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WATER AS A SYMBOL OF HEALING AND REDEMPTION IN MIDRASHIC LITERATURE

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## INTRODUCTION



On a summer day, resting in a homemade styrofoam sailboat, moving through the water with the wind, or still in the water with the calm, water seemed at once fierce and dangerous, and inviting and nurturing. Life or death can be found in water. Water has within it a blessing and a curse. Refreshing rains to parched fields, a cold swim on a hot day, well water after a long climb, all bring renewal. But there are also rainstorms, flash floods, and in the same lake in which the boat placidly sailed, a young boy had drowned last year. What was gentle and protective at one moment could be ruthless and destructive in the next. How frightening, and yet how compelling water must have been for the ancients. Who commanded the seas? How could the arbitrary power of water be harnessed?

How did our ancestors approach these questions? Was the paradoxical potential of water reflected within Jewish literature? I turned to the Midrash to find out. Within it there is both a literary and a folk element. The attempt to build a bridge from the contemporary world of the rabbis to the biblical text--which was for them at once both sacred yet old--creates an unabashed elaboration of their values. Since this bridge is constructed between a bank of literature and a bank of life, the artistry and sensitivity to the language of the biblical text is balanced by the honesty of the desires of real people--our ancestors.

My enjoyment of Midrash is twofold. Midrash provides insight into the questions and concerns of a Jew in his or her relationship to God, while reflecting a flexibility and understanding of the daily world.

At the same time, since the primary tools of Midrash are literary ones, the craft of the rabbis in approaching a fixed text and fitting their questions into it is a source of pleasure.

Not all summers were spent on sailboats. Several years after the questions concerning the nature of water began to tug at me, I had the good fortune to spend summer afternoons studying with Rabbi Michael Signer. My curiosity was piqued when I came across a passage equating water and Torah (Song of Songs Rabbah 1:2:3), and I wondered about the path from the physical nature of water to the metaphor of water as Torah. In addition, since water was understood to be a metaphor for Torah throughout much of the midrashic literature, then what were the implications of that assumption? How did the rabbis approach the negative qualities of water? How were the purely physical occurrences of water in the Bible treated? These were some of the questions which fueled this study.

In order to trace the theme of water in its various manifestations, I consulted Doy Noy's Motif Index of Midrashic-Talmudic Literature and the reference work upon which it is based, Stith Thompson's Motif Index of Folk Literature. These resources were useful in categorizing themes. However, since the works dealt primarily with English sources, it was necessary to turn to concordances such as H. J. Kassovsky's Osar Lashon HaTannaiyim, to the Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Sifra and Sifrei, and indices to individual rabbinic texts such as Judah Slotki's index volume to Midrash Rabbah. Secondary anthologies such as Montefiore and Loewe's A Rabbinic Anthology, Ephraim Urbach's Hazal: Pirkei Emunot Vede'ot and Bialik and Ravnitzky's

Sefer haAggadah were less helpful. Many of the midrashic passages were found with the use of a biblical concordance and Aaron Hyman's index Sefer Torah haKetuvah vahaMesorah. An additional aid was Erwin Goodenough's Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period. Of the secondary works which I consulted, HaMayyim by Raphael Patai, which treats occurrences of water in biblical, 'aggadic and halachic literature, was the most comprehensive.

Upon organizing the references acquired from these various sources, I analyzed the passages referred to and culled those which related to water as a symbol of healing and redemption. During the analysis of the passages, I broached many methodological questions which were literary, analytical and thematic in nature. Unfortunately, the literary quality of the midrashim will not be explored with the fullness they deserve. The strands which have been brought together here weave a work which reflects the artistry of the midrashic enterprise if not the fine craft practised in individual passages.

I then arranged the passages under several rubrics--chronology, imagery and theme. Studying each rubric, I sifted out the five major themes which form the chapters of this work--the paradox of the Red Sea as a reflection of the relationship between the Holy One and Israel, God as present in and provider of water, the action of individuals as they pertain to water, water as Torah, and water and future redemption.

Water is a miracle, a gift, because it creates life. Wherever water is found, it is a sign that the miraculous--life--exists. "Mayyim nikrau hayyim," water is called life. (Avot de Rabbi Natan 44) For the ancients, demons and gods--those who withheld or offered life--

lived in water.<sup>1</sup> Art from the Greco-Roman period reveals that water was understood to be the essence of fertility.<sup>2</sup> Water creates life. Without water, death ensues. This stark reality is magnified in the wilderness, where camels are a precious possession and oases form mirages.

Yet water is a paradoxical element. Its presence in the wilderness is sought. But for Noah's generation, it wrought utter destruction. It is this paradox which greets the children of Israel as they leave Egypt on their slow journey to become a people. The Red Sea, the boundary between Egypt and freedom, is as vast as an ocean. And although they will cry in the wilderness for water to bring them life, as the children of Israel face the Red Sea, they see in its waters only death. At the Red Sea, Israel learns that water has the power not only to redeem, but to destroy. Although they receive Divine assurance that they will go forward in safety, the people and their leader are poised at a precipice--they face either certain death or a life of faith, a life begun by a leap of faith, a leap which demands that they believe in the Holy One's protection, when logic demands that they are leaping only toward death.

Their actions anticipate the covenant into which Israel and God will enter. The redemption at the sea, accompanied by the fear and trembling of a life and death decision presages the redemption that the Holy One promises in the world to come.

How God acts at the Red Sea serves as an indicator of the relationship between God and Israel throughout the covenant. But it is not exclusively at crises that the relationship between God and Israel is manifest. In the wilderness, as well, the presence or absence

of water determines survival. In the wilderness, the people must rely on the Divine. Unlike the moment of life and death at the shore of the Red Sea, the reliance in the wilderness is the reliance of a lifetime. Israel learns to trust that the Holy One will sustain them throughout their travels in the wilderness. The Holy One will provide water for them, water which will quench their thirst, water which will demonstrate God's continual presence, water which will protect them along their journey. And, just as God assures the people of Divine care in the wilderness by providing them with water, so even after the wilderness experience, God's care is displayed through water. Water, whose source is the Holy One, sustains life.

The biblical figures who understand the interconnection between God and water influence Israel's history. Abraham, who offers water to the three visitors; Ishmael, who cries out to the Holy One to save him from death by thirst; Miriam, who sings at the Red Sea and is accompanied by a well; Joseph, whose bones are preserved in the depths of the Nile; Jacob, who is blessed with the dew of heaven, all acknowledge God's presence in their lives and receive a token of God's presence through the gift of water. For some biblical characters, the water which appears is interpreted by the Midrash as a portent for their descendants. Not only will the Holy One be with these biblical figures on their journey, but the gift of God, the gift of water, will accompany their progeny as well.

Water, the element essential for creation, fertility and survival, water, a gift which manifests God's presence in the life of Israel, becomes a metaphor for another gift of God, a gift which insures the survival and perpetuation of Israel. Water becomes a metaphor for

Torah. The Midrash conveys both implicitly and explicitly that Torah has the same potential as a lifegiving force as does water. Torah serves as the means by which Israel will be redeemed. Those who study Torah, like their ancestors who plunged into the Red Sea and relied upon God's water in the wilderness, express their faith in God's power to protect and nurture Israel. Those who study Torah drink from the wells of salvation, as they bring Israel closer to the time of the Messiah. Midrashic literature is replete with descriptions of the time of the Messiah. Incorporated in many of the descriptions are bodies of water. There will be rivers flowing from Jerusalem bringing healing as their waters stream from one place to another. There will be waters with verdant gardens at their shores. The sea will divide to form dry land as the Holy One escorts Israel's exiles home. God will bring reviving dew to the people, dew which will restore all those who have fulfilled the Torah.

Thus, water flows through Israel's life as a people, from the wilderness to the world to come. The power of water as a symbol of healing and redemption has its source in the wilderness. Inherent in the symbol of water is an understanding that water gives life and that water is God's miracle, God's tool for giving life.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE PARADOX OF WATER: ISRAEL AT THE RED SEA



Literature is replete with tales of lovers who wait with mournful eyes by the shores of the sea. They wait at lighthouses, they wait on the beach. They wait for shipwrecked sailors to return to the land. They wait for those whose livelihood is found in the water. They wait for those whose life may be ended in the water. At the shore of the sea one faces the unknown. Perhaps those who wait seek to know the unknown past. Some who wait seek to know the unknown future.

Midrashic literature is filled with descriptions of those who stood by the Red Sea. For those who stood at the sea, it was not the past that was found in its waters, but rather the future. For we who read those descriptions, both the past and the future are revealed. For the Red Sea is the place where our ancestors first had a glimpse of redemption, the redemption of which we read descriptions and the redemption of which we may write descriptions. When the children of Israel stood at the shores of the sea, they did not do so with the armchair calm of the reader of literature. Our ancestors stood at the shores of the sea knowing firsthand the power which has water both to redeem and to destroy. At the Red Sea, the paradox of water's potential for both redemption and destruction raged within them. Our ancestors knew their own frailty. They knew that, if they were to escape the destruction of the sea, if they were to embrace the redemption for which they hoped, they could only do so with God's help. The children of Israel stood at the shore of the Red Sea knowing that they faced a situation of death--or life.

The children of Israel had a leader. They were not yet a whole, they were not yet a community. But they did have a leader under whose guidance they left Egypt. Moses promised them freedom from slavery



and, in haste, the children of Israel followed their leader. They found themselves by the shores of the sea. They found themselves sought by the Egyptians who were pursuing their former slaves. "As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites caught sight of the Egyptians advancing upon them. Greatly frightened, the Israelites cried out to 'Adonai.'" (Ex. 14:10) The children of Israel had a leader, and so they not only cried out in terror to God, they also blamed Moses for their plight and bemoaned the fact that they could not return to Egypt. "And they said to Moses: Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt?" (Ex. 14:11) This was a frightened group of people, a group who felt that their leader had talked them into leaving familiar oppression for unknown dangers. "Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, saying, let us be, and we will serve the Egyptians, for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." (Ex. 14:12) Faced with Egyptian pursuers behind them and a sea before them, the children of Israel cried in terror. Moses, their leader, reassured them that redemption would come. "But Moses said to the people: Have no fear! Stand by and witness the deliverance which 'Adonai will work for you today: for the Egyptians whom you see today, you will never see again. 'Adonai will battle for you. Hold your peace!" (Ex. 14:14)

The Midrash describes three distinct responses to this moment. There were those who, fortified by Moses' reassurance, accepted their dependence upon the Holy One and were convinced that water would be a means of redemption for them. Therefore they were anxious to act

upon this confidence. They were prepared to sanctify God's name. In Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 5, Nahson ben 'Aminadav jumped into the sea. Nahson, from the tribe of Judah, wanted to insure that he would be the first to enter the sea. According to Midrash Tehilim, he even pelted his brothers with stones to prevent them from besting him. Thus, in the Midrash, the Psalms phrase "Judah was his godsho" (Psalms 114:2) implies that Judah was the one who acknowledged God's gedusha, God's holiness.

"Judah became God's sanctuary" (Psalms 114:2). When the children of Israel arrived at the Red Sea, they battled one another as to which tribe should go in first, so that they went in not waiting till the waters dried up, but going right into the sea, and kept on going until they were in the deep waters, as it is said, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul" (Psalms 69:2); and also "The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea" (Ex. 14:22). Benjamin kept saying: Let me go in first; and Judah kept saying: Let me go in first. So said Zevulun and so Naftali, and even so all the other tribes until they picked up stones and pelted one another, as it is said "There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them (rodem), the princes of Judah, pelting them; the princes of Zevulun, the princes of Naftali" (Psalms 68:28). Read not rodem "ruling them," but rad yam, "he went down into the sea." Moreover, because Judah pelted his brothers who went into the sea before him, he won purple garments for himself, these symbolizing royalty, as it is written "They clothed Daniel with purple" (Dan. 5:29). The Holy One said to Judah: In thy zeal to hallow My name, thou didst pelt thy brothers with stones. Rule therefore over thy brothers. Hence it is said that "Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel God's dominion." (Psalms 114:2)

(Midrash Tehilim 114:8)

Not only does this midrash convey that the tribes were eager to enter the Red Sea in order to sanctify God's name, it also helps to explain how "Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry land" (Ex. 14:22). The brothers knew that God would perform a miracle and so they did not need to wait until it was performed for them. Their actions expressed their utter faith in God and their dependence upon the

Holy One's promise. Furthermore, a hint of kingship is found here in the allusion to Judah's purple garments, worn by Daniel, who is identified as being from the children of Judah in Dan. 1:6, as well as to King David, the progenitor of the Messiah. Finally, the context of the Psalm 114 leaves no doubt as to where "Judah became God's sanctuary." "When Israel came forth out of Egypt" begins this Psalm. The children of Israel were poised at the edge of the sea, and it was here that Judah acted in a way that brought holiness to his name and to his relationship with the Holy One. How other than affirming his faith by jumping into the waters might he have done so? By using all means possible including pelting his brothers to insure that he would carry on the royal line.

Such zeal is not always reflected in the midrashic description of this moment. In Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el another reaction is expressed:

Rabbi Judah says: "When the Israelites stood at the sea, one said: I do not want to go down to the sea first, as it is said 'Efraim encompasses Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit' (Hosea 12:1). While they were standing there deliberating, Nahson ben 'Aminadav jumped up first and went down to the sea and fell into the waves. Of him it is said, 'Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even to my soul; I am sunk in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, and the flood overwhelms me.' (Psalms 69:2-3) And it also says 'Let not the water flood overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. (Psalms 69:16)

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 5)

According to Rabbi Judah the Israelites were far less eager to jump into a watery death than the earlier midrash assumes. Here, too, they fight, but the struggle in this interpretation is a struggle over who will lose and enter instead of who will win and enter. It is not

clear that Nahshon proudly proclaimed God's kingship here. The language of the text suggests that first he jumped, but then he fell into the water. The context of the psalm which is chosen as a proof-text for Nahshon's cries is a strong expression of the danger of water. "Save me O God for the waters are come in even unto my neck. I am sunk in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters and the flood overwhelms me. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink. Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the waterflood overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." (Ps. 69: 2-3, 15-16) Here was a drowning man, crying for God's help. Whether Nahshon entered with a plunge of faith, or fell in with an unsure step, his cries communicated that he had both faith in the God who has the power to save him and a very present terror that such a rescue may not have been forthcoming.

Between the two positions--that of competition for the first jump and terror at the impending drowning, is a middle road. The following midrashic interpretation suggests that the people were neither terrified nor eager to sanctify God. Instead, they engaged in a process of negotiation with the Holy One to insure that they would be saved. They were, somewhat humorously, "testing the waters." According to Avot de Rabbi Natan 33, when the people stood at the Red Sea and Moses told them to "rise and go across," the people declared, "We will not go across until tunnels are made in the sea." Moses, accommodating their request, struck the sea and tunnels were made within it. Then the children of Israel sought to have Moses turn the sea into a valley. He did so. Their next request was to cut the sea assunder. The demands of the

children of Israel continued until Moses had turned the sea into clay, a wilderness, small pieces, rocks, dry land, walls and finally, a flask.

A similar tale is related in Midrash Tehilim 114:7:

For the sake of Israel, the Holy One worked ten miracles on the sea: (1) God drew up the waters of the sea into walls, and no wall was without its tower, and no tower was without its watch --indeed, it was the ministering angels keeping watch over the children of Israel so that they would not come to harm. But when Moses said to them: "Come, and cross over," they replied: "How can we go down between walls?" as it is said, "The waters were a wall unto them." (Ex. 14:29). Then God pressed together the deeps of the sea, and the waters rose and piled up on the shore. Just like a swimmer with one hand above the water and the other below it, so the Holy One pressed upon the deeps of the sea and swept the waters upon the shore. (2) And God made a tunnel through the waters, as is said, "Thou hast pierced through for the sake of his tribes." (Hab. 3:14). But when Moses said to them: "Come, and cross over," they answered: "When two-thirds of the water lay below us and only one-third stood above us, we did not dare cross over. Now that two-thirds are massed above us, and one third lies below us, how much less do we dare cross over!" Thereupon (3) God flattened out the water into a level highway, as is said, "The mass of water into a level place (Perazav)." (Hab. 3:14), perasav clearly denoting a "level highway," as in the verse "Jerusalem shall be as extended as the flat countryside (perazot) (Zech. 2:8)."

In the Avot de Rabbi Natan passage, the children of Israel seemed to be testing God. Moses was attempting to fulfill God's command to get the children to move, but they were subverting his efforts by increasing their demands on the Holy One. God, desirous of the fulfillment of the command (and, undoubtedly anxious because, while this deliberation raged, the Egyptians were gaining ground), complied with the requests of the children of Israel. In the Midrash Tehilim passage, the negotiation is of a different nature. There, the children were concerned with safety. The Israelites were not testing God, rather they were collaborating on the logistics of the redemption. What links the two midrashim, then,



is the underlying assumption that even in a time of crisis and terror, the people were as yet uncertain of this God and of God's power. Prior to the Red Sea, their experience of God was filtered through their leader, Moses.

Moses and the Holy One had an established bond. Moses had already risked his life and developed his leadership as a result of their bond. Thus, when the children of Israel cried out in terror to Moses in Exodus 14:10, he could speak words of comfort. Moses told them that they would experience yeshu'at 'Adonai, the deliverance of the Holy One, and this reassurance was sufficient in at least one version of the event. But where was Moses? What was Moses doing while the children of Israel were jumping into the Red Sea? For Moses, it was easier to speak than to act. He who reassured his followers was less than certain of his words. Moses underwent a moment of extraordinary tension. Wanting to believe, frightened to act, Moses, too, was perched on a precipice. For just as the children of Israel cried to the Holy One, "Vayis'agu vene yisra'el" (Exodus 14:10), so Moses cried to God. For God's response was "Mah tis'ag elai" "Why do you cry to me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward" (Exodus 14:15). What was the content of Moses cry--a cry which God found inappropriate or unnecessary? Was Moses seeking reassurance from his Divine leader as the children of Israel sought it from him? The rabbis posit that Moses' cry is a prayer. At a time of terror, at a time of testing faith, at a time of danger, Moses prayed to God.

