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The Effect of Suffering on the Concept of God in Lamentations Rabba

by

Charles A. Kroloff

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Master of Arts Degree and Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish
Institute of Religion
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Referee:
Professor
Jakob J. Petuchowski

DIGEST

For a millenium following the destruction of the First Temple, a plethora of suffering visited the Jewish people. These sufferings were a source of despondency and demoralization for the Jew, and a confirmation for the nascent Christian Church and for the numerous gnostic circles of their own authenticity. For the Christian, the sufferings of the Jews bore final witness to the rupture of the God-Israel relationship; for the gnostic, duality or vulnerability of the Divine were implied.

Against such a background, this thesis considers the endeavors of the rabbis to rehabilitate, by numerous devices, the people of Israel. Expostulations such as those collected in Lamentations Rabba reflect such efforts at rehabilitation. Thus, an analysis of the midrashim contained therein engaged us in this thesis.

Our study revealed that the rabbis expounded, in detail, upon the nature of the sufferings, as well as their object and their author. The explanation of past sins as the cause of calamity was found wanting. Other attempts at resolution, such as the theory of "chastisement of love" or "suffering importunes hope", were submitted. These efforts notwithstanding, a number of midrashim frankly admit that a measure of the sufferings is undeserved.

The seeming lack of justification for the sufferings, coupled with nascent Christian and gnostic polemics, undermined

the traditional view of the Covenant between God and Israel. The rabbis consequently directed their attention to a consideration of God's role in the obloquy. We find that God is imputed to have limited Himself in order to circumvent total involvement in the sufferings, to have empathized with His people and to have become dependent upon them for His own salvation. Israel, on the other hand, is portrayed in the midrashim as contesting with God, demanding just treatment in accord with His own Torah. They implore Him to act according to His own nature.

In the course of our study, we learned that the rabbis qualified God and pictured Him confuted in His altercations with Israel. Yet the devices served their purpose. The external anti-Jewish forces notwithstanding, the rabbis, through Lamentations Rabba and similar midrashim, reaffirmed the eternality of the God-Israel relationship. Only then could Israel withstand the attacks from without and the depression from within.

To

My Father,

Whose Life Bespoke

Wisdom and Compassion

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INTRODUCTION

The destruction of the First and Second Temples, the Babylonian exile and the consequent loss of national independence constituted traumatic upheavals in the hearts of those so ill-fated as to live in those eras. These disasters had comparable effects on the philosophy and practice of Judaism oftimes necessitating a wholesale reorganization of Jewish philosophy and practice. The implications of these calamities were not quickly to pass away.

To the heathen, these misfortunes served to prove the weakness of God and the sinfulness of Israel. As we shall see, they leveled attacks upon such a Power helpless to prevent the razing of His own Sanctuary and the enslavement of His own people.

For the emerging Christian Church, Israel's plight constituted adequate witness of God's rejection of the Jews and His subsequent attachment to those who embraced the "New Covenant."

In a word, the suffering of the Jew profoundly influenced his religious faith (his view of reward and punishment and the role of Israel in history, his concept of God, etc.) and it contributed towards molding the attitude of the non-Jew toward the people of Israel.

Reflections on the sufferings of the Jew are present in almost any compilation of Jewish *'aggadot*, but the *Midrash Rabba* on Lamentations is unique in that it is almost wholly

devoted to an expostulation and homiletical interpretation of the misfortunes of the Jew over a period extending from the experience at Sinai to the revolt of Bar-kochba in the second century of the Common Era.

Lamentations Rabba consists primarily of sermons delivered by teachers before their people on the ninth day of Av, when the Jewish people mourned collectively the destruction of the First and Second Temples, as well as other misfortunes that had befallen the nation. Leopold Zunz has discussed in detail the extent to which the sermon, addressing itself to contemporary problems, reflected the thought of the Jewish people during a particular period.[1] Our Midrash includes those themes which the rabbis deemed important for the masses to understand. Statements on ethics, morality and the like occur less frequently in our Midrash than in many of the other well-known collections such as Midrash Rabba to Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus or ~~Pirke~~ Pesikta d'Rav Kahana.

