corpse was thus a necessity in the eyes of the Rabbis. However, they made it clear that burial was not to become a greater problem for the bereaved than the death itself. We are told that at one point burial was so costly that people simply could not afford to bury their dead. So they would simply set the corpse down and flee. "היו מניחין אותו והולכין." [56] Unable to provide the deceased with the proper attention, the relatives would simply drop the body and run. Rabban Gamaliel provided a solution for the problem. For his burial he chose simple linen garments which were far less costly than the usual burial finery. In doing so he provided a model which everyone thereafter adopted.

Two insights can be derived from this observation regarding burial garments. First, there is a second example of people learning their cultural responses from those about them. In this instance the role model was a great scholar and revered leader. His behavior was emulated as it was considered to be legitimate and authentic. Thus it became acceptable to refrain from investing huge sums of money in burial garments. A simple standard of burial shrouds

ensured that none be embarrassed for lack of funds to bury their dead in a fitting manner.

The second item of note is the concern that the dead must be buried in a fitting manner, even if lavish funerals must be foregone. The overarching concern was a proper and honorable burial. Fancy burial shrouds were of secondary importance. Hence, in order to allow even the poorest family to provide proper attention to their deceased, a simple, inexpensive burial shroud was instituted. Concern for the living was a prerequisite for proper care of the dead.

Food

The Rabbis link two foods to mourning: wine and lentils. Wine is to be given to the mourners because it gladdens them.[57] Their souls are "depressed within them(שפל רוח בתוכן)" and bitter.[58] In fact, ten cups of wine were to be drunk in a house of mourning.[59] The wine was probably not provided to the mourners in order to restore them to a previous state of happiness. It seems more appropriate to see the wine as a sedative given the grief-stricken to ease some of the anguish and shock or simply to help them sleep. Often the calming effect of the wine is to ease the initial agony and shock of the sad news. The therapeutic

use of wine, however was limited. When people began to become intoxicated, the practice was discontinued.[60]

The second mourning-related food which the Rabbis discussed was lentils.[61] The eating of lentils is said to have been customary even in the days of Adam and Eve, who ate them as a sign of mourning for Abel.[62] Jacob prepared lentils for his father Isaac to comfort him (Isaac) after the death of Abraham. Of more interest than the ultimate origin of the custom, however, is the conception of the lentil as a mourning symbol, and the symbolism of eating such a food. It is to these ideas which we now turn.

The Rabbis asked, "What does the lentil represent which makes it an effective mourning symbol?" They found two answers. One answer is that lentils represent the mourner and his silent agony.[63] The human mourner sits silently and alone.[64] As the silence is not broken, neither is the perfectly round shape of the lentil. Unlike other legumes the lentil has no cleft or seam. Since it has no "mouth," it symbolizes the mourner who is obliged to sit silently, accepting the death of a loved one with no recourse and no useful protest.

The second answer is that lentils represent the mourning which "rolls around" to all the inhabitants of the world:

"אב עדשה לו מגולגלת על אבלות מגלגלת ומתגרת

על כל הבאי עולם." [65]

"Just as the lentil is round (מגולגלת) so too does mourning roll (מגלגלת) and come around to all those who come into the world."[66]

The mourner thus eats lentils to indicate that the wheel of mourning has rolled around to him. In doing so, he signifies to all about him that he is in mourning.

The roundness of the lentil and the egg[67] addresses the cyclical nature of existence. It is to be remembered that they are consumed for the purposes of comfort and consolation as well as a representation of mourning. Thus, at the same time that the mourner is eating lentils and eggs to give expression to his grief (which in itself is a psychologically healthful act) he is acknowledging that just as mourning has rolled around to him it will also roll away. Life is a cycle of joy and bereavement. Man is constantly adding pieces to the fabric of his life only to have others torn away. These experiences do not occur at exact intervals. Joy and sorrow may follow close upon each other or there may be years intervening between them. Perhaps the egg represents this better than the lentil since its external shape is round yet not perfectly so, while internally (the yolk) it is perfectly round.

The eating of these foods at a meal for mourners has a significance all its own. The very fact that the mourners eat a prescribed meal indicates that they must begin the reconstruction of their lives. We have noted the distraught condition of the mourner whose dead lies before him. One of his reactions is loss of appetite. Eating provides him necessary nourishment. It is a step back to the basic routines of life. By replenishing his strength he therefore begins to repair the broken structure of his existence--symbolically and actually. Eating in and of itself provides a necessary therapy.

In particular, the ingestion of foods representing both mourning and comfort is significant. Eating these foods might indicate that the mourner is bearing a burden of grief. This grief is affecting him emotionally and physically. He has suffered a physical blow as well as an emotional blow and expresses that feeling through the act of eating. Perhaps too, there is an indication that just as he has accepted this sorrow there will also come a time when he will receive consolation for his loss.

Symbolic Acts

The act of eating a meal of mourning or a meal of comfort and the designation of certain symbolic foods are

examples of a variety of mourning symbols. Other mourning symbols involve various symbolic acts, as we shall see in the following pages.

The image of a mourning king provides the model for mourning behavior. He engages in several symbolic acts. First, he hangs sackcloth over the entrance of his house[68] or dons black and covers his head with sackcloth.[69] Black is clearly seen as the universal color of mourning and sorrow. The world has quite literally gone black and bleak for the mourner. One who lit up his world is gone and the mourner is engulfed in the shadow that loss has created. He covers his head, wishing to withdraw from the world. He hangs sackcloth on the entrance to his house, requesting that others stay away. He is enwrapped by his own sorrow, encircled by the eclipse caused by the loss of his loved one.

He extinguishes his lamps.[70] The one who brightened his world is dead. A lamp has gone out. There is no clearer way to express that feeling than by actually extinguishing the lamps which bring light to a darkened house. All who see the darkened dwelling are immediately aware that as the house has been darkened so too have lives of those who dwell within.

He sits and is silent ("דומם").[71] Perhaps a more appropriate translation is "dumbly." He is "dumbfounded." He has no words to express his grief. He sits in shocked and stunned silence. The mourner is unable to give any verbal expression to his grief. His numbed silence conveys his message.

He overturns the couches ("מכפה את המטות").[72] His life has been disrupted. Its rhythm will no longer be the same. Hopes, plans, dreams--all have been interrupted and shattered. Life cannot go on as usual. The very house in which the mourner lives must in some way express the loss of one who shared it with him. Thus it is that the bed, the symbol of shared life and love and dreams, is overturned, symbolizing the breaking of the bond between those who slept there.

Lastly, he tears his clothing.[73] Even the king will rend his purple garment. The image of tearing clothing may call to mind ancient images of people ripping their own flesh in agony and anguish. Certain religious rituals still preserve that custom in the form of self flagellation for the atonement of sins. The act of rending one's clothes provides a physical release for one who has been notified of a death. The tearing at the same time expresses the sensation that someone has been torn from him.

The image of the ripping of one's garment is the most powerful of all of these images, because it conveys so many meanings. The feeling of having been torn away from a loved one is conveyed visually through the act of ripping. But it evokes the strongest response in the sound of the ripping fabric. No better representation of the anguish of the bereaved exists.