'Adonai said to Moses: "Why do you cry to Me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." (Ex. 14:15). Rabbi Joshua says: The Holy One said to Moses: Moses, my children are in

distress, the sea is forming a bar and the enemy is pursuing and you stand there reciting long prayers. "Why do you cry unto me?" For Rabbi Eli'ezer used to say: There is a time to be brief in prayer and a time to be lengthy. "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." (Num. 12:13). This is an instance of being brief. "I fell down before 'Adonai as at the first time..." (Dt. 9:18). This is an instance of being lengthy.

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 4)

According to the rabbis, then, Moses' prayer was counterproductive. Prayer postpones action and, in this situation, action was far more significant. Furthermore, the rebuke of Rabbi Eli'ezer suggests that Moses had lost sight of what lay before him. Eli'ezer asserts that God impressed upon him the immediacy of the crisis, teaching him that prayer was not needed there. In an alternative version of this midrash, when Nahshon had entered the sea, Moses questioned God: "Ruler of the World, what can I do?" The Divine response is drawn from the next line in the biblical text, "Lift up your hand."<sup>3</sup> Before Moses complied, the rabbis find yet another obstacle. Since prayer seemed to be an incorrect response to the predicament in which Moses found himself, he tried another respectable Jewish avenue-- he argued with God:

"Lift up your rod." (Ex. 14:15). Moses said to the Holy One: You command me to divide the sea and to convert it to dry ground, but have you not written, "who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea" (Jer. 5:22) and does it not say "Or who shut up the sea with doors" (Job 38:8). The Divine reply was: You have not read the Torah from the beginning, where it is written "And God said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together." (Gen. 1:9). It was I who made a condition at the very beginning that I would one day divide it, for it said "And the sea returned to its strength (l'etano) when the morning appeared" (Ex. 14:27), that is, in accordance with the condition which I made with it at its creation. Moses immediately hearkened to God and went to divide the sea.

(Exodus Rabbah 21:6)

Moses' argument is more convincing when the verses are quoted in their entirety. "Should you not revere Me says 'Adonai, should you not tremble before Me, who set the sand as a boundary to the sea, as a limit for all time, not to be transgressed? Though its waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass it." (Jer 5:22) "Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth and issued out of the womb...and prescribed for it My decree and set bars and doors, and said, Thus far shall you come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed." (Job 38:8, 10-11). Clearly Moses was concerned not only for his safety and the safety of the children of Israel; he was also concerned about the propriety of violating a biblical ordinance. However, God reconciled the discrepancy between the verses Moses cited and the decision to change the boundaries of the Red Sea by claiming that this particular decision was accounted for at the beginning of creation. The Divine reply is constructed upon a play on l'etano "to its normal state," (Ex. 14:27), and litnaai "to its condition." Similarly lifnot boqer, "at daybreak" (Ex. 14:27) is taken to mean at the beginning of days, or at creation. And so, with a bit of linguistic gymnastics, the Holy One allayed Moses' fears, and Moses prepared to obey God by lifting up his hand.

Although at this juncture presumably Moses was ready to act-- both to get the children of Israel to go forward and to lift up his own hand, his reluctance to do so earlier merits consideration. Inherent in Moses' reluctance to act is the assumption that following his action--once the children moved forward, once his hand was raised, either destruction or redemption would ensue. Between God's command



and Moses' obedience was a drama of faith. If Moses did not act, then he would not have risked the possibility of failure. Moses, by lifting up his hand, by causing the people to enter the water tried not only his own faith and that of the people, but the response of the Holy One as well.

As the midrash suggests, the primary response of the Holy One was to urge Moses to act. God commanded that Moses lift up his hand. But couldn't the sea be divided without human action? One could argue that if God could divide the sea once Moses' hand was raised, then certainly the Holy One could do so before Moses complied. Yet, implicit in God's delay in dividing the sea was the premise that in order for the Holy One to perform a miracle, Moses and the children of Israel had to take a leap of faith. In order to set the stage for God to act as Redeemer, the people had to act.

Initially, the drama was expressed in words. The children of Israel cried to the Holy One and complained to Moses. Moses spoke in order to comfort them and then, with less certainty, he, too, cried to God. God responded with urging: Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward. Once again, Moses was asked to respond with words.

But these words required action--action on the part of the children of Israel. Physical security required that they move forward since the Egyptians were in pursuit. There were people suffering while Moses waited. Nahshon ben 'Aminadav was drowning in the sea, and Job was suffering at the hands of Pharaoh, for according to Exodus Rabbah 21:7:

"Why cry unto me?" (Ex. 14:15). It is written "Have you prepared your prayer before your trouble came?" (Job 36:19). Why is this so? Rabbi Eli'ezer ben Pedat said: The proverb has it, "Honor thy physician before you have need of him." Rabbi Shim'on ben Laqish says: Prepare your prayer before your Creator, so that no troubles may befall you from above. Rabbi Hama ben Hanina said: When Israel departed from Egypt, Sammael arose to accuse them. Rabbi Hama added the following explanation in the name of his father: It can be compared to a shepherd who was leading his sheep across a river when a wolf came to attack the sheep. What did the shepherd, who knew how to deal with such experiences, do? He took a large he-goat and threw it to the wolf, saying: Let him struggle with this till we cross the river, and then I will return to bring it back. So when Israel departed from Egypt, the angel Samma'el arose to accuse them, pleading before God: Ruler of the Universe, until now they have been worshipping idols and now You divide the sea for them? What did God do? God delivered Job, one of the counselors of Pharaoh, into his hands, of whom it is written, "And that man was wholehearted and upright." (Job 1:1), and he said, "Behold, he is in Thy hands." (Job 2:6). God reckoned: While he is busily occupied with Job, Israel will go through the sea. Afterward I will deliver Job. That is why Job said, "I was at ease and God broke me asunder." (Job 16:12). I was at ease in the world, said Job, but, "God broke me asunder. God has taken me by the neck and dashed me to pieces," (Job 16:12) in order to make me the target for God's people for it says, "God has also set me up for God's mark." (Job 16:2). "God has delivered me to the ungodly." (Job 16:11). God has delivered me into the hands of Satan, and in order that Israel may not emerge guilty from the trial, God has delivered me into his hand, hence "And cast me into the hands of the wicked." (Job 16:11). It was then that God said to Moses: Moses, behold I have given Job over to Satan. It is for you to "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." (Exodus 14:15).

In this midrash, Job is literally a scapegoat; an explanation for Job's apparently inexplicable suffering is provided. Here, Samma'el had an excuse for inflicting pain on Job. Not only was Job's suffering on behalf of Israel, but he was also identified as a counselor of Pharaoh, thus making his pain less capricious. If Job advised the Pharaoh, then even his description as "wholehearted and upright" could be disputed. It is curious to note that, instead of engaging in more words, in the form of a legal argument with Samma'el about the merit of

Israel, God distracted him so that both Israel and God could act. It then became even more essential for Moses to get the people to act so that the Holy One could return to save Job. The parable identified the Holy One as a shepherd whose task is first and foremost to protect the flock. While the image of a person suffering on behalf of others is infrequently found within the Jewish tradition, this explanation offers some reason for the seemingly arbitrary suffering of Job. Certainly God is depicted as manifesting great concern for bringing Job to safety. Furthermore, with this interpretation, Job has the merit of playing a critical role in yeshu'at 'Adonai, the deliverance of the Holy One at the Red Sea.

It fell upon Moses, then, to get the people to act. They had only to enter the sea to witness the miracles that God would perform on their behalf. Note, for example, Exodus Rabbah 21:8:

Rabbi Joshua said: God said to Moses: All that Israel has to do is to go forward. Therefore, let them go forward. Let their feet step forward from the dry land to the sea and you will see the miracles that I will perform for them.

According to Exodus Rabbah 21:10, the children of Israel stepped into the sea and the waters divided.

"And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry land." (Ex. 14:22). How was this possible? If they went into the sea, then why does it say "upon dry land?" And if they went "upon dry land" then why does it say "in the midst of the sea?" This is to teach that the sea was divided only after Israel had stepped into it and the waters reached their noses. Only then did it become dry land.

The first midrash asserts that God was poised to act. The second midrash conveys that Israel needed to initiate that action. Israel had to enter the sea in the face of a reality which belied her faith.

Yet, by taking that step, Israel was able to see the miracles which God performed.

These miracles were not devised on the spot. For the Holy One's commitment to dividing the Red Sea and to redeeming the children of Israel was a commitment made in anticipation of the covenant which the Holy One would eventually make with Israel. Even prior to Moses' prayer and argument, God had determined what to do. According to the passage from Exodus Rabbah 21:6 cited above, God had planned for the redemption at the Red Sea at the time of creation. Furthermore, the rabbis stressed that God planned to divide the sea for the sake of Abraham and for the sake of Jacob.<sup>4</sup> Thus, at creation and at the time of the Patriarchs, God was making preparations for the covenant. The miracles at the Red Sea reflected the future relationship between God and Israel.

Even if the covenant had not yet been established, the affection of God for Israel had. The Holy One treated Israel not only as the shepherd treats the flock, but the Holy One expressed concern as a loving parent would for a child. In Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Rabbi Yehudah quotes the Holy One as saying: "My beloved are drowning in the sea, the sea shuts them in and the enemy is pursuing." Rabbi Elie'ezer makes the same comment. However, he quotes the Holy One as saying, "My children are in distresses, the sea shuts them in and the enemy is pursuing."<sup>5</sup> The phrases "my beloved" and "my children" suggest that God's protection has, at its root, a love of the people Israel. This love is further suggested by a passage which reflects the nature of parental love--a love which is "in spite of," a love which neither pain

nor disobedience tears asunder:

'Adonai said. "I have surely seen the affliction of my people." (Exodus 3:7). When Israel was in Egypt, God saw what they would do, for it says "I have surely seen." It does not say "I have seen" once but "raoh raiti"--I have surely seen. Why? God said: Moses, you can only see one vision, but I see two visions. You see them coming to Sinai and receiving the Torah. I do too. This however is only one vision. But I can also see the vision of the golden calf, as it is said, "I have seen this people," (Ex. 32:9). When I come to Sinai to give them the Torah, I will come down in my chariot with four animals abreast. Yet, though they will observe me and unhitch me, and provoke me thereby, yet I will not judge them on the actions that they will do, but on their present ones. "For I have heard their cry." (Exodus 3:7). Although I am aware of the pains they are going to cause me later, still now I will surely look upon their afflictions. What is the meaning of "For I know their pains?" (Ex. 3:7). I know how much they will cause Me pain in the wilderness. As it is said, "How often did they rebel against God in the wilderness and grieve God in the desert?" (Ps. 78:40). Yet, despite all this, I will not refrain from delivering them.

The insight of one who saw how the people would bring pain and yet responded to the cries of the present moment is surely similar to that of a parent whose mercy exceeds justice. Finally, this allusion to God acting as a parent is addressed in a parable:

Rabbi Abbahu said: It is like one who saw robbers coming toward him. His son was with him, so what did he do? He took his son in one hand and with the other fought the robbers. His son said to him: May I never lack the protection of those two hands, the one that is holding me and the other which is slaying the robbers. This is what the Israelites said to God: May peace be upon both Your hands. Both on the one with which You did save us from the sea and on the other with which You overthrew the Egyptians.

(Exodus Rabbah 22:2)

Thus, the Holy One protected Israel as a parent protects a child. The way in which this parental care was manifested in the action of the Holy One will be addressed in the following chapter. Here, it is sufficient to observe that God's actions hinted at the covenant relationship which would be created between God and the people who

were the object of Divine redemption. That this relationship was anticipated is attested to in both the biblical text and the midrashic literature. For without a special link to the children of Israel, the fate which Israel feared as the people approached the sea--the fate which became that of the Egyptians--would have been theirs. Without the special relationship, Israel might have been one more group fleeing oppression and ending in destruction. Instead, Israel would become a covenanted people, a people whose unique link to the Holy One determined her fate. The actions of both God and Israel at the Red Sea had later repercussions in relation to the covenant. It was due to Nahshon's actions at the sea that the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah:

While they were standing there deliberating, Nahshon ben 'Aminadav jumped up first and went down to the sea and fell into the waves... Now what did Israel say then at the sea? "Adonai shall reign forever and ever." (Exodus 15:18). The Holy One said: He who was the cause of My being proclaimed ruler of the sea, him will I make ruler over Israel.

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 5)

Similarly, with regard to Nahshon ben 'Aminadav, a reward is found in Numbers Rabbah 13:4:

"By Judah God is known." (Ps. 76:2). For this reason, the Holy One made great the name of Nahshon in Israel, inasmuch as he was privileged to be the first to present his offering, as it says "And he that presented his offering the first day was Nahshon." (Num. 7:12). Thus we have explained "His name is great in Israel." (Ps. 76:2).

Nahshon ben 'Aminadav received a twofold reward for this act at the Red Sea. He would be honored by presenting the first offering after the Tabernacle had been built, and his descendant would be ruler over Israel. Both rewards were prefigured by Nahshon's action. For by



plunging into the sea, Nahshon already presented the first offering-- the offering of his life and faith in the process of Israel's becoming a holy nation. And, since his leap of faith was the action which, together with Moses lifting up his hand, caused the sea to divide, Nahshon was instrumental in insuring the redemption of the children of Israel, a people who, once on dry land, proclaimed the One who saved them as their Ruler. Consequently, since Nahshon bore responsibility for the proclamation of God's kingship, Nahshon's descendant would reap the privilege of becoming ruler. Indeed, not simply by inference, but explicitly, Nahshon is mentioned (Ruth 4:20) in the genealogy of King David.

The assumption that Israel would be a covenanted people and that the covenant was anticipated in God's actions at the Red Sea is emphasized in still another passage:

Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai said: When Israel descended to the water, the Red Sea was split for them, as it is said, "To the Divider of the Red Sea" (Ps. 136:13), and the waters stood in walls and Israel looked through windows and told one another what they saw, as it is said "And the water was a wall from their right and from their left" (Ex. 14:22), and Gabriel was surrounding and guarding them like a wall in the middle of the water. He announced to the waters: You are protecting Israel from the right because they will receive the Torah in the future from the right hand of God, as it is said, "At God's right hand was a fiery Law unto them." (Dt. 33:2). He turned and said to the waters on the left: Protect Israel for they are destined to lay tefillin on their left, as it is said, "And you will bind them for a sign upon your hand." (Dt. 7:8). He turned and said to the waters in front of them: Protect Israel that they will be careful with brit milah, as it is said, "This is My covenant that you shall guard." (Gen. 17:11). He returned and said to the waters behind him: Protect Israel that they are destined to guard sisit, as it is said, "And they placed fringes." (Num. 15:38). And the waters guarded them and they went in peace.

(Yalqut haMakhiri to Psalms, 136:19)

Here Israel was being protected, not on behalf of Abraham and Jacob, not on behalf of past actions, but because of future promises.

Gabriel took care of Israel by virtue of their future commitment to Torah, to tefillin, to brit milah, and to sisit. These commandments all bind God and Israel. Because Israel would accept and keep the commandments, the Holy One insured their protection at the Red Sea.

Consequently, it was not only the past that the children of Israel carried with them as they approached the moment of entering the Red Sea. God created the future for Israel by redeeming the people at the Red Sea. This future, borne of a redemption, looked toward another redemption. Beyond the Red Sea was the wilderness. And after Sinai was a long history of suffering. The redemption at the Red Sea was only a rehearsal for the final redemption. The children of Israel, not yet having reached the land, would need one day to return to the land. And the rabbis, living between the redemption at the Red Sea and the promise of the return to the land, saw in the former a presage of the latter.

"That which is has already been" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The Holy One said, "I shall dry up the Mediteranean Sea for the return of the exiles." And the proof? So it is written "'Adonai will utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian Sea; and with God's scorching wind, will God shake a hand over the river and will smite it into seven streams and cause men to march on dryshod" (Is. 11:15), and for their sake God will divide the river into pathways. And the proof? So it is written, "There shall be a highway for the remnant of God's people." (Is. 11:16). But mortals voice their doubts saying: Can God do such a thing? The Holy One answers: Have I not already done such a thing in this world when the Israelites went out of Egypt? And that which is to be has already been. Did I not divide the Red Sea and make it into separate paths and at the same time sink the Israelites' pursuers in it?



The Red Sea experience served as a paradigm for the redemption yet forthcoming. Indeed, following the description in Is. 11:15-16 elaborated upon in this passage, the biblical text reads "There shall be a highway for the remnant of God's people out of Assyria, such as there was for Israel when it left the land of Egypt" (Is. 11:16). Furthermore, the hallmark of the exodus from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, is reflected in the return of the exiles to the land of Israel. For the rabbis, the redemption for which Israel waits will unite our future and our past.

In the paradox of the Red Sea, on the brink of life or death, Israel took her first step toward becoming a people. The Holy One, by guiding them, protecting them, coaxing them into that step, set the stage for the wilderness experience which was to follow and for the next moment in Israel's history--the moment of Sinai.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE HOLY ONE AS PRESENCE AND PROVIDER

The Red Sea was but one step in a longer journey. A miraculous power divided the sea so that the children of Israel could walk across. But beyond the sea, in the wilderness, Israel continued to need Divine assistance. God would remain with this fledgling people throughout its journey. The Divine Presence would provide for Israel beyond the Sea.

It has been stated in Chapter One, page 19, that God conveyed concern for this new people in the manner of a parent for a child. At the Red Sea the Holy One joined in the fray. God did not leave Moses and Israel to fight their way through the waves or against the Egyptians from afar. The Holy One was no mere puppeteer in the Red Sea experience. Like a parent who accompanies a child through frightening moments, the Holy One could be counted on for aid when human efforts had failed.