Our text devotes itself more to descriptions, historical and theological, of the relationship between God and Israel, between God and the nations and between Israel and the nations. One may, with considerable justification, presume that the people were being challenged, or were themselves challenging the rabbis, in these areas. That the topics arose not out of a vacuum is clear; moreover, the historical background of the period in which the Midrash was compiled and the bulk of its homilies preached supports this conclusion. In addition, even a cursory persual of the themes of Christian writings

during the first centuries of the Common Era oftimes reveals a striking similarity between them and the early midrashim.

It is our intention to study the effect of suffering on the God-concept of the Jews as reflected in Lamentations Rabba. Following a brief consideration of the historical background of our Midrash, we shall confront the matter itself. When Job suffered, his advisers inquired directly of his sin; thus did the rabbis. Hence, we shall consider the nature of the sins attributed to Israel in Lamentations Rabba and the resultant (or sometimes not so resultant) sufferings which Israel incurs. A number of the homilies will attempt to explain the sufferings without recourse to a philosophy of Reward and Punishment. Some will outrightly question the justice of the sufferings, placing in question the traditional concept of a just, omnipotent, and long-suffering God. This suggestion is particularly interesting in view of A. Marmorstein's proposal that in the second, and third centuries the Jews vindicated their God.[2]

The two theses are by no means mutually exclusive. Marmorstein traced, in broad strokes, the outline of Rabbinic thought during that period. The scope of this paper is exceedingly more limited. We have no intention of identifying our descriptions of a "movement" or "trend" with the mainstream, if there be one, of Rabbinic Judaism in the early centuries of the Common Era. We are examining one important group of midrashim in detail. We are drawing conclusions on the basis of both the internal evidence found in the Midrash and the external evidence such as literary and historical documents

contemporary with it. The extent to which these "trends" permeated the whole of Rabbinic thinking is beyond the ken of this work.

Zunz theorized that Lamentations Rabba was not compiled earlier than the second half of the seventh century.[3] He founded his conclusion, in large measure, upon the reference to Arab rule which was included in the Midrash. Salomon Buber offers cogent arguments for an earlier dating, maintaining that the Midrash appears to draw heavily upon the Jerusalem Talmud, while the Babylonian was unknown.[4] Therefore, Buber places the compilation of the Midrash somewhere between the completion of the two Talmuds. His proposal of a fourth century date has become generally accepted.

Scholars mostly agree that the Midrash is Palestinian in origin.[5] Buber draws this conclusion on the basis of the language and style of the Midrash, the presence of Palestinian names for all the Amoraim included therein and the abundance of tales concerning the men of Jerusalem.

We need not dwell at length on the background of the period during which the homilies were framed and compiled. Nonetheless, some general comments regarding the pressures exerted upon the Jewish community in Palestine are in order. The Church was expanding and she found the bases for her pretentions in the Old Testament.[6] More significant for our study was her claim to succession. She did not look upon herself as simply a new religion, nor did she come to compete directly with the Jews simply because her origins were in

Palestine. Rather, as Marcel Simon so succinctly writes, there was no room for two societies, both of which presumed to be God's Israel, the favored-ones of God.[7]

Writing in the second century and missionizing for the most part in Jewish Palestine, Justin Martyr, in his "Dialogue with Trypho", enunciated the Church's claim.