Ripping is a physical act. It provides release for the powerful energies and emotions called forth in the mourner. But it is also a turning upon oneself. The mourner has lost a piece of himself. He expresses that loss by actually physically reenacting the tearing away of his loved one. His person must suffer, if only symbolically, the experience of his soul. This "undoing" of clothing is also represented by other examples. We are told that when the Egyptians saw the coffin of the patriarch Jacob, they undid their girdles,[74] and loosened their "shoulder knots."[75] Here too, we see the act of undoing one's clothing as a symbolic act of mourning.

What is apparent in all of these images is that bereavement and the feelings engendered are represented by physical acts. Because he feels isolated he symbolically isolates himself by covering his head or doorway with sackcloth. Feeling his world to be darkened, he darkens his house. His

life disrupted and overturned, he overturns his bed, the symbol of the life he once shared with his loved one. Because a piece of himself has been torn from him, he rends his clothing, and symbolically, his own person. These strong images convey, as no statement can, the depth of the feeling of loss when death strikes.

CONSOLATION AND BENEVOLENCE

The third theme discussed by the Aggadists is consolation and benevolence. The term used by the Rabbis for benevolence is "gemilut hesed"--a "reciprocity of benevolent acts." These include burying the dead, attending the funeral, mourning, and caring for the mourners by comforting them and providing for their sustenance.

These various acts are given great significance by the Rabbis. God is seen as a model for acts of benevolence, and by the principle of "imitatio dei" man is exhorted to do the same. The images provided by the Rabbis of the acts of human models illustrate strongly that the principle of loving-kindness is as basic to the fabric of Jewish life as is the belief in the existence of God. Indeed, it provides the bond necessary to enable a community to preserve its integrity despite tragedy, enabling it to transcend even death.

God Buries the Dead and Visits the Mourners

Just as God is seen to participate in the mourning for the dead, He is seen to attend to their burial and comfort the mourners, as well as other acts of benevolence.[76] He attended to the burial of Moses and showed loving kindness

to Aaron by allowing all Israel to see his coffin. This proved that Aaron was really dead and thus gave the people an opportunity to show loving-kindness to Aaron.[77] Even if a man has children to attend to his burial, God also will attend to him.[78] According to R. Simlai[79] God recites the blessing for mourners,[80] the "birkat-'avelim." God comforted Isaac in this way after the death of Abraham.[81] He also comforted Isaac in this way after the deaths of Deborah, Rebecca's nurse and of Isaac's own mother, Sarah.[82]

These images of God doing acts of loving-kindness are taken by the Rabbis as the model for human conduct. They illustrate the principle of "imitatio dei," the emulation of divine behavior. If God deigns to bury the dead and mourn with man and comfort the bereaved, can any human do less for his fellow? Furthermore, such images illustrate the conception of a God who is compassionately involved in the affairs of man. Although man may not always comprehend or be able to apprehend God's actions, the message is that God does care compassionately for His creatures--even to the extent of mourning with and for them.

The High Regard of "Gemilut Hasadim"

The performance of deeds of kindness for which there could be no material recompense was advocated strongly by

the Aggadists. Nabal the Carmelite was used as a case in point, in order to stress the importance of these acts of benevolence. R. Samuel b. Nahman relates that when Samuel died, all Israel mourned for him except for the wicked Nabal, who held parties. This disrespect prompted R. Judah to say that "if one denies the principle of acts of loving-kindness it is as if he denied the existence of God:"[83]

". שכל הכופר בגמילות חסדים כאלו כופר בעיקר"

The equation of performing acts of benevolence with the cardinal principle of God's existence affirms the exalted status of such acts. To cynically deny the necessity of deeds which serve "both the living and the dead"[84] is tantamount to rejecting the existence of God.

Another image that was used to emphasize the importance of acts of benevolence was the behavior of the wicked Jezebel, arch-foe of Elijah.[85] It is related that when a corpse was carried through the market place, Jezebel would follow it, wailing and clapping, and eulogizing. Thus, when Elijah prophesied that the dogs would consume her flesh[86] he indicated that they would not eat those parts of her body which performed acts of benevolence. When she was buried, her skull, hands, and feet remained intact.[87]

Thus even the most wicked of persons is described as being rewarded for an act of benevolence. Even sinful

Jezebel is cited as a model from whom the duty of benevolence may be learned. Practice of this ideal proved redemptive in part for Jezebel, whose behavior was otherwise morally reprehensible. That her practice of benevolence was exemplary in the eyes of the Rabbis is a vivid indication of their appreciation of its ethical and religious value.

Still another example of the high ethical priority given to such acts of benevolence is the description of how Solomon included two special gates in his temple. One gate was for bridegrooms while the other was for the mourners and the excommunicated. The Israelites would spend Sabbath at these two gates, greeting the bridegrooms with joy and wishing the mourners comfort from God. When the Temple was destroyed, the sages ordained that the practice be continued in the synagogs and houses of study. Bridegrooms and mourners would go to these places and the community would share their joy and join in their sorrow.[88]

It can be seen from the foregoing image that these acts of benevolence were so highly regarded that they became the ideal and standard of behavior for the entire community. The society as a whole was obligated to rejoice with the bridegroom and commiserate with the mourner. To achieve this end, these activities were ordained for the houses of

worship and study where the people congregated regularly. Thus the community would not miss an opportunity to exercise compassion, and the mourners would have an opportunity to be supported and comforted by a compassionate congregation.

Three striking images provide us with a sense of the importance of acts of compassion. They are taken respectively from the areas of theology, the individual, and the community. Their combined message is that society as well as its individual members has an obligation to perform acts of גמילות חסדים.
Repudiation of the significance of such acts attacks the very foundation upon which that society is built.

And the Living Will Lay it to His Heart[89] "ונתן אל לבו"

While the performance of benevolent acts has no material recompense it has the function of doing honor to both the dead and the living through the acts of proper burial and comforting the mourners. However, in performing such acts, the "gomel hesed," the one who acts benevolently, gains the assurance that when the time comes for him to die and for his mourners to be comforted, his acts will be remembered ("on the hearts of") the living. Thus one is admonished to attend funerals, assist or attend to the

Burial of the dead, lament and mourn for others, and act benevolently, "that others may act benevolently towards you."[90] " גמול חסד שגומל חסד. "

These acts of "gemilut hesed," literally the "reciprocity of acts of loving-kindness," are not redeemable in any fashion other than reciprocity. They are acts which " החי יתן אל לבו " which the living sets into his heart. They are acts of kindness which are kept in the heart's memory. They are done because "he did it for me when I was in need." It is this sense of reciprocity which is described in the images which follow, in which God takes the benevolence of others "to His heart."

First, it was God who buried Moses. The question is asked, how is it that Moses so merited?[91] The answer given is that when the Israelites were about to leave Egypt, they all busied themselves searching for silver and gold. Moses, however, spent three days and three nights searching the city for Joseph's coffin, without which the Israelites could not leave Egypt. Because Moses ignored the silver and the gold and concerned himself with the bones of Joseph, God promised him that God himself would attend to his bones. Thus great merit came to Moses through a simple but crucial act of kindness, which determined the course of history. The clear implication of the passage is that had Moses not

labored to find Joseph's coffin the Israelites would never have left Egypt. That such an act was seen to be so historically crucial is another indication of its importance to the Rabbis.