Following Moses' argument with God, and God's reassurance, Moses was willing to lift up his hand, as God commanded him. But the midrash continues:

Moses immediately hearkened to God and went to divide the sea... but the sea refused to comply, exclaiming: What, before you shall I divide? Am I not greater than you? For I was created in the third day and you on the sixth. When Moses heard this, he went and reported to God: The sea refuses to be divided! What did God do? God placed the right hand upon the right hand of Moses, as it says, "That caused God's glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, that divided the water before them." (Is. 63:11). When the sea beheld God, it fled, as it says, "The sea saw it, and fled." (Ps. 114:3). What did it see? It was God's right hand placed upon Moses and it could not longer delay, but fled at once. Moses asked of it: Why do you flee? The sea replied "At the presence of the God of Jacob" (Ps. 114:7), because of the fear of the Holy One. Thereupon, as soon as Moses raised his hand over the sea, it divided itself, for

it says, "And the waters were divided" (Ex. 14:21). It does not say, "And the water was divided," but "And the waters were divided," to teach us that waters that were in all the fountains and wells and other places became divided, and when the waters returned, for it says "And the waters returned" (Ex. 14:28). All these miracles were performed by Moses for it says "And Moses stretched his hand over the sea." (Ex. 14:21). It is for this reason that God praised him, as it says, "Then God's people remembered the days of old, the days of Moses" (Is. 63:11), and also "That caused God's glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses" (Is. 63:12).

(Exodus Rabbah 21:6)

In another passage, when the sea refused to divide, the Holy One revealed to it the Divine Countenance:

The Holy One said to Moses: "Stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it" (Ex. 15:16). "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea" (Ex. 15:21), but the sea refused to be divided. What did the Holy One do? God looked at the sea and the waters saw the face of the Holy One and they trembled and quaked (Ps. 104:32) and descended into the depths, as it is said "The waters saw You O God, the waters saw You and were afraid. The depths also trembled" (Ps. 77:17).

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 42)

Although these particular descriptions of God's intervention are contingent upon the imagery provided by the biblical poetry, as is evidenced in the prooftexts, the passages reflect the understanding shared by the biblical poets and the rabbis that the Holy One was a present and involved party at the Red Sea. In both passages, God intervened because Moses was attempting to obey God's command without success. Throughout rabbinic literature, the assertion is made that God will only demand from Israel what humans are capable of providing. Here, too, Moses endeavored to lift up his hand without the attendant division of the waters. Like a parent encouraging a doubting child who claims "I can't", God, having just urged Moses to lift up his hand, assisted him in turning an "I can't" into an "I can."

However, there is another aspect of God's intervention. The Holy One also appeared as a ruler; even, at times, as a commander leading troops. For it was at the Red Sea that God's sovereignty was proclaimed (Ex. 15:18) and such a proclamation suggests that those asserting it had witnessed the Holy One as divine ruler. Once again, the Midrash fills in the outlines provided by the biblical text.

Rabbi Eli'ezer said: On the day when God said "Let the waters be gathered together" (Gen. 1:9), on that very day were the waters congealed and they were made into twelve valleys corresponding to the twelve tribes and they were made into walls of water between each path, and the people could see one another and they saw the Holy One walking before them, but the heels of God's feet they did not see, as it is said, "Your way was in the sea and Your paths in the great waters and Your footsteps were not known (Ps. 77:20). Rabbi 'Aqiva said: The Egyptians desired to follow after Israel, but they turned backwards, fearing the waters would return over them. What did the Holy One do? God appeared before them like a man riding upon the back of a mare, as it is said, "To a steed in Pharoah's chariots" (Song of Songs 1:9). The horse on which Pharoah rode saw the mare of God and it neighed and ran and entered the sea after it. The Egyptians saw that Pharoah had entered the sea, and all of them entered the sea after him, as it is said, "The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen" (Ex. 15:28).

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer,  
chapter 42)

The first image here is that of the Holy Commander, walking before the troops, with each tribe in a valley, traversing the bed of the sea in an orderly, disciplined fashion. Even in its biblical context, Psalm 77 addresses the redemption at the Red Sea, but the portrayal of God as a shepherd in verse 21 is superseded here by the portrait of a military leader. With this image in mind, the desire of the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites becomes clearer, even comical. They were uncertain as to whether these twelve valleys would remain while they crossed the seabed and so they retreated in fear. But this same

majestic commander reappeared before the mounted Egyptians, this time, on a mare. Invoking the image in Song of Songs, the Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer passage plays on the overwhelming appeal a mare would have amidst stallions, for not all laws of nature were overturned at the Red Sea! Pharoah's stallion broke forth in pursuit of the Holy One's mount and in contrast to the disciplined march of the Israelites, the Egyptians and their horses plunged headlong into the sea after the lead of the Pharoah's horse. One should not miss the irony of the Egyptian destruction having been initiated by a stallion in heat.<sup>6</sup>

In another treatment of God's intervention, occasioned by Psalm 18, the following picture is drawn.

Rabbi Shim'on ben Laqish said: The waters of the sea overwhelmed the Israelites as well as the Egyptians. What did the Holy One do? God's right hand delivered the children of Israel and God's right hand also sank the Egyptians, for it is said, "Your right hand, 'Adonai, is become glorious power" (Ex. 15:6). For Israel "Your right hand, 'Adonai, has dashed the enemy in pieces" (Ex. 15:6)--the Egyptians.

Rabbi Shim'on ben Laqish again said: The foremost of the Egyptians also reached dry land and sought to go no further; but the Holy One brought the sea upon them, and it pursued them and covered them, as it is said, "'Adonai brought back the waters of the sea upon them" (Ex. 15:19).

(Midrash Tehilim 18:20)

By associating the two occurrences of "yeminkha," your right hand, in the Song of the Sea with the Psalms text, Rabbi Shim'on ben Laqish portrays a scene in which both the children of Israel and the Egyptians are drowning in the sea. However, God's right hand, the hand of power, served both to redeem the children of Israel and to destroy the Egyptians. The paradox of the Red Sea as a place of both destruction and redemption was graphically illustrated here. For it was only the function of God's right hand which determined the fate of those flailing in the sea.

If any Egyptians found themselves safely on the far shore, the Holy One completed the division of Egyptians and Israelites by covering the Egyptians with the waters.

It could be convincingly argued that God displayed enough power for one day. However, the redemption at the Red Sea is referred to so often in the biblical text that the midrashic literature built on these references to depict even more miraculous scenes. Occurring in several variant versions,<sup>7</sup> lists of the miracles which the Holy One performed at the sea would awe even the staunchest cynic:

"Lift up your rod" (Ex. 14:16). Ten miracles were performed for Israel at the Red Sea. The sea was broken through and made like a vault, as it is said "You have pierced through because of his tribes" (Hav. 3:14). It was divided into two parts, as it is said, "Stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it" (Ex. 14:16). Dry land was formed in it, as it is said, "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea" (Ex. 14:29). It became a sort of clay, "You have trodden the sea with Your horses, the clay of mighty waters" (Hav. 3:15). It crumbled into pieces as it is said, "You broke the sea in pieces by Your strength" (Ps. 74:13). It turned into rocks, as it is said, "You shattered the heads of the sea monsters upon the water" (Ps. 74:13). It was cut into several parts, as it is said, "And with the blast of your nostrils the waters were piled up" (Ex. 15:8). It formed a sort of heap, as it is said, "The floods stood upright as a heap" (Ex. 15:8). God extracted sweet waters from the salt water, as it is said, "God brought streams also out of the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers" (Ps. 78:16). The sea congealed on both sides and became a sort of glass crystal, as it is said, "The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea" (Ex. 15:8).

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 4)

What is the purpose of this midrash? From a literary perspective, it points to verses in the biblical text which glorify and describe God's power, and combines them to form an alternative portrait of the redemption. But from a thematic perspective, these miracles underline the ways in which the Holy One altered nature for the children of Israel.



Water lost its fluidity and instead became hard or divisible. Over and over God changed the nature of that which is not only familiar but also frightening. For water has within it the power of creation and the power of destruction. And even an element as mysterious as water is subject to God's will. Implicit in the lists of the miracles at the Red Sea was a presumption of God's omnipotence. Whatever the Holy One chose to provide for the people Israel was within the Divine means. The rabbis reinforce the assertion of God's utter power. God was not only present at the Red Sea, God also provided whatever that, or any subsequent, occasion demanded.

Certainly, after the children of Israel reached the shore nearest the land of Israel there were many occasions which demanded God's providence. If the Red Sea was a pressure point where the relationship between God and Israel was forged, then the wilderness was a place where the bond between them was constantly tested. It was in the wilderness where the children of Israel grew to rely on the Holy One.

In a sense, the wilderness was God's home. The wilderness was a place free of rulers, free of organized, settled life. There was nothing to which the children of Israel owed allegiance in the wilderness other than the Holy One. God's affinity for the wilderness is reflected in the following midrashic passage:

God may here be compared to a prince who entered a province, the inhabitants of which, seeing him, fled. He entered a second one and there again they fled from him. He then entered a ruined city and they advanced to welcome him and praised him royally. Said the prince: This city pleases me more than all the provinces. Here will I build a lodging-place, and here will I dwell. So when the Holy One came to the Red Sea, it fled from God's presence as it is said, "The sea saw (God) and fled (Ps. 114:3); likewise "The mountains skipped like rams" (Ps. 114:4). When, however, God arrived at the waste wilderness, it advanced to welcome God and praised God royally; as it is



said, "The wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; the inhabitants of Sela exult" (Isa. 42:11). Thereupon God said: This place pleases Me more than all the provinces; therein will I build a lodging-place and dwell therein. They began to rejoice that the Holy One was to dwell therein; as it is said, "The wilderness and the parched land shall be glad" (Isa. 35:1).

(Numbers Rabbah 1:2)

The longing for the wilderness expressed in this text suggests that the Holy One found in it a heavenly haven. It was in the wilderness that God was praised, and the praise led to a Divine decision to build a home there. The decision was a good one, for, according to the above passage, the building of the Tabernacle was yet another occasion for the wilderness to rejoice and to welcome God into its midst.

Furthermore, God chose the wilderness as the place from which to reveal the Torah. Thus, the wilderness became the place in which God revealed the Divine Presence.

Consequently, the children of Israel, upon crossing the Red Sea, found themselves as guests in God's home. Like a gracious host, the Holy One provided for all their needs. This is reflected in a passage where the depths of the sea are likened to the wilderness. What characterized the wilderness? "...These 40 years in which 'Adonai, your God, is with you, you have lacked nothing" (Dt. 2:7):

Rabbi Nehorai said in a discourse: The daughters of Israel passed through the sea holding their children with them, and when they cried, they would stretch out their hands and pluck an apple or a pomegranate from the sea and give it to them, for it says, "And God led them through the depths, as though a wilderness" (Ps. 106:9). Just as they lacked nothing in the wilderness, so also in the depths they lacked nothing. This is what Moses said to them: "These forty years in which 'Adonai, your God, has been with you, you have lacked nothing" (Dt. 2:7). They were never in need of anything; they had only to mention a thing and it was immediately created for them.

Rabbi Shim'on said. They did not find it necessary to utter a word. They only had to think of something and it was immediately fulfilled, as it says, "And they tried God" (Ps. 78:18), in their heart by "Asking food for their craving" (Ps. 78:18).

(Exodus Rabbah 21:10)

This text accentuates the continuity between the Red Sea and the wilderness experience. 'Adonai was with the people both in the Red Sea and in the wilderness. Furthermore, God was not merely a Presence, but also the Divine Provider. "וְיָרְאוּ יְהוָה" is understood in several different ways. In its literal sense, the people were provided with anything they wanted. In order to receive it, they did not even need to speak. For "davar" meaning "thing" suggests that they literally received "anything their heart desired." Like guests in a home of splendour, both in the Red Sea and in the wilderness, the people of Israel were recipients of God's beneficence.

Such bounty is all the more noteworthy in contrast to the typical image of the stark desert. Note the following illustrations:

In the ordinary course of events, when a mortal king goes forth in the wilderness, does he find there the same ease that he enjoyed in his own palace, the same food or the same drink? You, however, were slaves in Egypt, and I brought you out of there and caused you to recline on lordly couches; as it is said, "But God led the people about (vayashev) by the way of the wilderness" (Ex. 13:18). What is the meaning of (vayashev)? God caused them to recline in the manner of kings reclining upon their couches.

(Numbers Rabbah 1:2)

"Behold I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you" (Ex. 16:4). It is written, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (Ps. 23:5). When did Israel say this? When they left Egypt and the nations declared: These will surely perish in the wilderness, saying, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" (Ps. 78:19). What did God do? God made you recline beneath the clouds of glory as it says, "But God made the people recline" (Ex. 13:18). God gave them manna

to eat as it says, "Who fed you in the wilderness with manna" (Dt. 8:16). The manna was higher than the waters of the flood, for it says, "And God commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven" (Ps. 78:23), whereas in the case of the flood it says, "And the windows of heaven were opened" (Gen. 7:11). The nations beheld Israel sitting and eating and praising God, as it says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You have anointed my head with oil" (Ps. 23:5) --this refers to the quails. "My cup runneth over" (Ps. 23:5) --this is the well.

(Exodus Rabbah 25:7)

The wilderness, a place where one lives in fear of perishing, was turned into a place where former slaves learned to recline and to feast like royalty. Even a king does not expect the comforts of his palace while journeying, and yet the children of Israel, unaccustomed to luxury, were treated better than kings.

Since God was preparing to give Israel the precious gift of Torah, then it was necessary to nurse this group of former slaves until they were prepared to receive it. Israel needed to convalesce in God's domain, as guests of the Divine.

Rabbi Isaac said: By rights Israel should have been given the Torah immediately on their departure from Egypt, but the Holy One said: The bloom of my children has not yet returned. They just emerged from slaving with clay and bricks and they are not yet able to receive the Torah. What is this like? Like a king whose son arose from his sickbed and the people said to him: Let your son go to school. He replied: The bloom of my son has not yet returned and you say that he should go to school! Let him recuperate for two or three months with food and drink and afterward, he will go to school. Similarly the Holy One said: The bloom of my children has not yet returned. They have just been released from slaving with clay and bricks. How can I give them the Torah? Let my children recuperate for two or three months with the manna and the well of water and the quails. Afterward, I will give them the Torah. When was it given? "In the third month..." (Ex. 19:1)

(Ecclesiastes Rabbah 3:11:2)

Such Divine care could turn the wilderness into a garden.

But the wilderness, without God's provision was not only free, compelling and uncluttered, it was also pristine, dry and barren. The wilderness, for all its endless beauty could be a place of death. The children of Israel experience this aspect of wilderness life as well.

"Why have you brought 'Adonai's congregation into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die there? Why did you make us leave Egypt, to bring us to this wretched place, a place without grain or figs or vines or pomegranates? There is not even water to drink!" (Num. 20:4-5)

"And the people spoke against God and against Moses: Why did you make us leave Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread and no water, and we have come to loathe this miserable food" (Num. 21:5).

The harshest fact of wilderness life was the constant search for water. Throughout their journey, the children of Israel lost heart on account of their parched throats. Water which both redeemed and destroyed at the Red Sea, provided sustenance in the wilderness. When the children of Israel clamored for water in the text above, they only emphasized how much water is a source of sustenance in the wilderness. Consequently, the reliance of Israel on the Holy One in the wilderness was as great as, even if different in kind, than their reliance on God at the Red Sea. The wilderness only became an inhabitable place through God's provision.

And provide the Holy One does; first to fulfill the physical needs of the people, and then to shower them with gifts. In order to quench the thirst of the people, God provided a well which accompanied the Israelites on their marches.

How was the well made? It was made like a kind of rock in the shape of a beehive or a globe and it rolled and came with them on the marches of the children of Israel. When the standards

were camped and the Tabernacle stood, the rock came and stood in the courtyard of the Holy Tent and the princes came and stood on it and said, "Spring up O well, sing ye into it" (Num. 21:17), and it would rise.

(Tanhuma haNidpas, Bamidbar 2)

The Midrash attributes the well to the merit of Abraham or, alternatively, to the merit of Miriam. Both will be examined in the following chapter. According to one version, the rising of water from the well was not always assured:

As long as Israel obeyed the will of the Preserver of the world, the water would begin welling up in early morning wherever Israel camped; but when Israel did not obey the will of the Preserver of the world, it would delay welling up for as much as an hour or two, or three or four or even five, until the little children and the students would go out to the wellhead and say, "Spring up O well" (Num. 21:17), because of the merit of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "Spring up O well" because of the merit of Moses and Aaron and Miriam. At once the well would start gushing in a spot between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Issachar. As Israel prayed, the song they sang was, "Spring up O well, ... the well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people had delved" (Num. 21:17-18), and when the water gushed up, there was great joy in Israel among the adults and little ones alike.

(Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 12)

Just as at the Red Sea, the people needed to participate in the process of redemption in order for it to occur, so, too, in the wilderness, even with the merit of their ancestors, they still needed to obey the will of the Holy One; to understand who was the source of their sustenance.

This portable well served as the most frequently used water supply. But on two other occasions, water which had supernatural qualities was provided for the people. At the beginning of their desert experience, the people came to Marah where the waters were too bitter to drink. God sweetened the waters for the thirsty travellers:

The ways of God are not like those of humans. For a human inflicts a wound with a knife and heals it with a plaster, but God heals with the very thing with which God wounds, as it is said, "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter" (Ex. 15:23). "And he cried unto 'Adonai and 'Adonai showed him a tree" (Ex. 15:25). What kind of tree was it? Some say, it was an olive tree. Some think it was an oleander and others say it was the roots of fig and pomegranate trees. Whatever tree it was, it was bitter. And Moses took this and cast it into the waters, "And the waters were made sweet" (Ex. 15:25).

(Exodus Rabbah 50;3)

Thus, even after the miracles of the Red Sea, God continued to display power over nature. That this display was designed for Israel's benefit is illustrated in the following passage on the water which the people drank after Marah:

"And they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water" (Ex. 15:27). Scripture here tells us that that place was praised for its water more than all other places. You can learn this was so, for there were twelve springs there. Normally these supplied water for only seventy palm trees, and when the Israelites came and 600,000 people encamped around these springs, they supplied them with water, even though they stayed there over one night, and a second, and a third.

"And they encamped there by the waters" (Ex. 15:27). The Israelites only camped near water. These are the words of Rabbi Joshua. Rabbi Eli'ezer says: On the very day when the Holy One created the world, God created twelve springs in Elim, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel and seventy palm trees, corresponding to the seventy elders.

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Vayissa 2)

This spot, with its twelve springs and seventy palm trees, was created by the Holy One at creation to be used at precisely this moment in history. From the outset, the water at Elim was intended as a potential vehicle of redemption. For the water which one would expect twelve springs to supply increased to accomodate 600,000 people for three days.



Clearly these three miraculous watersources --a rolling well, an instant water-purification plant and increased output from twelve small springs--reflected the rabbinic understanding of two crucial factors in desert life. The rabbis were attempting to describe both how essential water was in the physical life of Israel and how bound up was their morale to their physical needs, but also to demonstrate that God was with them "every step of the way." Such a journey requires reassurance from more than just Moses. At the Red Sea, the Israelites learned to look beyond their human leader for strength and sustenance. The sources, however fanciful, demonstrate that the generation in the wilderness, as well as the rabbis who wrote these midrashim, found such sustenance.

Furthermore, the Holy One gave Israel water to satisfy an array of needs beyond thirst. The well assisted Israel in its military battles.<sup>8</sup> It provided a water route for transportation.<sup>9</sup> It provided drink offerings which enabled the people to thank the Holy One for the gift of water. It produced herbs and spices as well as thrones for those who lacked a place to sleep.

"Your shoots are a park of pomegranates" (Song of Songs 4:13). Where did the Israelites procure wine for drink offerings all the forty years that they spent in the wilderness? Rabbi Yohanan said: The well used to produce various kinds of herbs, vegetables and trees for them. The proof of this is that when Miriam died, the well ceased to give its waters to them, and they said, "It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines" (Num. 20:5).

(Song of Songs Rabbah 4:12:3)

"A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters" (Song of Songs 4:15). The well that causes all kinds of gardens to rise and for all people who do not have thrones to sleep upon, it rises and creates a bed of grass and spices, as it is written,



"God causes me to lie down in green pastures" (Ps. 23:1).

(Midrash Song of Songs 4:14)

Finally, the well served as a sign that Israel would continue to receive God's protection and redemption.

At the well, God wrought miracles for the children of Israel and they sang a song, as it is said, "Then sang Israel" (Num. 21:17). Moses said to Israel: Know that all the miracles which God wrought for you, God wrought through water, and even when you pass over the Jordan to take possession of the land, God will also work miracles for you through the waters of the Jordan (see Joshua 3).

(Deuteronomy Rabbah 3:8)

"That which has been is that which shall be" (Ec. 1:9). As the former redeemer made a well to rise (Num. 21:17), so will the latter redeemer bring up water, as it is said, "And a fountain shall come forth from the house of 'Adonai and shall water the valley of Shittim" (Joel 4:18).

(Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:9:1)

As the children of Israel, a wilderness people, found evidence of God's responsibility to them in and around the wilderness' most precious commodity--water--so even after the wilderness experience God's sustenance is linked with water.

Water is regarded as one of God's greatest blessings. In one passage water is identified with another of God's greatest blessings--offspring.

"He shall be planted by streams of water" (Ps. 1:3). Rabbi Yosi expounded the verse as follows: I will give you a parable by which the verse may be understood. A man was walking in a valley in a barren land, where there was no water. His spirit grew faint from thirst. He found a tree with a spring of water beneath it, with sweet fruits and with pleasant shade. He drank of the tree's water, sat in its shade, ate the fruit, and his spirit was restored. As he was about to leave, he said: O tree, O tree, how shall I bless you? Shall I wish that there be a flow of water beneath you? There is already such a flow. Shall I wish that your fruit be sweet? Your fruit is

already sweet. Shall I wish that your shade be pleasant? Your shade is already pleasant. Therefore, all I can say in the blessing is this: May it be the will of God that all shoots taken from you grow to be like you.

(Seder Eliyyahu Zuta 25)

To have water is to have a gift. God, the source of all gifts, was understood to be the treasurer of water. First, the Holy One was the keeper of the treasury of rain. It was a sign of God's generosity that the treasuries were opened to bestow rain.

"Behold I will cause bread to rain from heaven for you" (Ex. 16:4). It is written, "You open your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor" (Ps. 145:16). See how the human ways differ from the ways of God: For a sponge held by a person only drips water when the hand is shut, but not when it is open. With God, the contrary is the case. The sponge is in God's hand, as it is written, "With the river of God that is full of water" (Ps. 65:10). And "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of God's hand" (Is. 40:12). But if God shuts it, no water descends, for it says, "Behold God withholds the waters and they dry up" (Job 12:15), and "And God shut up the heaven so that there shall be no rain" (Dt. 11:17). When God opens the hand, however, the rain descends, as it says, "'Adonai will open unto you God's good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain of the land." (Dt. 28:12), and also "You open your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor" (Ps. 145:16).

(Exodus Rabbah 25:3)

After the wilderness, although the earth was cultivated by human labor, Israel understood that rain fell through the providence of the Holy One, the rain which enabled the people to fructify the earth.

"God causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Ps. 135:7). When the Holy One desires to bless the produce of the earth, and to give provision to the creatures, God opens the good treasures in heaven and sends rain upon the earth, namely the fructifying rain; forthwith, the earth becomes fruitful like a bride who conceives from her first husband and produces offspring of blessing, as it is said, "'Adonai shall open unto you the good treasury, the heaven, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless the work of your hand" (Dt. 28:12).

(Pirquei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 5)

The rain which was in itself a blessing, produced blessings. In this text, rain is likened to offspring of blessing. Just as throughout the biblical tradition God assisted or prevented women from conceiving, so with rain, God determined whether or not the earth would conceive. Not surprisingly, the proof-text found in both of the prior passages, Dt. 28:12, is one of a list of blessings which would be provided if Israel "obeys 'Adonai your God, to observe faithfully all of God's commandments which I enjoin upon you this day, 'Adonai your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth, All these blessings shall come upon you and take effect, if you will but heed the word of 'Adonai your God" (Dt. 28:1-2). Thus the blessing of rain was dependent upon obeying the commandments. The assumption that God would provide rain so that Israel could fulfill God's commandments is illustrated by the following story of Naqdimon ben Gorion.

Why was Naqdimon ben Gorion so named? Because the sun shone through for his sake.

One time Israel went up on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and had no water to drink. Naqdimon went to a certain general and said to him: Lend me twelve wells of water from now until such and such a day. If I do not return to you twelve wells of water, I shall give you twelve talents of silver. And he set a date.

When the time approached, the General said to him: Send me either water for twelve wells or twelve talents of silver. Naqdimon replied. There is still time today. That General jeered at him and explained: All year long, no rains came down, and shall the rain come down now? So the General went to the bathhouse cheerfully and Naqdimon ben Gorion went to the House of Study. He wrapped himself in his tallit and stood in prayer and said: Master of the Universe, to You it is manifest and known that not for my glory did I do this, nor for the glory of my father's house did I do this. Only for Your glory I did it, so that there might be water for the pilgrims. Immediately the skies knotted up with clouds and rains came down, until twelve wells were filled with water. And there was still more. So Naqdimon said to the General: Send me the money for my surplus

water which is in your possession. He replied: The sun has already set and the water fell in my domain. Naqdimon went back to the House of Study, wrapped himself in his tallit, and stood in prayer. He said: Master of the Universe, perform yet another miracle like the first one. Immediately the wind blew, the clouds were scattered, and the sun shone through. As he came out of the House of Study, they met each other and the General said to him: I know that the Holy One shook the world for your sake only.

(Avot de Rabbi Natan 6)

This story begins with water being provided not by God but by a non-Jewish General. Unlike the Holy One who gave water out of heavenly treasures, the General was willing to sell water for a fee. Naqdimon determined that the water was essential enough to be bought, since he was not interested in drinking water for an ordinary journey. He was supplying Israel with water so that the people could make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to fulfill God's commandment. Implicit in Naqdimon's actions was the premise that since Israel was undertaking to fulfill the mitzvot, God would provide the water. He continued to believe this even as time ran out. And so, like his counterpart Honi, Naqdimon wrapped himself in a tallit and prayed. He emphasized that the water assisted Israel in glorifying God's name. The treasures opened. God maintained the Divine end of the bargain. When there was additional rain, Naqdimon resorted to the human manner of handling commerce--he asked for the value of the rain in money, since the excess rain would certainly not benefit the pilgrims. When the General refused, Naqdimon once again donned his tallit, and God closed the treasury. Even the mercantile General understood that God was responsible for the blessing of rain.

Fulfilling the commandments and praying were two means by which Israel might obtain rain. A third way was to pour water on the Temple altar during Sukkot.

"Because God will deal bountifully with me" (Ps. 13:6). The Holy One said: Give Me of My things wherewith I met you in this world, and I shall deal bountifully with you in time to come. During Sukkot, pour water on the altar before Me, for long ago I met you with water, as it is written, "Spring up O well--sing ye into it" (Num. 21:17), and I shall deal bountifully with you in time to come, "When the mountains shall drop down sweet wine" (Joel 13:18).

(Midrash Tehilim 13:6)

In this passage, as well as in the biblical association of Miriam with the song of the sea and with the well in the wilderness, singing is found with respect to future promise. Singing (שִׁיר) at the well and at the sea, is related to seeing (רָאָה) into the messianic future. The song was a prayer to God, to which God responded with water, and which insured the singer of redemption in the future. God responded to the songs by providing water. The water libation, the sympathetic act which accompanied the song, was in recognition that God provided blessings, and that the Holy One was generous in granting blessings.

In conjunction with providing water, there is expressed in midrashic literature the view that God is present in water. This is illustrated in a passage concerning Adam's teshuvah--his repentance:

On the first day of the week Adam went into the waters of the upper Gihon until the waters reached up to his neck, and he fasted seven weeks of days until his body became like a kind of seaweed. Adam said before the Holy One: Sovereign of the Universe, Remove, I pray you, my sins, and accept my repentance, and all the generations will learn that repentance is accepted by You. What did the Holy One do? God put forth the right hand, and accepted his repentance and took away from him his sin, as it is said, "I acknowledge my sin unto You, and mine iniquity I have not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto 'Adonai; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah (Ps. 32:5). Selah in this world, and selah in the world to come.

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 20)

Some of the imagery found in this text is suggested by the context of the Psalm from which the prooftext is taken. "When I kept silence, my bones wore away through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me" (Ps. 32:2-3). Adam, who stood in silent vigil until he asked that his sins be removed, felt God's hand change from being heavy upon him to reaching out in acceptance of his repentance. Yet why was Adam standing in the waters of the Gihon? There are several possibilities. First, Adam asked that his repentance be accepted not only for himself, but for future generations. His inclusion of those who would follow him alludes to the association between water as blessing and offspring as blessing. In acknowledging that God provided for the former, he asked that God be present in the lives of the latter. Secondly, the biblical text continues "Surely, when the great waters overflow, they will not reach unto him (the one who is godly). You are my hiding place; You will preserve me from the adversary" (Ps. 32:6-7). Remembering the Red Sea material, one could argue that Adam was foreshadowing the experience that his offspring would have when God would save them. Just as the waters did not reach those who were godly at the Red Sea, so too, they would not reach the person who does teshuvah. Finally, both the extension of God's hand and the Near Eastern view that God is present in water<sup>10</sup> lead to the speculation that Adam approached the Holy One by entering into danger--by entering into water. He might have said "I am placing myself in a life and death situation in order to return to You. Accept my teshuvah. It is given with a whole heart." It is noteworthy that even today during the Ten Days of Penitence Jews still go to the



water for Tashlikh--or "casting." It is still customary to pray by the water, seeking forgiveness for the sins of the year, while symbolically casting the sins into the water. Jacob Lauderbach convincingly writes that the ritual is indeed related to the assumption that God is present in water and that one would go to water in order to insure that one's prayers would be answered."

The double identification of 'Adonai as both present in and provider of water points to several occurrences where the ruah haqodesh, the prophetic inspiration, was received in and around water.

Note, for example:

"And God said to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:1). This teaches that all nations were worthy for prophecy until the land of Israel was sanctified, but after the land of Israel was sanctified, the word only came to the prophets near water, as it is said, "The word of 'Adonai was upon Ezekiel the son of Buzi the priest in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Kebar" (Ez. 1:3), and it says, "And I saw a vision; now it was so, that when I saw, I was in Shushan the castle, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the stream Ulai" (Dan. 8:2), and so it was with Jonah, God only spoke to him at the water.

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai, Bo 12)

Similarly with respect to the water libation on Sukkot, there was an impression that the water served both to supplicate God for the gift of water and to draw the ruah haqodesh from the water.

"And drink of that which the young men have drawn" (Ruth 2:9), refers to the Festival of Water-drawing. Why is it called "Drawing?" For from there they draw the inspiration of the prophetic spirit, as it is said, "Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Is. 12:3).

(Ruth Rabbah 4:8)



"And behold a well in the field" symbolizes Zion; "And Lo three flocks of sheep"--the three Festivals; "For out of that well they watered the flocks"--from there they imbibed the prophetic spirit"; "And the stone ... was great"--this alludes to the rejoicing of the place of the water drawing. R. Hoshay'a said: Why was it called the rejoicing of the place of drawing (water)? Because from there they imbibed the prophetic spirit; "And thither were all the flocks gathered"--they all came, From the entrance of Hamath unto the Brook of Egypt (1 Kings 8:66). "And they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep"; from there they imbibed the prophetic spirit "And put the stone back upon the well's mouth in its place" (Gen. 29:3)--it was left for the next Festival.

(Genesis Rabbah 70:8)

CHAPTER THREE:

THE ACTIONS OF BIBLICAL FIGURES IN RELATION TO WATER

Israel's task is to differentiate between the well of living water and broken cisterns which cannot hold water. Israel's task is to differentiate between the Holy One and idols. And Israel learns to do so by looking backward, by finding in the biblical text those people who made the first havdalah, the first differentiation, whose people who had the vision and the courage to proclaim loyalty to the Holy One. For even before the parting of the Red Sea, water served to reward those individuals whose actions shed light on the presence of the Holy One in the world.

How biblical individuals acted around water reflected their relationship with the Holy One. In the lives of these figures and in the lives of their descendants, water provides both physical and symbolic means of redemption.

We first encounter Abraham as a wanderer, one who obeyed God's command to journey along God's way. Perhaps as one who went on the way, Abraham knew better than most what a wayfarer needed. And so, when three men stood before him at the opening of his tent, Abraham immediately sought to provide for those needs. "Let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under a tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and stay ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on forasmuch as ye are come to your servant" (Gen. 18:4-5), "Let now a little water be fetched." Abraham, the wanderer, knew thirst. The first provision that he sought for his visitors then was water. And it is on account of Abraham's offering of water to the three visitors, that the Holy One rewarded Abraham's descendants

by means of the well. Because Abraham provided water to God's emissaries, God provided water to Abraham's offspring in the wilderness, in the Land of Israel and will do so again in the world to come.

Rabbi Hiyya taught: "Let now a little water be fetched" (Gen. 18:4). God said to Abraham: You have said, "Let now a little water be fetched." I swear that I will repay your children (in the wilderness, in the Land of Israel, and in the Messianic future). Thus it is written, "Then sang Israel this song: Spring up, O well--sing ye unto it" (Num. 21:7)--that was in the wilderness. Where do we find it in the Land of Israel? "A land of brooks of water" (Dt. 8:7). And in the Messianic future? "And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:8).

(Genesis Rabbah 48:10)

Thus, the Holy One repayed Abraham's children threefold for the kindness which Abraham showed to his guests. As is shown above, one explanation of God's response is that of measure for measure--because of Abraham's provision, God would provide. Another explanation expressed in the following midrash is that Abraham did not have to be taught to be hospitable. Abraham anticipated God's command and sought to fulfill it:

"Who has anticipated Me, I will repay him" (Job 41:3). Rabbi Tanhūm ben Rabbah explained: If one who has no property of his own practices charity and benevolence; if one who has no children pays fees to Bible and Mishnah teachers; if one who has no house makes a mezuzah for others; if one who has no tallit makes ššit for others; if one who has no children circumscises those of other people or prepares books and lends them to others--of such a one, the Holy One says: This one has been quick to perform my mitzvot before I provide the means to fulfill them. I must repay this person by providing wealth and children who will read in the books. Thus the text means: If there is anyone who has anticipated My command in the performance of a good deed, I shall give a reward for it. Why? Because I lack nothing, for the world and its fulness is mine. Accordingly it says, "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:3).

Rabbi Eli'ezer ben Hiyya said: For all that Abraham did to the ministering angels, the Holy One repaid his children when they went out of Egypt and will give them the same in the future... In connection with Abraham it is written, "Let now a little water be fetched" (Gen. 18:4). And the Holy One gave water to God's children when they went out of Egypt, as it says, "And you shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it" (Ex. 17:6). How do we know that God will do the same in time to come? "For 'Adonai your God will bring you into a good land, a land of brooks of water," Dt. 8:7), and that the same will happen in the days of the Messiah? "And there shall be upon every lofty mountain and upon every high hill, streams and watercourses" (Is. 30:25), and also from "I will open rivers upon the high hills" (Is. 41:18).

(Numbers Rabbah 14:2)

Abraham, by his actions, enabled his descendants to drink from the well or, alternatively, to drink the waters which streamed from the rock. Abraham enabled his descendants to enter the covenanted land, a fruitful land, by his offer of water. And Abraham enabled his descendants to enjoy the water and garden of a messianic time. It should be noted that the prooftext found in this text from Is. 41:18 has preceding it the verse, "The poor and needy seek water and there is none, And their tongue fails for thirst. I 'Adonai will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." Even the context of the biblical text then relates thirst to the landscape of open rivers, as Abraham's satiation of thirst enables his descendants to one day behold such a landscape. Abraham's hospitality pointed to the presence of the Holy One as the well of living waters, the One who provides water to those who are thirsty in both body and spirit.