Benevolence towards the dying and the bereaved is rewarded with life in the world to come. Certain persons who attended the house of mourning had their names "recorded" and were excluded from Gehinnom while the names of others who went to the house of feasting went unrecorded. They went to Gehinnom.[92] Similarly, we are informed that on the day of Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi's death, a "bat-kol" announced that whoever was present at his death would be admitted to the world to come.[93] A third example of this notion is the recompense given to priests who defile themselves for a "meth mitzwah," the corpse of a poor, unknown person.[94] Even though a priest was forbidden to defile himself by contact with the dead, the burial of a meth mitzwah was of such importance that as a reward the priest who buried such a corpse would not contract defilement in the hereafter because God would abolish death. This last image links the act of benevolence with the abolition of death in the world to come. The implication is that because of acts of kindness having no earthly reward, there will be no death in the hereafter for those who perform them. Symbolically, man can overcome the tragedy and loss created by death through

honorable burial and life-giving and affirming acts of kindness which indicate to the bereaved that they are not alone in their grief. They are still part of a sympathetic, supportive, compassionate community which will care for them and help them through their time of grief. These actions, taken to heart, remembered, and ultimately reciprocated create the life-sustaining bond which enables the entire community to withstand tragedy. This is most poignantly illustrated in a passage from Echa Rabbati[95] which responds to the description of women slaughtering their own children for food.[96] The Rabbis comment that the verse is not to be taken literally. They describe how a woman who had only enough bread for her and her husband for one day would use it to provide a meal of comfort to a neighbor whose son had died. The great sacrifice of one who was so hungry herself was considered by God to be as great as if the woman had sacrificed her own son in order to do this particular act of loving-kindness. The care of mourners was so important that if a mourner's neighbors did not provide for him for a full week requiring him to work to sustain himself during that first week of mourning, the negligent neighbors were to be cursed.[97]

The image of reciprocity which sustains a community, and the image of the God who performs acts of "gemilut hesed"

underscore the importance of that concept in the eyes of the Rabbis. They indicated by their strong and vivid imagery that these acts, although financially non-remunerative are the very foundation of community existence, both socially and religiously. Therefore it was incumbent upon every community member, including the priests, to be diligent about performing even the simplest act of benevolence, because such an act once determined the course of Israelite history.

SUMMARY

The Aggadic statements on the subjects of bereavement, mourning and consolation indicate the sensitivity of the Rabbis' approach to the entire experience of death and dying. The mourner's quest for meaning is dramatized in a way which conveys the understanding that one must ultimately rely on a wisdom and kindness greater than himself. Life is but a trust, and it is for God alone to determine when that trust is to be recalled.

The impact of bereavement is presented through the eyes of the mourners themselves. The grief of a bereaved spouse is especially poignant. Widowhood has put an end to a special shared intimacy. The loss of such an integral part of one's existence as a spouse can be felt by no one else. A selection of vivid, yet touching images convey the depression, lethargy, aimlessness, and disillusionment which a widowed spouse experiences. Similarly, death has its impact upon the community. The loss of one member of a group is seen as a loss to the entire group. If the community is strong and supportive of itself it will survive the blow. If it is weak and fragmented it will crumble. Every community is constantly being weakened by the loss of some members and at the same time being strengthened by the addition of others. Qualities lost are sooner or later

regained. However, there is one quality which, once lost, can never be replaced. That is the wisdom of a scholar. The Rabbis indicate clearly that once a wise man dies, his wisdom dies with him. However much of this human resource has not been tapped, is lost forever to the community.

The Aggadic comments on mourning indicate that the Rabbis considered mourning essential, both for the health of the mourner and for its high ethical value. God Himself is portrayed as mourning over the dead, and rewarding those who do likewise.

The Aggadists demonstrate a keen understanding of the psychology of the mourning process. They indicate that while there is a time and a need for mourning, there is also a time to cease mourning. Protracted mourning was considered unhealthful for the bereaved, and a possible indication that he had not accepted the reality of his loved one's death. They also distinguished between "internal" and "external" manifestations of grief, indicating their sensitivity to the various psychological processes which the mourner undergoes, including his mixed feelings of grief and relief. This sensitivity even extended to expressing the principle that a fitting and proper burial for the dead did not require bankruptcy for the family. More important than lavish funerals and expensive burial garments was the need

to bury the dead respectfully. If the lack of money embarrassed those who could not afford the ostentatious burial garments, those garments were to be changed to simple shrouds. Burial was not to become an unbearable hardship on the living.

The section on mourning concludes with a discussion of various symbolic foods and behaviors involved in the mourning process. The Aggadists recognized the value of these symbolic gestures to the mourner. They provided catharsis for his emotions and a way of signifying his status as a mourner. At a time when verbal communication is not adequate the mourner could rely on a series of non-verbal expressions of his grief. When words would fail him, he could communicate his anguish through the symbolic act.

The concluding section of this chapter describes various acts of benevolence and consolation. The Rabbis placed high ethical value upon such deeds, because they were done with no thought of recompense. Such a kindness, extended in times of need, could only be repaid in kind, at a similar time of need. Thus, the Rabbis admonish one to weep for the dead, in order that others might extend one the same kindness later on. These acts are held in such high esteem that God Himself is portrayed as the example after which man is to model his behavior. To deny the importance

of this type of kindness, in fact, was considered by the Rabbis to be tantamount to denying the very existence of God. This "gemilut hasadim"--this reciprocity of benevolent acts--performed by each member of a community on behalf of his fellow provided a community with the strength to withstand any tragedy. The absence of such acts foreshadowed that community's destruction.

CHAPTER IV

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNSELING ROLE OF THE RABBI

Our task in this final chapter is to consider how the rabbi may use the Aggadic material on death and dying in his role as counselor to the dying and the bereaved. Our discussion will assume a two-fold character. In the first section we shall examine some of the various kinds of questions and issues which the rabbi will encounter in his capacity as bereavement counselor. In the second section we shall briefly study the various roles the rabbi plays as he counsels those people confronting death and bereavement. Then we shall consider the ways in which the rabbi can use the Aggada as a resource to speak helpfully to the questions, emotions, and dilemmas faced by the dying, the bereaved, and the community as a whole.

EMOTIONS, QUESTIONS, AND DILEMMAS

The rabbi who counsels the dying and the bereaved must deal with a vast array of emotions and problems. They seem to fall under four major categories. The first of these categories involves the different emotions felt and expressed by the dying and the bereaved. These feelings may be

shared with the rabbi. He may be told of anger, guilt, depression, or relief at someone's passing. He may witness various verbal or non-verbal displays of these emotions. He may be asked why one is experiencing a particular feeling or emotion. The rabbi has two objectives here. The first is to provide a vehicle for the expression of these emotions. The second is to dissolve the guilt associated with many of those feelings by legitimizing them through association with a time-honored tradition.