Abraham's commitment to the ways of the Holy One is described in a far more dramatic moment--that of the binding of Isaac. The link between Abraham's faith in the Holy One at Moriah and the faith of

his descendants at the Red Sea is addressed in the following text.

Rabbi Baria said: I will divide the sea for them for the sake of Abraham, because of what he did, as it says, "And he cleaved (vayivaqqa') the wood for the burnt offering" (Gen. 22:31). Hence, does it say, "And the waters were divided (vayyivvaq'u)" (Ex. 14:21).

(Exodus Rabbah 21:8)

The literary link at the foundation of this midrash is the root vq' --"cleave"--vayivaqqa'--"and he cleaved" (Gen. 22:3), and vayyivvaq'u --"and they were divided" (Ex. 14:21). Since the same root is used in both texts, their juxtaposition suggests that just as Abraham acted in a way which reflected his utter faith in the Holy One, so the children of Israel will have their faith tested. Abraham, like Moses, was asked to lift up his hands. For Abraham, to lift his hand meant that he would slay his beloved son. For Moses, to lift his hand meant that he would see whether or not his people would be drowned. For both Abraham and Moses, to lift up their hands was to manifest complete faith in the Holy One. In both cases, the Holy One intervened. In both cases, the children were saved. Abraham and Moses were asked to act contrary to human logic. By doing so, they enabled God's miracles to be present in the world. Abraham and Moses, one can presume, were themselves split, vitvvaq'a. Throughout Abraham's life, he desired a son. Moses risked his life to lead the people to freedom. Both were asked to jeopardize their life dreams. Both, in their willingness to do so, furthered the possibility of making their dreams real.

Abraham had another son. And just as Isaac's life was risked, so Ishmael's life was risked. For Ishmael was sent out into the wilderness

with his mother Hagar. But if Abraham's descendants through Isaac were to receive water in the wilderness by his merit, should not Abraham's wife Hagar and son Ishmael, sent into the wilderness, receive water by his merit? The following passage suggests that they did.

By the merit of our father Abraham, the water did not fail in the bottle. But when she reached the entrance to the wilderness, Hagar began to go astray after the idolatry of her father's house and forthwith the water in the bottle was spent, as it is said, "And she departed and wandered" (Gen. 21:14). The meaning of "and she wandered" is merely idolatry, because it is written, concerning this root, "They are variety, a work of delusion" (Jer. 10:15).

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 30)

Abraham's merit, which points to the presence of God in the world, was eclipsed by Hagar's idolatry.<sup>13</sup> For, while Abraham distinguished between the well of living water and broken cisterns, Hagar sought the broken cisterns. Consequently, she, and Ishmael, were without water.

But Ishmael was a child of his father as well as his mother. Even in the face of Hagar's idolatry, Ishmael still sought the Well of Living Water. And, by doing so, he was accompanied by the well created at the first twilight.

The soul of Ishmael was faint with thirst... and he went and cast himself beneath the thorns of the wilderness, so that the moisture might be upon him and he said: Sovereign of the Worlds! If it be Your pleasure to give me water to drink, give me to drink and let my soul not depart because of thirst, for death by thirst is unnatural and it is harder than all other kinds of death. The Holy One heard his prayer, as it is said, "God has heard the voice of the lad where he is" (Gen. 21:17). The well which was created at twilight was opened for them there, and they went and drank and filled the bottle with water, as it is said, "And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water" (Gen. 21:17), and there they left the well and started



on their way, and went through all the wilderness until they came to the wilderness of Paran.

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 30)

Ishmael, like his cousins at the Red Sea, knew that the presence or absence of water would determine his death. According to this passage, he too cried out to the Holy One. And just as God planned for the Red Sea to part at creation, so God planned for the well created at twilight to quench the thirst of the one who would cry out.

Ishmael, in his struggle with life and death, recognized that the Holy One would ascertain the outcome of the struggle. Despite exile from his father's home, despite accompaniment by his mother and her idols, Ishmael still turned to his father's God.

Furthermore, by doing so, Ishmael led his mother to the Well of Living Waters. For Gen. 21:17 reads, "God opened her eyes ('eineyha), and her eyes, from the root, "'yn", led her to the well, to the ma'ayan, whose root is also "'yn", to the source of the waters. Thus, Hagar, as well as Ishmael, recognized the providence of the Holy One.

And the Holy One defended Ishmael for his allegiance, even though those who saw the future took exception to the providence of the Holy One.

"Where he is" (Gen. 21:17). Rabbi Shim'on said: The ministering angels hastened to indict Ishmael, exclaiming: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Will you bring up a well for one who will one day slay your children with thirst?' (See Is. 21:13). The Holy One replied: 'Where is he now?' The ministering angels responded: 'Righteous.' The Holy One said: 'I judge man only as he is at the moment.' "Arise and lift up the lad" (Gen. 21:18)

(Genesis Rabbah 53:14)

This text hinges on the phrase ba'asher hu sham--where he is right now. God overruled the ministering angels who noted that Ishmael's

descendants would allow Abraham's descendants to die of thirst in the future (Is. 21:14-15), in contrast to their father Abraham's hospitality. However, while Ishmael cried to the Holy One for drink, he was regarded as responsible only for the present. And in the present, Ishmael, like his father, sought water from the Well of Living Waters.

The well attributed to Abraham was the same well which provided for Ishmael in the wilderness. This same well was also ascribed to Miriam.

There was revealed to the children of Israel a well of water, which did not abandon them in all their forty years' wandering, but accompanied them on all their marches. God wrought this great miracle for the merits of the prophet Miriam, and so it was also called "Miriam's well." But this well dates back to the beginning of the world, for God created it on the second day of creation, and at one time, it was in the possession of Abraham.

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Vayissa 5)

What did Miriam do which prompted the Holy One to associate her gifts with the Divine gift of the well? Miriam sang a song at the Red Sea. Since the root 'nh occurs both in the song of Miriam and in the song Israel sang at the well, therefore the Midrash links the two events:

The well was due to the merit of Miriam, who sang by the waters of the Red Sea; as it is said, "And Miriam sang (vata'an) unto them: Sing to 'Adonai" (Ex. 15:21), and by the waters of the well, "Then sang Israel this song: Rise up, O well, sing ('enu) ye unto it" (Num. 21:17).

(Numbers Rabbah 1:2)

Furthermore, the verse which speaks of Miriam's death, Num. 20:1, is followed by "And there was no water for the congregation" (Num. 20:2).<sup>14</sup> Since the water ceased at Miriam's death, it was assumed that the actions of Miriam's life enabled the well to accompany the people

in the wilderness. And where was it that Miriam died? In Kadesh, a place identified with 'eyn mishpat (Gen. 14:7), a "spring of judgment." Thus, the root 'nh suggests another link. Miriam's death at a place of water ('ayin, spring) hints at her life which was honored through her song ('anah).

But Miriam's relationship to water is deeper than the place of her death or the song during her life. Miriam's connection to the Red Sea was preceded by her patient wait at the shores of the Nile to learn the fate of her brother, Moses (Ex. 2:4). Miriam's first role in the biblical text was that of midwife, a woman who waited to deliver her brother from the waters of the Nile. Similarly, Miriam was present at the Red Sea and a participant in Israel's deliverance from the waters of destruction. It was here that she sang, and by her song, led the women in proclaiming the Holy One was Ruler. At the Nile, protecting Moses, Miriam's actions created the possibility for redemption. At the Red Sea, Miriam celebrated that redemption. Because she did so, the Holy One will cause Miriam's well to rise at the redemption of the future.<sup>15</sup> Miriam, like Abraham, affirmed the presence of the Holy One. And since Miriam is so frequently associated with water, she was truly one who recognized that the Holy One is a Well of Living Waters.

In the Bible, Miriam waited by the Nile in order to watch over Moses. In the Midrash, Moses also waited by the Nile. Moses, preparing to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, went first to the Nile River in search of the bones of Joseph.

Serah, daughter of Asher, who was still alive in the generation of the Exodus, told Moses: Moses, Joseph is buried in the Nile River. Thereupon Moses went and stood by the Nile River, calling out: Joseph, Joseph, the time has come when the Holy One is redeeming God's children. The Presence is awaiting you. Israel is awaiting you. The clouds of glory are awaiting you. If you make yourself visible, well and good. If not, we shall be innocent of violation of the oath you made our forebears swear. Immediately, at these words, Joseph's coffin floated up to the surface of the river. According to another account, however, Moses took a shard, wrote God's Ineffable Name upon it, and threw the shard into the river. At once Joseph's coffin floated up to the surface.

(Pesiqta de Rav Kahana Pisqa 11:12)

Moses called to Joseph to encourage him to participate in the process of redemption. In a moment of great haste, there was stillness. The Presence, Israel, the clouds of glory all ~~awaited~~ Joseph's bones. The redemption was delayed because Joseph made his children promise that even if he were unable to return to Israel while alive, he, like his father, would do so in death. The Nile, the waters, protected Joseph's bones. And, at Moses' request, the waters relinquished their treasure, allowing Joseph to participate in God's redemption. Waters in which some were drowned and some were saved served here to protect and preserve the bones of the righteous one, Joseph.

It can be argued that Joseph only made such a request of the children of Israel (Gen. 50:25) because Jacob, his father, had made a similar request of him (Gen. 49:29). Perhaps the waters of the Nile protected Joseph in honor of his father, Jacob. For Jacob, too, had a special relationship with water.

Rabbi 'Aqiva said: For the sake of Jacob, I will divide the sea for them, for it says, "and you shall spread abroad to the west (ufarasta yamma) and to the east" (Gen. 28:14).

(Exodus Rabbah 21:8)

The foundation of this passage is a play on "ufarasta yamma" which literally means, "And you shall spread abroad to the west." Rabbi 'Aqiva interprets it to mean "and you shall break up the sea, the yam." The biblical verse is found in Gen. 28:19, in the midst of Jacob's dream. In this dream, 'Adonai promised Jacob the land. 'Adonai assured Jacob that through his progeny all of the families of the earth would be blessed. Upon awaking from this dream, Jacob erected a pillar, a physical marker of God's presence in the world. And Jacob sought God's providence, acknowledging that he was reliant upon God in his journey. And thus, beyond the linguistic nuance, Jacob's commitment commended him as one for whose sake the Red Sea was divided. Jacob knew that his safety could only be guaranteed by the accompaniment and providence of the Holy One. Jacob knew what his descendants in the wilderness were to learn.

It was not only the Red Sea that was crossed through the merit of Jacob, but the Jordan as well.

"For with my staff I passed over this Jordan" (Gen. 32:11). Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon said in Rabbi Yoḥanan's name: In the Torah, Prophets and Writings, we find that Israel crossed over the Jordan only through Jacob's merit. In the Torah, "For with my staff I passed over the Jordan" (Gen. 32:11). In the Prophets, "Then you shall let your children know, saying: Israel came over this Jordan on dry land" (Josh. 4:22), that is, Israel, the Patriarch. In the Writings, "What ails you, O sea, that you flee? You, Jordan, that you turn backward... at the Presence of the God of Jacob" (Ps. 114:5-6). Rabbi Levi said: There is a place where the Jordan falls with a roar onto the hot springs of Tiberias; in his great trepidation Jacob entered there and Esau shut him in but the Holy One dug an opening for him so that he got through. Thus, it is written, When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you, when you walk through fire, you shall not be burned" (Is. 43:2).

(Genesis Rabbah 76:5)

The Genesis verse cited here (32:11) describes the time when Jacob is about to meet Esau. The providence and comfort of God's presence of which he had been assured seemed elusive to Jacob. He was soon to struggle at the edge of another body of water--the stream Jabbok. In this verse, the staff of which Jacob spoke was taken as an allusion to the staff by which Moses divided the Red Sea. And indeed, in the Joshua passage (4:22) that allusion is explicated, "Israel came over this Jordan on dry land." The text was chosen because the term, 'avar, came over, is singular, thus suggesting that Jacob, who is Israel, came over on dry land. But the text continues, "For 'Adonai your God dried up the waters of the Jordan from before you, until you were passed over, as 'Adonai your God did to the Red Sea, which God dried up from before us, until we were passed over" (Josh 4:23). Finally, the context of the Psalms text (114:5) is Israel's exodus from Egypt. And so there was a confluence of tradition that Israel was saved at the water--both at the Red Sea and at the Jordan, for the sake of Jacob. In this text, the Holy One's reassurance came in another form. For the Jordan did not divide as the Red Sea divided for Jacob. How did the Holy One save him from the Jordan? From what danger was Jacob fleeing? The Torah text answers these questions. Jacob was fleeing Esau and, as the Holy One promised, Jacob was saved at the Jordan with Divine assistance. Furthermore, the context of Is 43:2, the prooftext cited in Genesis Rabbah 76:5, reiterates the promise of redemption: "But now says 'Adonai that created you, O Jacob, and the One that formed you, O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,



and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you" (Is. 43: 1-2). Who other than Jacob did God call by his name? Who but Jacob passed through the waters at that event? For this passage anticipated Jacob's wrestling at the waters, the wrestling in which Jacob and Israel become one.

In the Midrash, God protected Jacob in the waters of the Jordan. In the Bible, Jacob showed his strength at water--once at the waters of Jabbok during his wrestling and once at the waters of the well, where he did the work of many men in removing the stone from its mouth (Gen. 28:10):

"When you go, your steps shall not be straightened; and if you run, you shall not stumble" (Prov. 4:12). Jacob's steps were not straightened, and his strength did not fail and like a hero he rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, and the well came up and spread forth water outside itself and the shepherds saw and they all wondered, for all of them were unable to roll away the stone from the mouth of the well, but Jacob alone rolled the stone from off the mouth of the well, as it is said, "And Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth" (Gen. 28:10).

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 36)

Where did Jacob acquire such strength? Why was his strength manifested around water? Once again, a merging of the biblical and midrashic traditions offers an answer. In the two episodes mentioned above--Jacob's dream and Jacob's wrestling, Jacob came to know the Holy One and to define his relationship to the Holy One. But prior to these episodes, Jacob had received God's blessing through his father, Isaac. "God will give you of the dew of heaven and of the fat places of the earth and plenty of corn and wine" (Gen. 27:28).



The nightfall of the festival day of Passover came and Isaac called unto Esau, his son, and said: O my son! Tonight the heavenly ones utter songs and the treasures of dew are opened; on this day the blessing of the dew is bestowed. Made me a savory meal while I am still alive, and I will bless you. The Prophetic Inspiration rejoined, saying to him, "Eat not of the bread of him that has an evil eye, neither desire now his dainties." (Pro. 23:6). He went to fetch it and was delayed. Rebecca said to Jacob, his other son: On this night the treasures of dew will be opened and on this night the angels will utter a song. Make savory meat for your father, that he may eat, and while he still lives, he may bless you.

Rabbi Judah said: Isaac blessed Jacob with ten blessings concerning the dews of heaven and the corn of the earth, corresponding to the ten words whereby the world was created, as it is said, "And God will give you the dew of heaven" (Gen. 27:28); "And let the peoples serve you" (Gen. 27:29). When Jacob went forth from the presence of his father Isaac, he went forth crowned like a bridegroom, and like a bride in her adornment, the quickening dew from heaven descended upon him and refreshed his bones (see Prov. 15:30) and he also became a mighty hero, therefore it is said, "By the hands of the Mighty Jacob, from there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel" (Gen. 49:24).

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 32)

The treasures of dew opened on the eve of Passover. The association between Passover and dew is confirmed by the tradition of reciting the blessing for dew on the first day of Passover during Musaf, the additional service.<sup>16</sup> Passover, the ritual enactment of the first redemption, has in it the symbolic allusion to the redemption yet to come through the supplication for dew. It is not only the dew which will revive the earth of winter, but also the dew which will revive those who dwell in the earth at the time of the Messiah that is sought.

The Proverbs text referred to here (15:30), literally, "a good report makes the bones fat," refers to the good blessing, the blessing of the dew of heaven which Jacob received. This blessing gave his bones strength. This strength was referred to in Joseph's blessing which is cited at the end of the passage: "But his (Joseph) bow abode firm

and the arms of his hands were made supple, by the hands of the mighty Jacob from there, from the shepherd, the stone of Israel" (Gen. 49:24). While the biblical context refers to the Holy One, the midrashic context refers to Jacob the mighty one who, among the shepherds, removed the stone of Jacob from Rachel's well. The act of removing the stone from the well was evidence of the strength which Jacob acquired as a result of the blessing of the dew of heaven. Finally, the imagery in the midrash of Jacob going forth crowned like a bridegroom alludes to the courtship that Jacob initiated by removing the stone from Rachel's well. As Jacob's strength served to attract Rachel's attention, so the power of the Holy One both at the Red Sea--the first redemption--and in the future--through the reviving dew--expressed God's similar courtship of Israel.

From Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph and Miriam, one can infer that the relationship of several biblical figures with the Holy One was reflected in their actions in and around water. Furthermore, as it did in the earlier Red Sea material, water served as a portent of the future covenant relationship between the Holy One and Israel. For example, for both Rebecca and Abraham's shepherds, the well rose as a portent for their descendants.

The rabbis said: Abraham's shepherds quarreled with Avimelekh's shepherds, each claiming: The well is ours. Abraham's shepherds said to him: It belongs to him for whose flocks the water will rise when it sees them. When the water saw Abraham's flocks, it immediately ascended. Said the Holy One: You are an augury for your children, that the well will rise for them, thus it is written, "Spring up O well--Sing you unto it" (Num. 21:17).

(Genesis Rabbah 54:5)

These passages argue that the Holy One had already planned for Abraham's and Rebecca's descendants to be wandering in the wilderness in search of water. This suggestion is furthered by a text regarding Jacob:

"Then Jacob lifted up his feet" (Gen: 29:1). R. Aha quoted, "A tranquil heart is the life of the flesh" (Prov. 14, 30): since Jacob had been given these good tidings, his heart carried his feet. Thus people say: "The stomach carries the feet."