The second task facing the rabbi is that of helping people deal with the issue of the meaning of death. A terminal patient might ask, "Why me?" A bereaved husband might demand "Why did God let her die?" The rabbi must encourage and support these people in their lonely struggle to "make sense" of their own death, or the death of a loved one, and to still find meaning in their own lives.

A third group of problems which the rabbi faces involves questions regarding appropriate behavior for the mourners, and for their community. Mourners will often ask the rabbi about the "correct" procedures of burial and mourning. What should be done during and after the funeral? Should one wear a black ribbon? Should a candle be lit? How many days of mourning should be observed? The issue is not one of providing a definitive Halachic response,

although the rabbi may find certain Halachic prescriptions appropriate to a particular situation. Rather, he must be informed primarily by his understanding and assessment of the needs and feelings of the mourners. Secondly, he must have at his disposal those images which can be used as the models, paradigms, or analogies for expressions of grief which are appropriate to the particular situation, and which speak to the need of those particular mourners.

The need for a community response to death can be approached by the rabbi in a similar fashion. When such a response is called for, the task of the rabbi is to provide--based upon his perceptions of the community's needs--the images which will inspire a sensitive community response to death.

The fourth issue with which the rabbi must inevitably deal is the question of the prolongation of life and the right to die. His support and advice will be requested by families who must decide whether to continue the heroic measures keeping a terminally ill loved one alive, or to remove the artificial life-supports and allow him to die a peaceful, dignified, humane death. The rabbi's task is to help the family understand that there is a point at which the dying must be allowed to die. He must address their

dilemma in a way which legitimizes it, and which provides them moral support at a time when they may feel the need to make a decision based on something firmer than their own logic.

THE ROLES OF THE RABBI

In the human encounter with death, the role of the rabbi involves five major capacities.

First, he is an emotional mainstay for the entire family-providing support to them as a unit. In this capacity, he might counsel the family when it comes time to tell a critically ill member that his illness is terminal. He might aid that same critically ill member, in telling the family that the illness is terminal. He might also be involved in counseling the family and helping them come to crucial and sensitive decisions on the issue of the right to die.

A second capacity in which the rabbi serves is that of counseling the dying--helping them find meaning in their own deaths, and in their lives until they die. He also acts as a facilitator for the expression of the many emotions which the dying experience and need to verbalize or symbolize in some form.

Thirdly, the rabbi serves as counselor to the bereaved mourners, facilitating <u>their</u> expressions of grief and loss,

assisting them to find meaning in the death of one who was so significant a part of them, and advising them regarding appropriate ritual or symbolic expressions of their grief.

The fourth role of the rabbi is as the eulogist for the deceased. In his eulogy he might confront or address the seeming senselessness of death. He may speak of the struggle to find meaning in death. He may give expression to the emotions felt by family or community, enabling them to vent their feelings.

Finally, the rabbi serves as a setter of standards of behavior for the mourners and the community. He is the source of answers to the question of "What do I do?" or "What is the right thing to do?" He enables the family to perform appropriate rituals which will facilitate the transition which they now must undergo, and not become mired in endless grief. Secondly he enables them to seek their own particular ritual expression of their situation. Finally, he has an opportunity to involve the community in the experience of its individual members. It is this community participation and involvement which unites it in times of joy and sustains it in times of tragedy and grief.

The Rabbi as Support to the Entire Family

In counseling the family as a whole the rabbi is often confronted with two critical and sensitive issues: those of "breaking the news" and of the "right to die." It is a most difficult and agonizing responsibility to have to tell a loved one he is going to die, because it entails the actual verbalization of the fact that several people are going to lose a significant part of themselves. This responsibility is often met with denial. Doctors, relatives, or friends may find all kinds of reasons not to tell the patient he is dying, projecting their own fears upon him. Rather than determining "how" to tell the patient, they question whether they should tell him anything at all. According to Kubler-Ross,[1] most patients will come to know their condition sooner or later, and will be relieved when the subject is eventually brought up, as it gives them an opportunity to express their feelings. Refusal to tell someone he is dying only exacerbates his feelings of isolation and loneliness and makes his death a more difficult thing to bear.

It is to this situation that the Midrash of the death of Aaron speaks.[2] Even God cannot bear to tell Aaron he is to die. Given responsibility for the task--as a <u>favor</u> to God--Moses is in emotional turmoil. He does not know how to broach the subject. Thus it is that he carefully, sensi-

tively, and gently leads Aaron on until Aaron himself realizes the implications of what Moses is saying to him. With the tension relieved and the taboo broken, the brothers can confront the imminent loss.

Using this Midrash, the rabbi can convey to the family the message that although they may wish to deny the reality, it is their responsibility to express it. Their task is not whether they ought share their knowledge, but how. The touching scene between Aaron and Moses might provide hope that once given expression, the fact of death can be faced together. It will not be denied, and the family will not be fragmented through the emotional isolation of the dying member. Using the examples of the characters in the Midrash, the rabbi can assist the family in assessing how best to share the news with the patient in view of their own personal circumstances.

The second issue involving the rabbi and the entire family is that of "letting go" or the "right to die."

The rabbi has two vivid images which can assist him in his work with the family at such a crucial juncture. The first is the description of the death of Rabbi Juda Ha-Nasi,[3] whose community refused to allow him to die. His handmaid, sensing that it was time for those on earth to "let go,"

interrupted the fervent prayers which kept the sage's soul bound to earthly life, thereby allowing him to die. The rabbi must be aware that the family does not want to "let go." Often the dying actually await permission from their loved ones to die. Using this image, the rabbi can assist the family to recognize their need to "keep" their loved one, and also to understand his need ultimately to die. The rabbi can use this passage to enable the patient and his family to come to a decision together well before the family must make the decision alone. Or, the rabbi can present it when circumstances require that a decision be made and the patient cannot be consulted.

A second image provided by the Rabbis exemplifies a person's need to die with dignity. Hospitals are unpleasant, lonely places to die. Many patients feel increasingly isolated and dehumanized as they are left to die. The Aggada of Rabbi Sheshet[4] who demanded to die at home and not "in the marketplace like a beast" speaks to those feelings. Such a model can be used to discuss with a family the last days of a terminally ill member. Does he wish to die at home? Shall that wish be respected? Will he be allowed to die as a human being, in comfortable surroundings (at least)? Or must death come amidst a tangle of tubes, wires, and machines in an environment so cold and sterile as to

make one think that an object--not a person-- is under treatment? Rabbi Sheshet confronts these questions, and expresses his preference. His story can be used to aid the family in confronting this problem and coming to a viable solution. The image does not dictate a solution, but rather points to a way of caring for the dying with humanity and dignity.

The Rabbi as Counselor to the Dying

The rabbi is often called upon to visit or counsel the terminally ill, whose awareness of their own death engenders emotions of denial, anger, and bitterness. These feelings find expression in many ways while one is dying. At times they are directed at persons who respond with resentment and rejection. The rabbi as counselor must recognize these feelings and be able to respond with acceptance despite the hostility directed towards him. In his role as counselor, one of his tasks is to enable the patient to verbalize many of these feelings, and thereby confront and deal with them.

A prime example of a text which the rabbi can use to elicit the feelings of a dying patient is the Midrashic dramatization of the death of Moses.[5] In this particular text Moses expresses many of the same feelings that a dying patient might experience. By reading the story of Moses'

death the patient, seeing many of his own emotions mirrored, can identify with them and speak about them. Seeing that even the "great" Moses--a towering Biblical hero--did not wish to die and tried to deny, defeat, even bargain away his fate (albeit unsuccessfully), only to ultimately resign himself to the will of God might assist the dying patient to come to his own acceptance of the reality of his own death. Similarly, the description of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai weeping when he realized that he was facing God and eternity might be used to address a person's fear of what lies beyond life. The image of Absalom[6] hanging by his hair from a tree, with the open grave at his feet may be used to confront a patient's refusal to accept the inevitable.

These images--read, and interpreted--provide a response to the emotional state of the dying. He can identify with paradigmatic figures and see in their feelings his own emotions and experience. He sees their struggles as his own. By identifying with these mythic-symbolic figures he can identify, express, and perhaps most important, legitimize his feelings and dissolve his guilt about them, as he confronts them.

The Rabbi as Counselor to the Bereaved

The rabbi can use Aggadic texts to facilitate his work with the bereaved in three areas. First there is the area of externalizing their feelings. The families of the dying and the dead experience many of the same emotions as the dying themselves. There is denial, anger, and bitterness. There may also be relief that death has come. There may be guilt that somehow the bereaved has caused the person's death in some way. There are also those very personal feelings of loss felt by those who have lost a significant part of their lives.

By giving expression to these feelings via the images of a venerated body of tradition, the rabbi can help the mourners work through their feelings. The images in the Aggada do not always provide a concrete, definite, satisfying answer. However, they do express the feeling and speak to the mourner's situation. The statement that "only a spouse" feels the death of the other[7] touches the situation of the person who has lost his life's partner. The poignant description of the man who has lost the wife of his youth[8] describes the emptiness felt by an elderly widower (or widow). The mixed emotions of grief and relief are expressed in the Aggadic description of "internal" and "external" mourning,[9] providing compassionate understanding for one who feels not only loss, but relief that the long

agony of dying is over, both for himself and for the deceased. The reaction of Aaron to the death of his sons[10] mirrors the feelings of those who have watched a loved one suffer great agony, and react to his death with the statement, "It was a blessing." Lastly, the image of Jacob refusing to be comforted over the "death" of Joseph[11] might speak to those who refuse to accept the death of a loved one as reality.

A particularly difficult and sensitive issue which the rabbi may have to confront is the guilt of parents who feel responsible--by virtue of something they did or did not do--for the death of their child. Perhaps they feel that the loss of their child constitutes some form of "punishment" or "retribution." The rabbi is thus faced with the task of easing their awesome burden of guilt. He might share with them the Aggadic statement which considers the death of children because of their parents' sins an "oppression,"[12] commenting that while the Aggada acknowledges the idea of parental guilt for a child's death, it does not necessarily subscribe to it. By emphasizing that the Aggada describes the notion of parental guilt as "oppressive" the rabbi may help to elicit similar feelings of oppression from the bereaved, guilt-ridden parents. He may also enable them to confront their own feelings by eliciting their reactions to the Aggada and then relating their oppressive feelings of guilt to the "oppression" described by the Rabbis.

In addition to using Aggadic images to elicit emotions of the bereaved, the rabbi can use them to assist the bereaved in their efforts to find meaning in death. Beruriah's affirmation that life is but a trust held temporarily[13] conveys the message that one must ultimately resign oneself to God's will and wisdom. A similar theme is expressed in the statement that God knows when the fruit of His orchard is ripe for plucking, and He does so.[14] Still a third message is that of Rabbi Eleazar ben 'Arak's message of comfort to Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai after the death of his son.[15] He likened a life to a trust which the owner (God) came to claim. The trustee could only take comfort in the fact that he had returned the trust in as pure condition as he had received it.

These answers do not give reasons for the deaths of loved ones, but they convey the realization that man will never know the reasons for death. He can only accept its inevitability and trust in God's wisdom and kindness. The only answer to what appears to be unfathomably blind caprice is, as we see by these images, an affirmation of faith--the insistence that although we cannot comprehend it, there is a meaning in the death which ultimately strikes every person.

The third area in which the rabbi can call the Aggada into play is in the area of ritual behavior. The bereaved

are concerned with the "right thing to do." Using the image of God mourning after the example of a human king[16] as well as the symbolic statements regarding such foods as wine, lentils, and eggs,[17] the rabbi can provide mourning behaviors for the bereaved which serve three functions. First, these behaviors, if not traditional, will certainly be in the spirit of the tradition upon which the mourners so badly need to call. Secondly, they will be symbolic actions which have meaning and significance to the mourners and are appropriate to their particular mourning situation. Thirdly, these behaviors and rituals will, by virtue of the above two qualities, give expression the grief of the mourners and signify their status to the community. The rabbi will thus be able to provide a ritual repertoire for the bereaved, and at the same time build a range of possible symbolic actions which he may call upon in the future.

It is important to emphasize that the rabbi is not using the Aggada to determine a specific, limited repertoire of ritual. The Aggadic material is not to be seen as a code from which the rabbi takes specified prescriptions of action. While his suggestions to the bereaved may include behavior described in the Aggada, the rabbi will be using the Aggadic material, not as halacha, but as models, analogies, and paradigms whose intent is to <u>inspire</u>, rather than dictate, appropriate responses.

Thus, in his role as counselor to the bereaved the rabbi has the opportunity to draw upon the Aggada not so much for specific answers, but rather to express and elicit feelings, and to address various situations. Using the Aggada as an emotional stimulus he can work with the mourners and help them express their feelings, aid them in their quest for meaning, and develop the ritual and symbolic image-behaviors which express their grief and identify them as mourners.

The Rabbi as Eulogist

In his capacity as eulogist for the deceased and funeral officiant the rabbi has the opportunity to address both the emotional state of the mourners and their search for meaning. Using many of the texts we have mentioned in this chapter, as well as in the rest of this thesis, he can prepare a ritual which speaks to the particular needs of the mourners. This, of course, involves a careful assessment of their needs, and of the feelings he wishes to elicit. For a widower, for example, he may call upon the image of "the wife of one's youth" and what the loss of such a person does to the surviving spouse. He may speak of the seeming senselessness of death, and use the images of Meir and Beruriah or Aaron to address the search for meaning in the death of a loved one. He may use the image of God in mourning or the

cosmic wail of the soul[18] to address feelings of grief. Or he may simply note the dictum that "against your will were you born and against your will you shall die,"[19] in order to indicate man's powerlessness against death.

The funeral itself is not only to provide an honorable farewell for the dead; it is also to establish the reality and irrevocability of death for the mourners. The rabbi might seek suitable texts and images to reinforce that reality. He may, for example, call upon the image of the soul floundering between heaven and earth until the body has been buried for a certain length of time.[20] He may address the need to accept the reality of death before grief work can be successfully completed.