"And he looked, and behold a well in the field " (Gen. 29:2). Rabbi Hama ben Hanina interpreted: "And behold a well in the field"--this alludes to the well; "And Lo three flocks of sheep"--Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; "For out of that well they watered the flocks"--from there each one drew water for his standard, his tribe, and his family. "And the stone upon the well's mouth was great." Said R. Hanina: It was but the size of a small sieve. "And thither were all the flocks gathered"--when they pitched their camps. "And they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep"--from there each one drew water for his standard, his tribe, and his family. "And put the stone back upon the well's mouth in its place"(Gen. 29:3)--during their journey.

(Genesis Rabbah 70:8)

Consequently, Jacob not only saw the well, he also heard how it would be used to provide for his descendants in the wilderness. God's provision of water indeed would be extended beyond individuals to the people Israel. The development forms the foundation for the metaphor that will follow, the metaphor of water as Torah.

CHAPTER FOUR:

WATER AS A METAPHOR FOR TORAH

Water served a crucial role in the lives of many peoples, both ancient and modern. Hermann Hesse,<sup>17</sup> James Joyce,<sup>18</sup> Carl Jung,<sup>19</sup> and many other writers consider water a central symbol or metaphor for both spiritual and psychological journeys. In the Jewish tradition as well, as has been stated, water plays an important role. However, it is not simply as a physical element that the importance of water is noted. For, within the rabbinic tradition, water comes to mean Torah.

Water as a symbol for Torah emerged from the prominent role that water played in the relationship between the Holy One and Israel. It has been shown that water epitomized the potential for life and death in a wilderness culture. Furthermore, the first redemption, the redemption at the Red Sea, occurred in water. The children of Israel, who were frightened that they would find death in its depths, experienced instead God's redemption and their own birth as a people. Thus, the covenant which would be formed between the Holy One and Israel was anticipated at the Red Sea. The people come to be sustained by the Holy One through the divine provision of water. Not only following the Red Sea redemption, but even prior to it, biblical figures who had a close relationship with the Holy One were sustained by the provision of water by God. They also were reassured that their descendants would receive God's sustenance. In time, this sustenance became less tangible. The need for water, overwhelming in the wilderness, appeared to be less overwhelming beyond the wilderness. As the literature began to reflect a change from the essentially physical

sustenance of water to the spiritual sustenance of Torah, water provided by God and necessary for life, became a metaphor for Torah.

Additionally, the language and context of certain verses in the biblical text suggest that water means Torah. The most common proof-text for water meaning Torah is Isaiah 55:1.<sup>20</sup>

הו"י קח - חַי וְחַיִּים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים  
לֵאמֹר חַי וְחַיִּים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים  
וְהַיְּבֵשִׁים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים  
וְהַיְּבֵשִׁים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים

"Ho, all who are thirsty, come for water, Even if you have no money; come, buy food and eat; Buy food without money, wine and milk without cost." How might one buy food and drink without money? The text

continues: חַי וְחַיִּים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים  
לֵאמֹר חַי וְחַיִּים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים  
וְהַיְּבֵשִׁים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים  
וְהַיְּבֵשִׁים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים  
וְהַיְּבֵשִׁים לְכֹל הַיְּבֵשִׁים

"Why do you spend money for what is not bread, your earnings for what does not satisfy? Give heed to Me, and you shall eat choice food and enjoy the richest viands. Incline your ear and come to Me; Hearken and you shall be revived. And I will make with you an everlasting covenant, the enduring loyalty promised to David" (Is. 55:2-3). Thus, even beyond wilderness, when one might think that money can buy sustenance, even here it was not money but heeding the Holy One which sustained. Listening to God, and obeying the commandments, and participating in the covenant would provide that which truly sustained: "Ho, all who are thirsty, come for water." Come for the water of Torah, which will satisfy and revive.

While this is the primary proof-text for water as Torah, the Midrash plays out the relation between the two in extensive lists.<sup>21</sup>

The most comprehensive of these lists comparing the qualities of water and the qualities of Torah is found in Song of Songs Rabbah

1:7:13:

"For your loved ones are better than wine" (Song of Songs 1:2). The words of the Torah are compared to water, to wine, to oil, to honey, and to milk. To water: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye for water" (Isa. 55:1). Just as water stretches from one end of the world to the other, as it says, "To the one who spread forth the earth above the waters" (Ps. 36:6), so the Torah goes from one end of the world to the other, as it says, "The measure thereof is longer than the earth" (Job 11:9). Just as water is a source of life for the world, as it says, "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters" (Song of Songs: 4:15), so the Torah is a source of life for the world, as it says, "For they are life unto those that find them and health to all their flesh" (Prov. 4:22); and it is also written, "Come ye, buy and eat" (Isa. 55:1). Just as water is from heaven, as it says, "At the sound of God giving a multitude of waters in the heavens" (Jer. 10:13), so the Torah is from heaven, as it says, "I have talked with you from heaven" (Ex. 20:19). Just as (the downpour of) water is accompanied by loud thunderings, as it says, "The voice of 'Adonai is upon the waters" (Ps. 29:3), so the Torah was given with loud thunderings, as it says, "And it came to pass on the third day when it was morning that there were thunders and lightnings" (Ex. 14:16). Just as water restores the soul, as it says, "But God cleaved the hollow place which was in Lehi and there came water thereout, and when he had drunk ... he revived" (Judg. 15:19), so does the Torah, as it says, "The law of 'Adonai is perfect, restoring the soul" (Ps. 19:8). Just as water purifies man from ritual uncleanness, as it says, "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean" (Ezek. 36:25), so the Torah cleanses an unclean man of his uncleanness, as it says, "The words of 'Adonai are pure words" (Ps. 12:7). Just as water cleanses the body, as it says, "He shall bathe himself in water" (Lev. 17:15), so the Torah cleanses the body, as it says, "Thy word is purifying to the uttermost" (Ps. 119:140). Just as water covers the nakedness of the sea, as it says, "As the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9), so the Torah covers the nakedness of Israel, as it says, "Love covereth all transgressions" (Prov. 10:12). Just as rain water comes down in drops and forms rivers, so with the Torah: a man learns two laws today and two to-morrow, until he becomes like a flowing stream. Just as water has no taste unless one is thirsty, so the Torah has no taste unless one labours at it. Just as water leaves a high place and flows to a low one, so the Torah leaves one whose spirit is



proud and cleaves to one whose spirit is lowly. Just as water does not keep well in a vessel of silver or gold but in the commonest of vessels, so the Torah resides only in one who makes himself like a vessel of earthenware. Just as with water a great person is not ashamed to say to a lowly person: Give me a drink of water, so with the words of the Torah, a great scholar must not be ashamed to say to a lesser one, Teach me one chapter, or one statement, or one verse, or even one letter. Just as with water, if one does not know how to swim in it, he will be drowned, so with the words of the Torah, if one does not know how to thread his way in them and to instruct in accordance with them, he will ultimately come to grief. Said R. Hanina of Caesarea: Seeing that water is conducted not only to gardens and orchards, but also to baths and privies, am I to say that it is the same with the words of the Torah? Not so, since it says, "For the ways of 'Adonai are right" (Hos. 14:10). R. Hama b. 'Uqba said: Just as water makes plants grow, so the words of the Torah nurture everyone who labours over them as they require. Shall I say that just as water becomes stale and noisome in the jar, so the words of the Torah? Not so, since it says, that it is like wine: just as, the longer wine matures in the jar the better it becomes, so the more the words of the Torah become ingrained in a man, the greater the reputation they win for him. Shall I say that just as water after being drunk is imperceptible in the body, so are the words of the Torah? Not so, since it is compared with wine: just as wine leaves its mark when drunk, so words of Torah leave their mark, and people point with the finger and say, that is a scholar. Shall I say that just as water does not gladden the heart, so the words of the Torah? Not so, since it is compared with wine: just as wine rejoices the heart, as it is written, "And wine that maketh glad the heart of man" (Ps. 104:15), so words of Torah rejoice the heart, as it says, "The precepts of 'Adonai are right, rejoicing the heart" (Ps. 19:9). Shall I say that just as wine is sometimes bad for the head and the body, so are the words of the Torah also? Not so, since it is compared to oil: just as oil makes the head and the body feel pleasant, so the words of the Torah make the head and the body feel pleasant, as it says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet" (Ps. 119:105). Shall I say then that just as oil is bitter at first and sweet afterwards, so are the words of the Torah? Not so, since it is compared to milk and honey: just as these are sweet throughout, so are the words of the Torah, as it says, "Sweeter also than honey" (Ps. 19:11). Shall I say that just as honey has wax-cells, so also the words of the Torah? Not so, since it is compared to milk: just as milk is pure, so are the words of the Torah pure, as it says, "Gold and glass cannot equal it" (Job 28:17). Shall I say that just as milk is insipid, so are the words of the Torah? Not so since it is compared to milk and honey: just as milk and honey when combined do not injure the body, so the words of Torah, as it says, "It shall be health to thy navel" (Prov. 3:8) and, "For they are life unto those that find them" (Prov. 4:22).

In this passage, dodekha, "your beloved", is understood to refer to Torah--"For better is your Torah than wine." From a contextual perspective, Torah is beloved to God. From a linguistic perspective, the rabbis read dodeykha, "your beloved" as dadeyka, "your breasts" or "your nipples." Just as the liquids which are enumerated in this text provide sustenance, so that which comes from a nursing, nurturing divine source, gives sustenance. By suckling at the divine breast, Israel drinks in Torah. Thus, the words of Torah which sustain are compared to other fluids which sustain. The most essential among them is water.<sup>22</sup>

From this text the following qualities are evident: water and Torah both stretch from one end of the world to the other; both are a source of life; both are given from heaven; both are accompanied by loud thunder when they descend from heaven; both restore the soul; both purify; both cover nakedness. (In the case of Israel, Torah covers the nakedness of transgression; in the case of the earth, water covers the nakedness of the sea.) Both come in drops and gather in larger bodies; both must be sought in order to be tasty; both flow from high places to low places; both are collected in common vessels; the need for both levels social distinctions; both are dangerous if one does not possess skill in swimming in them, and both nurture.

In the second aspect of this midrash, qualities of water are identified which would not compare favorably to Torah. But the text begins by comparing Torah not only to water, but to wine, oil, honey and milk. Consequently, when those qualities of water which are not flattering to Torah are raised, they are denied by an appeal to

the other fluids which provide sustenance and to which Torah is compared. Although water can become stale in a bottle, aging wine is desirable. In this regard, Torah is like wine. Similarly, unlike water, Torah, like wine, leaves a mark, and it gladdens the heart. However, there are qualities of wine which are undesirable. With regard to them, Torah is compared to another liquid, in this case, to oil. This pattern is repeated throughout the passage. Thus, the qualities of Torah which are identified here include Torah improving with age, Torah leaving a mark, Torah rejoicing the heart, Torah making the head and body feel pleasant, Torah's words are sweet, Torah is pure, and Torah is healthy. The passage concludes with the verse from Proverbs 4:22: "For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh", suggesting that just as the various foods and drink mentioned in this passage bring physical sustenance and growth, so the words of Torah bring life and health.

The qualities enumerated in the section above suggest that Torah is as essential to Israel as water is essential to human life. As a matter of fact, in the Midrash, there is an explicit assumption that it is on account of the acceptance of Torah that the Holy One provided water for Israel:

"Behold, I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you" (Ex. 16:4). It is written, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. 9:5). The Holy One said: What enabled you to eat of the manna and drink from the well? The fact that you accepted the statutes and ordinances; for it says, "There God made for them a statute and an ordinance" (Ex. 15:25). So because you have accepted My food you have received the food of the manna, and because of "the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. 9:5), have you drunk of the water of the well, as it says, "And drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. 9:5).

(Exodus Rabbah 25:7)

The same stress on the necessity of water, which the rabbis interpret to mean Torah, is communicated elsewhere in more anecdotal forms. For example, in the Joseph story, one reads "And the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (Gen. 37:24). If the pit was empty, then clearly there was no water in it. Why does the absence of water need to be emphasized? The following passage provides an answer:

Rabbi Aha interpreted, "And the pit was empty" (Gen. 37:24). Jacob's pit was emptied, "There was no water in it" (Gen. 37:24). There were no Torah teachings in it, which are likened to water, as you read, "Ho every one that thirsts, come for water" (Is. 55:1). It is written, "If a man be found stealing any of his brothers of the children of Israel ... and sell them, then that thief shall die" (Dt. 24:7), and yet, you sell your brother.

(Genesis Rabbah 84:16)

The absence of water in this case refers to the absence of Torah. If Jacob's pit had been full of Torah teachings, then his sons would have known that selling Joseph was prohibited by the Deuteronomy text. In order to emphasize this, the pit, ownerless in the biblical story, belongs to Jacob in the midrash.

A similar argument is employed to explain the victory of Amalek:

"Then came Amalek" (Ex. 17:8). Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Eli'ezer Hisma say: This verse is to be taken in an allegorical sense and explained in connection with the passage in Job where it says, "Can the rush shoot up without mire? Can the reedgrass grow without water?" (Job 8:11). Is it possible for the rush to grow without mire and without water, or is it possible for the reedgrass to exist without water? So also it is impossible for Israel to exist unless they busy themselves with the words of Torah. And because they separated themselves from the Torah, the enemy came upon them. For the enemy comes only because of sin and transgression. In this sense it is said, "Then came Amalek" (Ex. 17:8).

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 6)

The suggestion that it is the absence of water, meaning the absence of Torah, which was responsible for Amalek's presence is based on the

preceding passage, Exodus 17:1, "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin by their stages, according to the commandment of 'Adonai, and encamped in Refidim; and there was no water for the people to drink." In Refidim, the place with no water, the Amalekites came upon Israel. In Refidim, the place of Massah and Meribah, where the children of Israel strove, they asked, "Is 'Adonai among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7) Since the people were doubting God's presence, then clearly they were without Torah. And since they were without Torah, they were weak enough to be defeated by the Amalekites.

Water or Torah is not only Israel's strength, but it is also Israel's environment. For Israel lives in Torah as fish live in water.

"And let them increase like fish in the midst of the earth" (Gen. 48:16). Just as fish live in water, yet when a drop falls from above, they catch it thirstily as though they had never tasted water in their lives, so are Israel brought up in the waters of Torah, yet when they hear a new exposition, in the Torah, they receive it thirstily as though they had never heard a Torah teaching in their lives.

(Genesis Rabbah 97:3)

This clever interpretation emerges from the peculiar use of the verb veyidggu "And they shall increase." This root does not occur elsewhere in the Bible as a verb. The word closest to it--dag, "fish"--is found frequently. Since fish are numerous, the biblical "And let them grow into a multitude" became "And let them increase like fish" in the midrash. How do fish behave in water? Fish pursue water as Israel pursues Torah. The image created in this passage is one in which Israel is utterly surrounded by and at home in the amniotic fluid of Torah. This image is expanded in a small midrash called Midrash Between Water and Water:



And God sent them in the midst of the waters, or in the midst of words of Torah which are likened to water, as it is said "Ho, all that are thirsty, come for water" (Is. 55:1). Therefore, when they busy themselves with Torah, neither a people, a nation nor the evil eye rules over them. They are like fish in the water, so deep that a net could not reach them. And even if the evil inclination, which is like a net, were to attack them, the Torah would guard them and prevent them from being seized. And there is a division between water and water, between the Holy One who is the Well of Living Waters and the worship of idols which are like broken cisterns, unable to hold water, and whose waters are stale and rank. Israel rises above them to make a distinction between water and water.

In this text, the water is not only the environment in which Israel lives, it is also protection against temptation. Because Israel is so at home in the waters of Torah whose source is the Holy One, they are able to distinguish between the waters of the Holy One and the stale waters of idolatry.

Just as the children of Israel had to walk into the Red Sea in order for the Holy One to initiate the miracle of parting the waters, so too with Torah study. Students of Torah must study in order to provide the human incentive for the Holy One to redeem Israel. How one is to study is reflected as well in the metaphor of water as Torah. The many vessels for water and the various forms which water takes suggest guides for study. These images coupled with biblical verses form a series of dicta for students, as preserved in Sifrei Devarim, Pisqa 48:

Rabbi Shim'on ben Mansi says. Behold it says, "Drink waters out of your own cistern" (Proverbs 5:15). Drink from the waters that the Holy One created for you and do not drink turbid waters or draw from the words of the heretics.

Rabbi 'Aqiva says: Behold it says, "Drink waters out of your own cistern" (Proverbs 5:15). A cistern, in the beginning, cannot give a drop of water on its own other than what is put in it. Similarly, a student, in the beginning can only learn what has been taught. "And running waters out of thine own

well" (Proverbs 5:15). He is likened to a well. Just as in the case of a well of running water, water runs from all its sides, so in the case of a student when many come and study from him. Consequently it says, "Let thy springs be dispersed" (Proverbs 5:16).

The advice provided in this passage begins with a caution against learning from water that is not for Israel, but for heretics: Reminiscent of the Midrash Between Water and Water passage, Rabbi Shim'on ben Mansi warns against the turbid waters of the ones whose source is not the Holy One.

Unlike Rabbi Shim'on ben Mansi, who focuses on "your own cistern," Rabbi 'Aqiva uses the metaphor of a cistern to explicate how a student learns. This understanding of the learning process is particularly appropriate coming from Rabbi 'Aqiva, given his own late start in studying Torah.<sup>23</sup> Students can only give what they have taken in, as cisterns can only give water which is in them. But the image of a well of running water is not that of the passive student. Instead, this student is active and creative, and giving forth more than what was still and expectant in a cistern. Others come to study from students who are like wells of running water; thus such students become teachers and their teachings spread. To such a well, students come from many places, and so the water is dispersed to many places.

There is an old adage that "water never passes the same place twice." The following midrash addresses the question of what happens to knowledge once it is imparted. Does it, like water, find a new home?

"All of the rivers run into the sea" (Ecclesiastes 1:7). All the Torah which a man studies is only in his heart, "Yet the sea is not full" (Ec. 1:7), but the heart is not full nor the appetite ever satisfied, as it is said, "And yet the appetite is



not filled " (Ec. 6:7). Do you mean to say that when a man imparts his learning to another, it never returns to him? Therefore the text continues, "Thither they go again" (Ec. 1:7). As it is written, "And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart" (Dt. 6:6). That is, they shall always be upon your heart.

(Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:7:5)

Like the Song of Songs Rabbah passage in which the qualities of water are balanced by those of wine, here, the elusiveness of water is balanced by the understanding that the words will remain in the heart of the one who teaches them. Inherent in both passages cited is the premise that Torah study involves both learning and teaching. In order for a stream to flow, much water needs to be gathered into it. This process is described in Song of Songs Rabbah 4:15:1:

"You are a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters" (Song of Songs 4:15). Rabbi Yohanan said: The word well is found in the Torah forty eight times corresponding to the forty eight qualities by which the knowledge of Torah is gained (Pirkei 'Avot 6:6), and so it is written, "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters. And flowing streams from Lebanon" (Song of Songs 4:15). Rabbi 'Azariah said: One student contributes a trickle and another contributes a trickle until the halakha, the law, issues like the Lebanon.

In teaching how Torah is to be studied, the rabbis are not only interested in the form in which study takes. They are also concerned with the quality of the learning. Water should be pure--clear, drinkable, refreshing--as well as plentiful.

"His bread shall be given, his waters shall be pure" (Is. 33:16). This refers to God who commands those who study Torah. Never say: I understand anything which you do not understand; neither prohibit to another what you permit to yourself, but let all the utterances that proceed from your mouth be reliable, as were those that proceeded from Moses, and I will make you behold my beauty face to face.

(Exodus Rabbah 25:8)

In order to insure the quality of one's Torah, in order to have pure waters, a student must be scrupulously honest about what is understood, painstakingly consistent about the law, and certain of all the teachings which the student imparts. If the student does this, then, "As in water face answers to face" (Prov. 27:19), so in Torah, the face of the student might behold the face of the Holy One. Finally all the Torah which Moses taught was true Torah and if the Torah of the student is similarly true, then the student might also behold God's beauty face to face.<sup>24</sup>

One whose Torah teaching was remarkable was Rabbi 'Aqiva.

'Aqiva had a particular sensitivity to learning, as is illustrated in the following passage:

It is said that when 'Aqiva was forty years old, he had not yet studied any Torah. Once he stood by the mouth of the well: Who hollowed out this stone? he wondered. He was told: It is the water which falls upon it every day, continually, it was told to him. 'Aqiva, have you not heard, "The waters wear away the stones?" (Job 14:19). Thereupon, Rabbi 'Aqiva drew the inference with regard to himself: If what is soft wears down the hard, all the more shall the words of Torah, which are as hard as iron, hollow out my heart, which is flesh and blood. Forthwith he turned to the study of Torah.

(Avot de Rabbi Natan,  
chapter 6)

According to this text, 'Aqiva turned to Torah study because he saw the paradoxical power of water. He was touched by the power of gentle water to wear down even the hardest stone. Understanding that Torah study acts like water in this manner, 'Aqiva knew that Torah study is a long and continual process, a process by which knowledge is acquired by gathering very small amounts:

"Like drops of water falling on the stone  
splashing, breaking, dispersing in air  
weaker than the stone by far

but be aware that as time goes by  
 the rock will wear away  
 and the water comes again."<sup>25</sup>

The image conveyed in this midrash is one of great power manifested with such gentleness that the power is almost imperceptible. Yet 'Aqiva had the wisdom to perceive the strength of Torah.

Institutions, as well as individual scholars are regarded in the equation of water and Torah. The well which Jacob saw in the field (Gen. 29:2) which reassured him about the future sustenance of his descendants has been interpreted to refer to the Courts of Judgment, the Sanhedrin, the synagogue and Sinai. The determination or transmission of Torah, that which emerged from Jacob's well, took place within each of these referents:

"And he looked, and behold a well in the field" (Gen. 29:2)--this alludes to Zion; "And lo three flocks of sheep"--the three Courts of Judgment, as we learned: Three Courts were there, one at the entrance of the Temple Mount, another at the entrance to the Temple Court, and the third in the Chamber of Hewn Stones. "For out of that well they watered the flocks"--from there they learnt the law; "And the stone was great"--this refers to the great Court in the Hall of Hewn Stones; "And thither were all the flocks gathered"--this refers to the Courts of Judgment in the Land of Israel; "And they rolled the stone"--from there they learned the law; "And put the stone back"--there they debated the law until it was clearly settled. (Gen. 29:3).

"And behold a well in the field" symbolises the Sanhedrin; "And lo three flocks of sheep"--the three rows of scholars who sat before them. "For out of that well they watered the flocks"--from there they learned the halakha, the law, "And the stone upon the well's mouth was great," this symbolises the mufla of the Beit Din, the rabbinical court, who finally decides the law. "And thither were all the flocks gathered"--this symbolises the scholars in the Land of Israel; "And they rolled the stone"--from there they learned the law. "And put the stone back upon the well's mouth in its place"--they debated the law until it was clearly settled.

"And behold a well in the field" symbolises the synagogue; "And lo three flocks of sheep", the three men called (to the reading of the Law). "For out of that well", etc.--there they heard the Torah. "And the stone was great" symbolises the Evil Tempter. "And thither were all the flocks gathered"--that represents the congregation; "And they rolled the stone"--there they heard the Torah. "And put the stone back", etc.--as soon as they depart (from the synagogue) the Evil Tempter returns to his place.

R. Yohanan interpreted it with reference to Sinai. "And he looked and behold a well"--this symbolises Sinai; "And lo three flocks of sheep"--Priests, Levites, and Israelites; "For out of that well", etc.--thence they heard the Decalogue; "And the stone was great"--this alludes to the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence, "And thither were all the flocks gathered." R. Simeon b. Judah of Kefar Acco said on the authority of R. Simeon: (All of them were required), for had Israel been short by one only, they would not have been worthy of receiving the Torah. "And they rolled the stone from there"--they heard the Decalogue. "And put the stone back", "you yourselves have seen that I talked with you from heaven"(Ex. 20:19). The Shekhinah returned to heaven.

(Genesis Rabbah 70:8/9)

With respect to Zion, the passage describes the place in which Torah was debated. With respect to the Sanhedrin, there the scholars both studied and legislated Torah. In the synagogue, Torah was read and studied and transmitted. At Sinai, Israel gathered to receive the Torah. Thus, the well which sustained Jacob stands for those structures or places in Israel's life which would sustain the people.

In the text which follows, which consists of a portion of Balaam's prophesy and its explication, the association of the tents of Jacob with the academies of Israel is assumed:

"How goodly are your tents, O Jacob ... as streams stretched out" (Num. 24:5). What is the point here of speaking of streams in connection with academies of Torah? Because, as men who are defiled go down into streams, immerse themselves, and then come up from the water purified, so are men who attend academies of Torah. Men go into them full of iniquities and come out of them purified. Such is the point of the words, "How goodly are your tents (of Torah), O Jacob ... as streams stretched out" (Num. 24:5)

(Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 21:19)

Consequently, both streams of water and academies of Torah purify those who enter them. And so the tents of Jacob are the places of Torah learning in Israel. Not unlike the passages which equate Israel to fish who live in water, the suggestion here is that Israel indeed lives in the academies of Torah. Study is not divorced from living.

Even in the biblical context, the following Psalms text speaks about water as Torah: "Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked... But his delight is in the law of 'Adonai, and in God's law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, that bring forth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does he shall prosper" (Ps. 1:1-3). Yet here R. Samuel bar R. Isaac identified rivers of water as cities of learning in the Land of Israel:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (Ps. 1:3). Rabbi Samuel bar Rabbi Isaac was in the habit of planting himself in one learned company after another so as to bring to fulfillment the words, "I have more understanding because of an abundance of teachers" (Ps. 119:99). For to what do the words, "rivers of water" refer? To cities such as Tiberius, with its learned companies, Sephoris, with its learned companies, Jamnia with its learned companies, and Lydda with its learned companies.

(Midrash Tehilim 1:3)

The counsel which this text attempts to convey is that one who is surrounded by teachers of Torah will have firm roots and will yield fruit. Again the midrash suggests a world in which the scholar is steeped in Torah in every aspect of life.

In a pithy and perhaps humorous interpretation of the Ecclesiastes text "Cast your bread upon the waters" (Ec. 11:1) R. Bibi emphasizes that one should support those who study Torah:

"Cast your bread upon the waters" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Rabbi Bibi said: If it is your desire to practice charity, bestow it upon those who labor in the Torah, because "the water" can only mean Torah, as it is said, "Ho, all who thirst, come for water" (Is. 55:1).

(Ecclesiastes Rabbah 11:1)

It is possible to view the prior passage with a cynical eye, suggesting that those who wrote the passage were those who would benefit by its suggestion. However, the fact that one would offer to support Torah scholars accents the value which Torah has both in the social and religious life of Israel. Within the Midrash, Torah scholarship was more than a source of pride; it was a means by which to bring the Messiah. Students of Torah, by their dedication and their scholarship, hasten healing and redemption.

Several passages enumerate the benefits of Torah study. In a general sense blessings come to those who study Torah. For example,

'Aggadat Bereshit: 43:

"And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as dew from 'Adonai" (Micah 5:6). The prophet says, "My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch" (Job 29:19). Israel said: Because our children busy themselves with Torah that is likened to water, as it is said, "Ho, all who thirst, come for water" (Is. 55:1), therefore blessings come.

One of the blessings which is available to Israel for both Torah study and fulfilling the mitzvot is the blessing of health and healing. Note the following illustration:

If every day without fail you do My will, as voiced in My Torah, "Then healing shall spring forth speedily" (Is. 58:8). When you open your mouth to expound Torah, I will cause you to do so with such precision that nobody will be able to contradict you; you will see yourself so strong in your precise interpretation of Torah that besides there being nobody able to contradict you, your bones will grow in strength through your performance of Torah's commandments, as it is said, "'Adonai will guide you



continually, satisfy your soul in drought, and make strong your bones" (Is. 58:11). You will be like a spring which flows forth in a garden, watering figs and grapes and all other kinds of fruit, every one of them, as it is said, "You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring whose waters fail not" (Is. 58:11).

(Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 27)

The cycle presented in this text suggests that one who observes Torah will become strong and healthy, both physically and creatively. The Torah that is expounded will then be guided essentially by 'Adonai, so that the Torah scholar will become like a fruitful garden, whose teachings are strong.

Torah study also purifies:

As men who are defiled go down into streams, immerse themselves, and then come up from the water purified, so are (men who attend) academies of Torah. Men go into them full of iniquities and come out of them purified.

(Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 21:19)

All of the advantages already mentioned are individual advantages. By studying Torah, one can acquire blessings, good health, purification. However, Torah study has a value beyond these. It is due to the merits of those who study Torah that the Messiah will come:

Isaiah says, "Happy are you that sow beside the waters, that send forth freely the feet of the ox and the ass" (Is. 32:2). These are those who busy themselves with Torah, as it is said, "Ho, all who thirst, come for water" and "That send forth freely the feet of the ox" (Is. 32:20)--this is the Messiah son of Joseph, who is likened to an ox, and "And the ass"--this is the Messiah, as it is said, "Poor and riding on a donkey" (Zech. 9:9).

(Tanhuma haNidpas, Bereshit 1)

The implication of the Isaiah verse is that the one who sows beside the waters, that is, the one who studies Torah, will cause the Holy One to send forth the feet of the ox and the ass. The ox is identified with Messiah son of Joseph. In Gen. 49:22, as part of the blessings of



Jacob, Joseph receives a confusing blessing:

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

This text is alternately translated "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by the fountain, its branches run over a wall"; or as in the new Jewish Publication Society translation, "Joseph is a wild ass, a wild ass by a spring, wild colts on a hillside." In neither translation does the import of Joseph as an ox apply. A more likely association is with Joseph and an ass. However, the Hebrew shor is present in both Is. 32:20 and in the Gen. text 49:22. That is to say that Joseph is identified with a shor, an ox. The association of the Messiah son of David with an ass is more straightforward. Note, in this regard, Zech. 9:9, which reads: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; Behold, thy king comes unto you; he is triumphant, and victorious, lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass." The frequent link with the king and David confirms this prooftext as relating to Messiah son of David. However, just as in the Gen. 49 text in which one could transpose the referent and regard the wild ass as relating to Joseph, the context of the Zechariah passage suggests a similar relationship. For below this verse is one which speaks of God who "sends forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water" (Zech. 9:11). The language of the text, " יֵצֵא מִן הַבֵּי�ר מִן הַיָּבֵשׁ ", suggests the experience of Joseph once again, this time when his brothers threw him into the pit: " מִן הַבֵּי�ר יֵצֵא מִן הַיָּבֵשׁ " (Gen. 37:24). One could argue then that

through the midrashic interpretation, both Messiah son of Joseph and Messiah son of David are alluded to in the Zechariah text. Certainly, the messianic possibility is underscored in the above passage. One who studies Torah will encourage the Holy One to send the Messiah to the people.

With regard to Torah study, as well as with regard to the physical provision of water, Israel's actions determine, in part, the actions of the Holy One. Torah is called hayyim, "life"; water is called hayyim.<sup>26</sup> Both help Israel to grow, to become strong, to remain pure and, ultimately, to bring about a redemption for which the Red Sea was the paradigm.

CHAPTER FIVE:

WATER AND THE MESSIANIC REDEMPTION

Both physically and metaphorically, water has been shown to be related to the life and sustenance of Israel. One can expect that it is similarly present in material which treats the eternal life of Israel. As water at the Red Sea represented a literal transformation and rebirth, so water as related to the world to come symbolizes renewal and rebirth.

Messianic references are frequent in midrashic literature. The Holy One promises a time of future redemption, a time of comfort for Israel when Jerusalem will be restored to her former glory and the exiles, scattered throughout the globe, will gather together in her midst. Often, descriptions of this future time paint portraits of a lush landscape covered by flowing water. Some of these descriptions have their foundation in the poetry of the Prophets. Others are suggested by the description of the Garden of Eden found in Genesis 2, a description abounding with rivers. Thus, the biblical material coupled with an identification of water with fertility creates a body of midrashic literature in which water signifies redemption and renewal.

The following text culls several descriptions of the world to come spread throughout the prophetic literature. They are linked by the introductory word, "vehayah":

"So that I come back to my father's house in peace, then shall 'Adonai be my God' (Gen. 28:21). Rabbi Joshua of Siknin said in the name of Rabbi Levi: The Holy One took the words used by the Patriarchs and made them a key for the redemption of their descendants. Thus God said to him: You have said 'Then shall 'Adonai be (vehayah) my God.' By your life! All the benefits, blessings and consolations which I am to confer upon your children, I will confer with this very expression, as it says, 'And it shall come to pass (vehayah) in that day that living waters shall go

out from Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:8). "And it shall come to pass (vehayah) in that day that a man shall rear a young cow and two sheep" (Is. 7:21). "And it shall come to pass (vehayah) in that day, that 'Adonai will set God's hand again, the second time, to recover the remnant of God's people" (Is. 11:11). "And it shall come to pass (vehayah) in that day that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine" (Joel 4:18). "And it shall come to pass (vehayah) in that day that a great horn shall be blown; and they shall come that were lost in the land of Assyria" (Is. 27:13).

(Genesis Rabbah 70:6)

In context, the Genesis verse speaks of Jacob, who has dreamt that God was with him and who was eager for God to remain with him. He had set up a pillar and was explaining the tie between the pillar and his desire that God remain with him. The earlier part of the verse, in its literal sense, conveys that Jacob sought to return to the house of his father Isaac, from which he has been exiled by his own actions and the anticipated revenge of his brother. That he spoke the word "vehayah" probably warranted little notice. However, one can interpret this text in another manner. "So that I return to my father's house in peace", might mean so that I--Jacob/Israel--can return to my father's house--the house of my divine parent--in peace. Thus, Israel seeks to return from her own exile to God's house in Jerusalem. In this sense, "vehayah" provides a kind of literary code for redemption, for how 'Adonai will carry out this divine plan.

Five verses are offered to elucidate what will happen at redemption. Each verse begins with "vehayah." Furthermore, each verse begins with "vehayah bayom hahu", "And it will come to pass on that day." Consequently, although the verses are found in different texts, one can assume that they address the same day--the day of the redemption. The first verse, in which the image of living waters flowing forth from

Jerusalem is found , speaks of the future safety of Jerusalem as the seat of Divine sovereignty. The second verse, Isaiah 7:21, speaks of the agricultural wealth which will accompany redemption, a day in which cows, sheep, milk, honey and vineyards shall be in abundance. Isaiah 11:11 addresses the ingathering of the exiles. The image of God extending a divine hand a second time is reminiscent of God's right hand at the Red Sea. This allusion is made explicit in the verses which follow: "And 'Adonai will utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea ... And there shall be a highway for the remnant of God's people " (Isaiah 11:15-16). The third verse in the preceding midrash speaks of the landscape which the ingathered exiles will encounter upon their return to the Land of Israel. "And in that day, the mountains shall drip with wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the watercourses of Judah shall flow with water; A spring shall issue forth from the House of 'Adonai and shall water the Wadi of the Acacias" (Joel 4:18). This verse is suggestive of more than the physical sustenance found in Is. 7:21. Here, the picture drawn is an opulent one, particularly in contrast to the desolation of Egypt and the desolate wilderness of Edom of which Joel speaks following this text. Once again, the image of 'Adonai dwelling in safety in Zion is present. But the effect is beyond mere safety. Sweet wine, milk, flowing waters, streams from Jerusalem merge to create an image of royal comfort and fertility. The final verse in this midrashic passage once again addresses the return of the exiles, accompanied by the blast of the great shofar, a return which will enable them to worship 'Adonai in Jerusalem. Thus, the five verses combine to create a portrait of redemption in which food and drink is not only present but plentiful, in which

Jerusalem is a city of safety and the source of libations of all kinds, in which the exiles are gathered amidst splendour in order to worship the Holy One.