The rabbi as eulogist does not counsel; he addresses and evokes feelings on the part of both mourners and community. By involving the community as well as the mourners the rabbi encourages their active emotional and physical participation in the life-passage of one of their members. They thus unite with the mourners and mourn with them in an expression of community support and identification.

The Rabbi as Role Model and Setter of Standards

The fifth function the rabbi serves in his capacity as counselor-in-time-of-death is that of role model and setter of standards for both mourners and community.

As a role model the rabbi plays a significant part in the mourning experience. What he deems appropriate will be considered appropriate by the family. He has, for example, a unique opportunity and responsibility to enable the mourners to provide a respectful burial for their loved one without having to create added financial burdens for themselves. Secondly, it is important to bear in mind, as Rabban Gamaliel did, the idea that burials and funerals are as much for the living as they are for the dead. As long as the body is properly and respectfully cared for--as it must be--the living require the greatest attention. Consideration for their abilities to bear the strain--financially and emotionally--takes first priority.

This role of the rabbi extends beyond the mourners to the community. Being the bearer of the tradition the rabbi has the best access to it, and can use tradition to build a community which celebrates all the life-passages of its members. A community in which this takes place not only provides essential support for its members in times of great stress, but it also ensures itself of closer relationships, stronger human bonds, and greater viability. These strengths, in turn, result in a greater sense of joy when a member rejoices, and a greater sense of loss when a member mourns. These intensified feelings, in turn, provide even greater community involvement and bonding.

To encourage such community qualities the rabbi has at his disposal the comparison of the community to an archway. The loss of one stone from the archway causes it to weaken, while the addition of one stone strengthens it.[21] The community relies on every one of its members for its strength. It must therefore care for and support each member in times of joy as well as times of sorrow.

The prime example of this support is the "benevolent act," the "gemilut hesed." The virtues of "gemilut hesed" are described and extolled by the rabbis in vivid and strong imagery,[22] which is indicative of the significance they attributed to it. Using these strong images, the rabbi can encourage this behavior on the part of his community. He can thus organize the community to perform such acts of benevolence as assisting the family in funeral preparations, providing them with food and meals during the mourning period, and visiting the mourners as "menahame 'avelim." Here the rabbi functions as leader and guide, prescribing the necessary "behaviors" which the congregation can exhibit in the course of performing their acts of benevolence. His source for these prescriptions, and others which a sensitive community might wish to undertake is, of course, the Aggada. It is this activity which draws the community together, unites them in times of happiness, and sustains them in times of sorrow.

IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

In conclusion, it should be noted that much of the material which has been presented in this thesis has been interpreted symbolically. Meanings have been sought which reach beyond the images themselves. It is this symbolic character of the images and the feeling that they address that which is deep and profound in the experience of man which gives rise to the assertion that they have a legitimate and significant role to play in the experience of death and dying. It is the rabbi, as a bearer of tradition to provide these symbolic images with the exposure they need to resonate within the human experience. To the extent that he accomplishes this task his role as counselor will be enhanced. By introducing contemporary human experience to these ancient images at a time when "tradition" is so vitally important to the bereaved the rabbi can provide the mourner with a way of communicating and externalizing his inner experience.

The ancient text--even reworked in a modern setting--carries with it a sense of continuity, integrity, and strength. It gives the mourner a source from which he can draw strength to weather his tragedy. Once these images were part of the Jew's life experience. He assimilated them because they were part of his education. They are part

of his education no more. Thus, they can no longer sustain him in times of life-crisis. Lifted from their obscurity, restored to a niche in the awareness of the individual (not just the rabbi), they can enable the mourner to deal with the rite-of-passage known as death, to express his grief at this ultimate mystery, and to find the wherewithal to conclude his grieving and reinvest his energies in the reconstruction of his life.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Koheleth Rabbah 5:4, sec. 1. "R. Ammi said: 'There is no death without sin, and no suffering without iniquity.' "

2. Some men did not die; Enoch and Elijah, for example were "translated" to heaven.

3. Koheleth Rabbah 11:5, sec. 1.

4. Tanhuma, Kedoshim 8; Yalkut Shim'oni, Koheleth 3.

5. Aboth de Rabbi Nathan 1:10.

6. Koheleth Rabbah 1:3, sec. 1 and 2:2, sec. 4.

7. Bereshith Rabbah 45:12.

8. Koheleth Rabbah 3:2, sec. 3.

9. Shemoth Rabbah 33:3.

10. Bereshith Rabbah 12:6.

11. See ibid. and Shemoth Rabbah 33:3, wherein is discussed the Hebrew word 'TOLEDOTH,' particularly the defective spelling (one waw instead of two).

12. Koheleth Rabbah 7:14, sec. 1.

13. Bereshith Rabbah 16:6.

14. Bemidbar Rabbah 19:18.

15. Shemoth Rabbah 32:1; cf. Bamidbar Rabbah 16:24.

16. Mekilta, Bahodesh.

17. Ibid.

18. Tanhuma, Vayesheb, par. 4.

19. Bereshith Rabba 9:5.

"בתורתו של רבי מאיר מצאו כתוב 'והנה טוב מאד',
והנה טוב מות... אמר ר' שמעון בר רבי יצחק הנה
טוב מאד זה מלאך חיים והנה טוב מאד זה מלאך המות."

20. Koheleth Rabbah 3:14, sec. 1.

21. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, chap. 16.

22. Bereshith Rabbah 9:5.

23. See Genesis 3:22f.

24. Koheleth Rabbah 5:4 sec. 1.

25. Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, chap. 16.

26 Koheleth Rabbah 3:2, sec. 2.

27. Koheleth Rabbah 5:4, sec. 1.

28. Bereshith Rabbah 8:11. This is another indication that there were those of the opinion that each man was responsible for his own fate, and that one did not necessarily have to die because Adam brought death into the world.

29. 3:2, sec. 3.

30. Ecclesiastes 4:1.

31. Koheleth Rabbah 4:1, sec. 1. (My translation) Note the use of the term "nignaz" instead of "meth" for the death of children. Perhaps this indicates that the sensitivity to the death of children was so great that it could only be expressed euphemistically. For the meaning of the root (נזג) see Jastrow.

32. Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, chap. 16.

33. My translation.

34. I. Sadger, "Ein Beitrage zum Problem des Selbstmords," Z. psychoanal. Päd., 3 (1929): 423, translated and quoted by Kate Friedlander, "On the Longing to Die," in DEATH INTERPRETATIONS, ed: Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 40.

35. Daniel Cappon, "The Psychology of Dying," in DEATH INTERPRETATIONS, ed: Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 40.

36. Koheleth Rabbah 3:2, sec. 2.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Mekilta, Bahodesh.

41. Bereshith Rabbah 96:2.

42. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, ON DEATH AND DYING (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 72-74.

43. Koheleth Rabbah 8:8, sec. 1.

44. Ibid., 10:5, sec. 1.

45. Midrash Tehillim 104:26.

46. Sifre Deuteronomy, par. 339.

47. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 43.

48. Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, chap. 12, version A.

49. Koheleth Rabbah, 3:2, sec. 3.

50. Ibid., 11:5, sec. 1.

51. Tanhuma, Kedoshim 8; Yalkot Shim'oni, Koheleth 3.

52. Bereshith Rabbah 96:2.

53. Koheleth Rabbah 1:3, sec. 1; cf. Wayikra Rabbah 28:2.

54. Ibid., 3:11, sec. 3.

"רבי חנינא בשם רבי לוי אומר אף את בעולם נתן בלבם
אהבת עולם נתן בלבם. אמר רבי יונתן בחכמתו של מאן המות
נתן בלבם."

55. Ibid., 2:2, sec. 4.

56. Bereshith Rabbah 45:12.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Aboth 4:22; Tanhuma, Pekude, par. 4.
2. Koheleth Rabbah, 5:15, sec. 1.
3. Ibid.
4. Sanhedrin 47a; Midrash Haggadol, Hayye Sarah; Mo'ed Katan 28a.
5. Aboth, chap. 5.
6. Berakoth 8a; Sefer Ha-'agada, pg. 455, par. 56.
7. Kubler-Ross, ON DEATH AND DYING, p. 27.
8. Ibid. p. 25ff.
9. Midrash Tehillim, chap. 116.
10. According to this text the death of each of them was necessary in order to make room for the next righteous person.
11. "Midrash Petirath Aharon," in BETH HAMIDRASH, ed: Adolf Jellinek (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 1:91-95; Yelammedenu, Parashath Hukkath, par. 22, in SEFER HALIKKUTIM, ed: L. Grunhut (Jerusalem: 1898-1902), vol. 4.
12. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 53.
13. Ketuboth 77b.
14. Berakoth 18b.
15. Ta'anith 18b.
16. Devarim Rabbah 9:10.
17. Mo'ed Katan 29a.
18. Ketuboth 104a.
19. Yalkut Shim'oni, Mishle, 8.
20. Midrash Haggadol, Hayye Sarah.

21. Erubin 41b.

22. Baba Bathra 58a.

23. Bereshith Rabbah 100:2

24. Tanhuma, Pekude, par. 4.

25. Aboth 4:22.

"על כרחך נוצרת, ועל כרחך נולד, ועל כרחך אתה חי, ועל כרחך אתה מת, ועל כרחך אתה עתיד ליתן דין וחשבון לפני מלך מלכי המלכים, הקדוש ברוך הוא."

"Against your will were you created,
And against your will were you born;
And against your will do you live,
And against your will do you die;
And against your will are you destined to
render an accounting before the King of Kings
of Kings, The Holy One, Blessed be He. (My translation)."

26. Koheleth Rabbah 5:14, sec. 1.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 53.

30. Bereshith Rabbah 62:2.

31. Seder Eliahu Rabbah, chap. 5.

32. Midrash Haggadol, Hayye Sarah.

33. Ketubot 103b.

34. Ibid.

35. Mo'ed Katan 28a.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Chap. 5.

41. Chap. 25.

42. Ketubot 103b; Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, 25.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Mo'ed Katan 28a.

46. Baba Bathra 17a.

47. Ibid.

48. Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:2, sec. 5.

49. Kubler-Ross, 25ff.

50. Devarim Rabbah 9:1.

51. Midrash Tehillim, chap. 116.

52. Yelammedenu, Parashat Hukkat, par. 22.

53. Ibid.

54. Devarim Rabbah 9:1.

55. Psalm 116:5.

56. Midrash Tehillim 116:6.

57. Ibid. Thus Abraham had to die to make room for Isaac, and Isaac had to die to make room for Jacob, and so on.

58. Midrash Petirath Aharon; Yelammedenu, Parashath Hukkath, par. 22.

59. Yelammedenu, Parashath Hukkath, Ibid.

60. Midrash Petirath Aharon.

61. Ibid. My translation.

62. Tanhuma, Pekude, par. 4.

63. Ketuboth 77b.

64. Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, chap. 25.

65. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 53.

66. Ta'anith 18b.

67. Devarim Rabbah 11:10.

68. Ketuboth 104a.

69. Yalkut Shim'oni, Mishle, 8.

70. Midrash Haggadol, Hayye Sarah.

71. Erubin 41b.

72. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 20.

73. Bereshith Rabbah 100:2.

74. Kubler-Ross, ON DEATH AND DYING; cf. Devarim Rabbah 11:10.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Midrash Mishle 31:10.

2. Ibid., my translation.

3. Ibid., my translation.

4. Abot de Rabbi Nathan, chap. 14.

5. That is, just as the man wished to return the deposit in peace (בשלום) Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai returned his deposit (שלם), that is intact or in peace.

6. 5:10, sec. 2.

7. "Aris" אריס.

8. Pesikta Rabbati 47:2.

9. Ibid., my translation.

10. Sanhedrin 22b: "אין איש מת אלא לאשתו ואין אשה מתה אלא לבעלה."
"A man dies only unto his wife,
And a woman dies only unto her husband." But
cf. Ruth Rabbah 2:7 :
"If a woman die, only her husband misses her." "מתה אשה מי מתחסרה אלא בעלה."
(My translations.)

11. Ibid., 22a.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 22b.

14. Ibid., 22a.

15. Ibid. This statement by R. Jose b. Hanina.

16. 18:7.

17. My translation.

18. Sanhedrin 22a, my translation, based on Job 18:7,
"his counsel casts him down." "ותשליכהו עצתו."

19. Bereshith Rabbath 100:7.

20. Koheleth Rabbah 5:11, sec. 4.

21. Koheleth Rabbah 5:10, sec. 1.

22. Esther Rabbah 8:2.

23. 3:4.

24 Koheleth Rabbah 3:4.

25. Esther Rabbah 8:2.

26. Koheleth Rabbah 12:6, sec. 1; Tanhuma, Mikketz, par. 4.

27. Tanhuma, ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 34.

30. Shabbat 152a, b.

31. Tanhuma, Mikketz, par. 4.

32. Baba Bathra 60b.

33. Echa Rabbati 2:11, sec. 15.

34. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, trans. William J. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975), p. 397 (Piska 263). Cf. Mandelbaum.

35. Ibid.

36. Aboth 4:23.

37. Devarim Rabbah 9:1.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Bereshith Rabbah 84:21.

41. Vayyikra Rabbah 9:8.

42. Bereshith Rabbah, chap. 96 (MSV), pg. 1238 in Albeck.

43. Echa Rabbati, Proem 7.

44. 3:26.

45. Pesikta de Rab Kahana 26:4; Pesikta Rabbati 47:3.

46. Ibid.

47. Pesikta de Rab Kahana 15:3; Echa Rabbati 1:1; 3:10 (3:28, sec. 9 in Soncino translation).

48. Bereshith Rabbah 27:4; 32:7.

49. Echa Rabbati, Proem 2; Pesikta de Rab Kahana, chap. 15 (quoting Jeremiah 9:16).

50. Echa Rabbati, Proem 2.

51. Bereshith Rabbah 96 (MSV).

52. Hayye Hanoch, in Jellinek, vol. 4, p. 130.

53. My translation.

54. Ibid., my translation.

55. Tanhuma, Bereshith, 10.

56. Ketuboth 8b.

57. Vayyikra Rabba 34:13.

58. Ibid.

59. Ketuboth 8b.

60. Ibid.

61. Baba Bathra 16b; Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 35; Bereshith Rabbah 63:11.

62. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 35.