Bountiful water is a sensible metaphoric and physical antidote to the suffering of Israel. In the following text fruitful rivers and Miriam's well combine with free-flowing water to symbolize the return of Israel to the beloved land.

Twelve good measures the Holy One created in the world and all ceased. But the Holy One will return them to Israel in the world to come. In the world to come, the Holy One will cause twelve rivers to go out of Jerusalem, and upon each stream will be a tree that makes fruit, and in each month they bless the tree's fruit, as it is said, "And on the stream will rise upon its banks, shall grow every tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail; it shall bring forth new fruit every month" (Ez. 47:12). And not only this, but in the future the Holy One will cause Miriam's well to rise, as it is written, "And it shall come to pass on that day that living waters will go out from Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:8). And the Gihon will go forth from Jerusalem and water the land of Israel. Hezekiah stood and waited for the prophetic spirit and he said: I know that Israel will be exiled from their nation and the Temple destroyed, but if the Gihon is in its place, all the nations will come here. So he closed it, as it is said, "Hezekiah closed the mouth of the waters of Gihon" (II Chronicles: 32:30), and in the future, the Holy One will return it to Israel and water their land, as it is said, "And a fountain from the house of 'Adonai shall go forth" (Joel 4:18).

(Seder 'Araqim 71b in Osar Midrashim)

There is an implicit assumption in this passage that, when the waters return to their full richness, then the world will be as the Holy One wished for it to be. Hezekiah, by the prophetic spirit--that is, by divine desire--closed the mouth of the waters of Gihon, the river from Eden, until Israel would be able to enjoy its waters. It will reopen on the day that "a fountain shall go forth from the house of 'Adonai" (Joel 4:18), that is, on the day of redemption.



If one were to enlarge one aspect of the picture of redemption which has already been painted in order to better understand what will occur, the following passage might be the result:

Rabbi Phineas said: In the future the waters of the well will ascend from under the threshold of the Temple and they will overflow and bubble over and issue forth and become twelve streams corresponding to the twelve tribes, as it is said, "And (the man) brought me back into the door of the house, and behold waters issued from under the threshold of the house eastward, for the forefront of the house was towards the east; And the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar" (Ez. 47:1). Three streams toward the south to pass through them up to the ankles, and three streams toward the west, to pass through them up to the knees, as it is said, "When the man went forth eastward, with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. Again he measured one thousand and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees" (Ez. 47:3-4). And three streams toward the east to pass through them up to the neck, for the neck is the extremity of the body, as it is said, "And he measured one thousand cubits and he caused me to pass through waters that were to the extremity" (Ez. 47:3). And the waters descended to the brook of Kidron and they rose higher than in the stream and I could not pass through, as it is said, "For the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a stream that could not be passed through" (Ez. 47:5). And the waters are drawn from there and they flow down to the fords of the Jordan, as it is said, "And they shall go down into the 'Aravah" (Ez. 47:8).

Every field and vineyard which did not yield fruit, people water them with those waters and they yield fruit, as it is said, "And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarms, in every place where the rivers come, shall live ... for these waters are come here, that all things may be healed and live" (Ez. 47:9). Then the waters shall enter the salt sea and they heal it and the waters "shall go towards the sea... and the waters shall be healed" (Ez. 47:8), and there they generate all kinds of fish. The Torah gives a general rule concerning the fish, that they will be as sweet as manna. They ascend in the stream as far as Jerusalem, and there they are caught in nets, as it is said, "And it shall come to pass that fishers shall stand by it" (Ez. 47:10). It is written, "They shall stand by it."

Upon the bank of the stream grow all kinds of trees bearing according to their kind. By the river they shall stand, "Upon the banks thereof of this side and on that side" (Ez. 47:12).

Every month they shall bring forth new fruit, as it is said, "And they shall bring forth new fruit every month" (Ez. 47:12). Some of them are for food and others are for growing, as it is said, "Because the waters thereof issue out of the Sanctuary, and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing" (Ez. 47:12). Every man who is ill and bathes in those waters will be healed, as it is said, "In every place where the rivers came, he shall live ... and everything shall live wherever the river comes" (Ez. 47:9). Every man who has a wound will be healed by taking of their leaves and applying them to his wound, as it is said, "And the fruit thereof shall be for food and the leaf thereof for healing" (Ez. 47:12). What is the meaning of "for healing?" Rabbi Yohanan said: For a laxative, suck its leaves and one's food is digested.

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 51)

This description, following the text of Ezekiel, chapter 47, begins with the waters of the Temple, symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel, and relates their journey throughout the breadth of the land. The Temple serves as the center from which the waters flow. Wherever the waters flow, they bring fertility, both within their depths and upon their banks. In the waters will be fish, as sweet and as readily available as manna. From the waters will come irrigation for fields and vineyards, and fruit trees which continually flower. The waters will also bring healing, both through bathing in its midst and through eating the fruit of the trees grown at its banks. By means of these waters, all of the land of Israel will be restored to a land of richness, fertility and health. All of Israel will resemble the garden described in Genesis 2.

The image of healing waters which will revitalize Israel is found in yet another passage:

"For your breach is great like that of the sea; Who can heal you?" (Lam. 2:13). Rabbi Hilfa of Rumyah taught: Had Scripture said, Your breach is great like the wound of the dead, it would have intimated that there was to be no restoration for Israel. But Scripture says, "Your breach is great like that of the sea." As the sea awaits healing, so Israel awaits it. When the Temple is rebuilt, the waters will go forth from under the Temple, as it

is written, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea" (Zech. 14:8), and these waters will first come into the Great Sea and sweeten it, as it is said, "For these waters come there that I may heal it" (Ez. 47:9), and then the Great Sea will go into the Dead Sea and heal it. Hence, "Who can heal you?" implies that the One who can heal the wound of the sea will heal your wound, O Israel.

(Pesiqta Rabbati 33:12)

Prior to the Lamentations verse with which this passage begins is an eyewitness account of the starvation which was rampant during the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem. Children were seeking food from mothers who could not provide them with a morsel. Infants, who should be taking milk at their mothers' breast instead pour out their soul (Lam 2:12). The devastation is so total that even the sea needs healing. In a time when there is neither food nor water, how compelling is a description of waters which will be healed and then heal. The waters, whose source is the Temple, go to the Great Sea, the Mediteranean, and heal it by sweetening its waters. The waters will then heal the Dead Sea. And simultaneously, the One who will heal the sea will also heal Israel. From one object of healing to another, the waters come in waves, bringing redemption into their midst. There is extraordinary strength and compassion manifested in this text in the actions of the Holy One who will take care of the wounds of the sea, as well as the wounds of the people.

This compassion is apparent in still another form. The Holy One will bring reviving dew to Israel, dew which will revive the dead, promise eternal life and will accompany Israel in the world to come. The following passage from 'Aggadat Bereshit 44:4 reflects this hope:

"I will be like dew for Israel" (Hosea 14:6). Why is dew a sign of resurrection of the dead? As it is said "Your dead shall

live, my dead bodies shall arise--Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust--For Your dew is as the dew of light, and the earth shall bring to life the shades" (Is. 26:19).

The Holy One will be like dew which awakens those who sleep in dust.

An illustration of the reviving power of dew is found with respect to Isaac who, according to some traditions, died on Mount Moriah and was resurrected:

When Isaac our father was bound upon the altar and ashes were made, and his ashes were cast upon Mount Moriah, immediately the Holy One brought dew upon him and revived him. Therefore David said "Like the dew of Hermon that falls upon the mountains of Zion, for there 'Adonai commanded the blessing, even life forever" (Psalms 133:3), like the dew that revived our father Isaac. Immediately the ministering angels opened and sang "Blessed are you, 'Adonai Our God who resurrects the dead."

(Shibbolei haLeqet 9a)

While this text is an attempt to explain the origins of the blessing of resurrection as part of the 'Amidah it serves as well to illustrate that dew was the watery element associated with resurrection and revival.

Similar to Isaac's revival, there is a tradition that when Israel was to receive the Torah on Sinai, the people all died and were revived.

The following text from Midrash Tehilim, chapter 68 speaks of the reviving powers of both rain and dew:

"The earth trembled" (Ps. 68:9), and at once, all the living in the land of Israel died; But the dead came to life as the Holy One dropped the dew of resurrection on them, for the verse goes on to say, "The heavens also dropped at the presence of God" (Ps. 68:9).

"A bounteous rain" (Ps. 68:10). When the ministering angels saw that the breath of life had flown out of the children of Israel, they asked the Holy One: To whom will you give the Torah, to the dead or to the quick? At once the Holy One waved out rains of life over the children of Israel, so that they could receive the Torah with abounding spirit. And the ministering angels waved the rain along with fans upon the children of Israel, as it is said, "You did pour out, O God" (Ps. 68:10).

The heavens dropped down both rain and dew, and these rains and dew of resurrection enabled Israel to return to life and to accept the Torah with abounding spirit.

Dew has within it a protective quality. Because Israel knows of divine dew and its powers of redemption, Israel is able to carry the burden of this world. Consider the following passage in this regard:

"The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favor is as dew upon the grass" (Prov. 19:12). Just as dew brings eternal life, so the Holy One comes like dew for Israel, as it is said, "I will be like dew for Israel" (Hosea 14:6). Even when God is angry at Israel, God is upon them like dew, as it is said, "And like dew upon the grass of his favor(ed)" (Prov. 19:12). Israel said: Therefore we are able to withstand exile. Indignation is made for us like dew, as it is said, "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from 'Adonai" (Micah 5:6).

('Aggadat Bereshit 8:1)

In the Proverbs verse the dew which brings eternal life is equivalent to God's favor. In the passage, the Proverbs text is translated to suggest that God, like dew, is upon the grass of God's favorite--that is, God's favored people, Israel. Consequently, even amidst indignation,<sup>27</sup> Israel can bear her exile, by knowing that divine dew rests with the people.

However, Israel will not remain in exile forever. The Holy One will bring them back from exile, accompanied by reviving dew. This return is commented upon in the following passage:

"My head is filled with dew" (Song of Songs 5:2). Here, Scripture is alluding to the time of the Messiah, when, as the dead come back to life, the Messiah will be told, "Your dew is as the dew of night, and the earth shall bring back to life the shades" (Is. 26:19). In the following phrase, "My locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Songs 5:2), Scripture is alluding to the tears of those who will return from exiles which were dark as night--those, who, it is said, "Shall come with weeping" (Jer. 31:9).

(Midrash Tehilim 18)

That this text speaks of the time of the Messiah is suggested by the beginning of the Song of Songs passage, "I sleep, but my heart wakes" (Song of Songs 5:2). The Holy One knows the pain of Israel's exile and will bring the Messiah to alleviate this pain. Inherent in the midrashic explanation is the premise that dew is a signal for the Messiah. The second part of the Song of Songs verse adds a fuller dimension to this picture of redemption. The "drops of night" are the tears of those who will return. While exile is like a dark night, the Messiah will bring light, the dew of light. The complete verse from Jeremiah which is cited in brief in the midrash alludes to the description of the messianic landscape which was examined earlier in the chapter: "They shall come with weeping, and with compassion, will I guide them. I will lead them to streams of water, by a level road where they will not stumble. For I am ever a Father to Israel, Ephraim is My firstborn" (Jer. 31:9). And so the exiles will return from a dark, tearful night to the light of resurrection in a land of bountiful water and flowing streams.

Another interpretation of the Song of Songs passage presents an image of the Holy One whose locks are full of reviving dew which will descend with a shake of the Holy One's head:

Rabbi Tanhūm said: On account of the seed of the earth, when it is commanded, it discharges the dew for the resurrection of the dead. From what place does it descend? From the head of the Holy One, for the head of the Holy One is full of reviving dew. In the future life the Holy One will shake God's head and cause the quickening dew to descend, as it is said, "I was asleep, but my heart waked ... for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of night" (Song of Songs 5:2).

(Pirkei de Rabbi Eli'ezer, chapter 34)



While some passages suggest that the Holy One will cause dew to descend which will revive the dead and escort the exiles back to Jerusalem, the passage which follows describes a caring, loving parent who will usher Israel into the world to come with great tenderness:

"Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust" (Is. 26:19). The text does not speak of the dead as simply lying in the dust, but as "you who dwell in the dust" signifying that in their lifetime, in this world, the dead were content to have themselves and their flesh dwell in the dust for the sake of the study of Torah. Over the dust of such people, the Holy One will cast a light of sparkling dew drops, which will lift them between God's knees, put God's arms around them, hold them close and kiss them, and thus usher them into life in the world to come, as it is said, "For your dew is as the dew of light" (Is. 26:19).

(Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 5)

The loving bond between God and Israel is poignantly depicted in this text. As a parent lifts a half-sleeping child, God will be present at Israel's awakening. God will provide the sparkling dew for those beloved who not only rested, but dwelt in the dust. The Holy One exhibits sensitive concern for Israel who, because of their study of Torah, of living water, merited redemption, deserved the world to come. Israel, accompanied by the Holy One, will dwell at the time of redemption, in eternal light.

## CONCLUSION

Water is an ever unfolding symbol. From physical life to eternal life, water is present in the bond between the Holy One and Israel. That which in and of itself, is essential, is found as a measurement and a symbol of the relationship between God and Israel. From the terrifying depths of the Red Sea to the gentle dew as the Holy One ushers Israel into the world to come, the versatility, power, comfort and sustenance of water pervades Israel's life. In its very fullness and mystery, water points to the Ultimate One. Always a gift of God, sometimes a portent for destruction, water is found in Israel's birth, in her efforts to call forth the messianic age through Torah study and, finally, as a symbol of ultimate comfort and health. The life and death significance of water at the Red Sea and in the wilderness draws upon the physical nature of water. No less compelling, however, is the use of water as a metaphor for Torah, or as an image of messianic redemption.

Water has always been significant to me. As a swimmer, a daughter of a woman who drinks water incessantly, a bath lover whose physical and spiritual renewal is often around or in water, I am at home in water. I am learning to be at home in Jewish language, in Jewish time and space. This study was prompted by a desire to explore where the two homes meet, to determine if a symbol significant for an individual would be significant for a people. Knowing that water was a metaphor for Torah, the literary richness of the midrashim in Chapter Four was anticipated. However, I had not anticipated the steady pulse of water throughout the life of Israel as a people, from birth through eternal life. This pulse leads always to the Eternal One. At any point on the Jewish lifeline, we

are commanded to drink in, to live in the waters of Torah, to find sustenance from the Holy One. The promise of water surrounds us. The task is ours to cause it to flow. May there be fruit on the banks of the waters of Torah, as the fruit on the banks of the rivers which will one day stream forth from Jerusalem. May we be nurtured by water, both physically and spiritually, with each drop leading us ever back to the Well of Living Waters.

# NOTES

1. T. Canaan, "Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine," in Studies in Palestinean Customs and Folklore II (1922):16. See also Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period (New York, 1956) V:161, VI:43.
2. E. D. Van Buren, The Flowing Vase and the God with Streams of Water (Berlin, 1933), p. 104.
3. Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 5.
4. Exodus Rabbah, 21:8.
5. Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 3.
6. Perhaps on a less humorous note, this is reflected in the perception of Egypt as a place of dark sexuality, a place where Joseph was tempted, yet resisted.
7. Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 5. See also Tanhuma Buber, Beshallah 10. See also Avot de Rabbi Natán, chapter 33. See also Midrash Tehilim 114:7.
8. Numbers Rabbah 19:25. See also Tanhuma Buber, Huqat 64:47.
9. Numbers Rabbah 19:26.
10. T. Canaan, "Haunted Springs", p. 16.
11. Jacob Z. Lauderbach, "Tashlik", Rabbinic Essays (Cincinnati, 1951), pp. 299-436.
12. "Midrash Between Water and Water", in Batei Midrashot, ed. A. J. Wertheimer, (Jerusalem, 1953), II:99.
13. For another example of the interface between merit and actions in providing or withholding water, see Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah, 12.
14. Tanhuma haNidpas, Bamidbar 2.
15. "Seder 'Araqim" in Osar Midrashim, ed. J. D. Eisenstein. (New York, 1918), I:71b.
16. Philip Birnbaum, haSiddur haShalem (New York, 1949), p. 634.
17. Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha, trans. Hilda Rosner, (New York, 1951).
18. James Joyce, Ulysses (New York, 1946).
19. Carl Jung, "Symbols of Transformation", The Collected Works of Carl Jung (Princeton, 1956) V:218, 219.

NOTES (continued)

20. Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Vayissa 1. See also Genesis Rabbah 54:1. See also Tanhuma haNidpas, Bereshit 1. See also Tanhuma haNidpas, Ki Tavo 3. See also Song of Songs Rabbah 1:2:3. See also Midrash Tehilim 1:3. See also Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah 2.

21. Tanhuma haNidpas, Ki Tavo 3. See also Sifrei Devarim, Pisqa 44. See also Midrash Tehilim 1:3.

22. While one thinks of words flowing from the mouth or the pen, here, the words of Torah flow like milk from a mother's breast. This image suggests a bonding between mother and child--between God and Israel--stronger than the legal form by which we refer to it. Furthermore, the reason that God provides water in the wilderness is so that "Torah will be mixed in Israel's body." (See Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishma'el, Beshallah 1.) This suggests a direct connection between the food and drink which enables us to grow, and Torah, which enables us to grow. I am grateful to Rabbi Norman Cohen for drawing my attention to this word play.

23. See below, p.72 for a fuller treatment of Rabbi 'Aqiva's road to Torah.

24. See Deuteronomy 5:1-3.

25. Meg Christian and Holly Near, "The Rock Will Wear Away", Album Notes to Face the Music by Meg Christian (Los Angeles, Olivia Records, 1977).

26. Avot de Rabbi Natan, chapter 44.

27. See Micah 7:9 for an admission that Israel deserves the indignation which she suffers, and an assurance that God will ultimately save Israel.



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