63. Baba Bathra 16b.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., my translation.

67. Ibid.

68. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, chap. 15; Echa Rabbati 1:1; 3:28, sec. 9; cf. Midrash Mishle 31:10.

69. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, ibid., Echa Rabbati, ibid.

70. Echa Rabbati, ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., 1:1.

73. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, chap. 15.

74. Bereshith Rabbah, chap. 97 (NV).

75. Ibid.

76. Bereshith Rabbah 8:13, Koheleth Rabbah 7:2, sec. 3 (חסדים גומלי).

77. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 17. The theme is loving-kindness to mourners, but the examples given are of loving-kindness to the dead. For loving-kindness to the mourners see Bereshith Rabbah 81:15; Midrash Haggadol, Hayye Sarah, par. 11, and Koheleth Rabbah 7:2, sec. 2. On the need for accepting the reality of death see pg. 80 above.

78. Pesikta Rabbati 2:3.

79. Bereshith Rabbah 8:13.

80. According to Rashi (Ketuboth 8b) the blessing is " ברוך מנחם אבלים ," "Blessed is he who comforts mourners." Cf. Megilla 23b and Ketuboth, Soncino translation, page 37.

81. Bereshith Rabbah 8:13; Midrash Haggadol Hayye Sarah, par. 11; Koheleth Rabbah 7:2, sec. 7.

82. Bereshith Rabbah 81:5.

83. Koheleth Rabbah 7:1, sec. 4, my translation.

84. Ibid. 7:2, sec. 1.

85. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 17.

86. II Kings 9:36.

87. Ibid. v. 35.

88. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 17; Middoth 2:1.

89. Koheleth Rabbah 7:2, sec. 5.

90. Ibid.; cf. Mo'ed Katan 28b.

91. Devarim Rabbah 11:7.

92. Koheleth Rabbah 7:2, sec. 4.

93. Ketuboth 103b.

94. Echa Rabbati 1:13, sec. 41.

95. 4:11, sec. 13.

96. Lamentations 4:10.

97. Bereshith Rabbah 100:7.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, On Death and Dying, Ch. 2.
2. Page 43 above.
3. Page 50 above.
4. Page 34 above.
5. Pp. 47-49 above.
6. Page 46 above.
7. Pp. 67-68 above.
8. Page 68 above.
9. Pp. 87-89 above.
10. Pp. 64-65 above.
11. Page 79 above.
12. Pp. 10-11 above.
13. Page 60 above.
14. Koheleth Rabba V:11, sec. 2.
15. Page 62 above.
16. Pp. 89-92 above.
17. Pp. 95-99 above.
18. Page 30 above.
19. Ibid.
20. Pp. 78-79 above
21. Page 71 above.
22. Pp. 105-112 above.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Rabbinic Texts (Standard editions of the following rabbinic works were consulted).

Aboth de Rabbi Nathan
Aggadath Bereshith
Midrash Haggadol
Midrash Lekah Tob
Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael
Midrash Mishle
Midrash Rabbah
Midrash Shemuel I & II
Midrash Shoher Tob
Midrash Tannaim
Midrash Tehillim
Midrash Yelammedenu
Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer
Pesikta de Rab Kahana
Pesikta Rabbati
Pirke Abot
Sifre
Talmud Babli
Tanhuma
Tanna debe Eliahu
Yalkut Shim'oni

II. Translations

THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD. London: Soncino Press, 1938.

Braude, William G. THE MIDRASH ON PSALMS. 2 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

_____. PESIKTA RABBATI. 2 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Braude, William G. and Kapstein, Israel J. PESIKTA DE RAB KAHANA. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975.

Friedlander, Gerald. PIRKE DE RABBI ELIEZER. New York: Hermon Press, 1916.

Goldin, Judah. THE FATHERS ACCORDING TO RABBI NATHAN. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.

MIDRASH RABBAH. London: Soncino Press, 1939.

III. Anthologies

Bialik, H. N., and Ravnitzky, I. N. SEFER HA-AGGADAH. Tel Aviv: Dvir. 1960.

Ginzberg, Louis. THE LEGENDS OF THE JEWS. 7 vols. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913.

Grunhut, L. SEFER HA-LIKKUTIM. 6 vols. Jerusalem, 1898-1902.

Jellinek, Adolf. BETH HAMIDRASH. 6 vols. Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967.

IV. Psychological, and Other, Sources

Baron, Joseph Louis. "Death in the Jewish Folk Religion." Ph.D. dissertation. University of Chicago, 1962.

Dempsey, David. THE WAY WE DIE. New York: Macmillan, 1975; reprint ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.

Freud, Sigmund. COLLECTED PAPERS. International Psycho-analytical Library, no. 10. Translated by Joan Riviere. London: Hogarth Press, 1949.

Fulton, Robert. DEATH AND IDENTITY. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965.

Grollman, Earl A., ed. RABBINICAL COUNSELING. New York: Bloch, 1966.

_____. TALKING ABOUT DEATH. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.

Heifetz, Milton D., and Mangel, Charles. THE RIGHT TO DIE. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975.

Hinton, John. DYING. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1967.

Jackson, Edgar N. FOR THE LIVING. Des Moines: Channel Press, 1963.

_____. THE MANY FACES OF GRIEF. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977.

Kastenbaum, Robert, and Aisenberg, Ruth. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DEATH. New York: Springer, 1972.

Katz, Robert L. "Counseling the Bereaved." Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1953), pp. 465-469.

Kaufmann, Walter. EXISTENTIALISM, RELIGION, AND DEATH. New York: Meridian, 1976.

_____. THE FAITH OF A HERETIC. Garden City: Doubleday, 1963.

Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. ON DEATH AND DYING. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Lamm, Maurice. THE JEWISH WAY IN DEATH AND MOURNING. New York: Jonathon David, 1969.

May, Rollo. SYMBOLISM IN RELIGION AND LITERATURE. New York: George Braziller, 1960.

Murray, Henry A. MYTH AND MYTHMAKING. New York: George Braziller, 1960.

Riemer, Jack, ed. JEWISH REFLECTIONS ON DEATH. New York: Schocken, 1974.

Ruitenbeek, Hendrik M., ed. DEATH INTERPRETATIONS. New York: Delta, 1969.

Shapiro, David S. "Death Experiences in Rabbinic Literature." Judaism, Winter 1977, pp. 90-94.

Steinfels, Peter, and Veatch, Robert M., eds. DEATH INSIDE OUT. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Weisman, Avery D. ON DYING AND DENYING. New York: Behavioral Publications, Inc., 1972.

Weisman, Avery D., and Kastenbaum, Robert. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY. New York: Behavioral Publications, Inc., 1968.

V. Encyclopedia Judaica, Jerusalem: Keter, 1971. The following articles:

"Angel of Death," by Dov Noy. 2: 952-956.

"Death," by Harry Freedman. 5: 1420-1427.

"Mourning," by Aaron Rothkoff. 12: 485-493.