> "Trypho", I began, "there never will be, nor has there ever been from eternity, any other God except Him who created and formed this universe. Furthermore, we do not claim that our God is different from yours... Nor have we placed our trust in any other (for, indeed, there is no other), but only in Him whom you also have trusted... men have turned to God, leaving behind them idolatry and other sinful practices... we are the true spiritual Israel, and the descendants of Juda, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham... "[8]

(Justin Martyr's statement no doubt served also as a retort to the gnostics who claimed "that the God of the Old Testament, who is the creator of the world, is not the same as the God of the New Testament, who is the father of Jesus."[9])

On the other hand, one must be cautious in dealing with polemics. To ascribe to all Rabbinic writings of this period an apologetic intention is to deny to the rabbis any faith in the validity of their tradition for its own sake. On the basis of the evidence at hand, one would not be guilty of undue sympathy for the rabbis if one attributed to them the further aim of maintaining among their people a reverence for the rituals, ethics and morals of the tradition.

But it is never a simple matter to determine when the rabbis are apologizing and when they are teaching. We shall

have to feel our way in this matter.

The biblical book of Lamentations bemoaned the sufferings of the people. Tisha b'Av was the day upon which the individual experienced, within his very being, those very abuses. The Jew, for the most part, subscribed to some sort of a system of reward and punishment. The Christian did also. Perhaps coincidentally, perhaps from design, such a doctrine served for the Christian to substantiate that the Jews were suffering for past transgressions. In earlier periods, when the Jew did not confront such fierce polemical attacks, he still did not fail to equate agricultural failure with failure to do God's bidding.[10] It is not unlikely that he would have attributed some of his sufferings to earlier sins even had the Christian not been proximate and antagonistic. The presence of the Christian does, however, influence the nature of the sins which our Midrash records, as well as its attempted explanations.

CHAPTER I

ISRAEL'S SINS

What were the characteristics of the sins of which the rabbis in the early centuries found their people guilty? A recurrent theme is the "smugness" or self-assurance of Israel. The fourth century Amora, R. Joshua b. Nachman, said that the "beauty of Israel" has been cast down from heaven to earth because Israel provoked God by taking advantage of the likeness of Jacob which was on his throne.[11] Israel had grown proud over her heritage.

In the same vein, we read that Israel refused to repent, smugly assuring herself that in the event of an attack upon her city, the celestial princes will protect her.[12] In so relying upon her ability to manipulate the angelic hosts, Israel denied her present responsibility.

(Such a reliance upon angelic hosts may have been, in part, a result of syncretism with gnostic philosophy. Wolfson postulates the existence of "some form of Judaized pagan syncretism, in which the original lower pagan deities were reduced to the status of Jewish angels."[13] Such systems portray the God of the Old Testament as an "inferior power."[14] It was perhaps in opposition to such syncretism that the rabbis composed these midrashim.)

Israel was also ridiculed for trusting in the sacrifices which she offered to God.[15] She presumed that she might

provoke God again and again so long as "the tables were set" before God and so long as the sacrifices were offered. One of the proems[16] to our Midrash attributes the calamity to Israel's self-assured declaration, "the vision that he sees is for many days to come, and he prophesies of times that are far off."[17]

Placing great store in her ancestry and her ritual, Israel is reproved by our Midrash for her disregard of the moral law. The Midrash relates in the name of R. Ukba that not only did she transgress the condition of b'rit milah imposed upon her at Sinai, but she committed the moral transgression of rejoicing in one another's downfall.[18] The transgression is related more specifically in discussion of the fate of Betar. The question is asked, if Betar continued to exist 52 years after the destruction of the Temple, why was it finally destroyed? It was because the men of Betar expressed joy over the destruction of the Sanctuary.[19] This midrash relates a fraud committed by the Jerusalemites against the men of Betar who would come up to the Holy City to pray. The rabbis suggest that despite the illegal behavior of the Jerusalemites, the men of Betar should never have exclaimed, "would that my leg had been broken so that I should not have gone up to that corner (Jerusalem)."

Another midrash recounts that the great men of Israel behaved as harts who, in time of heat, turn their faces one under the other.[20] So the great men of Israel, upon seeing a

transgression, turn their faces from it. In the same midrash, a man requests of his friend that he teach him a page of Bible or Mishnah. He responds, אין בי כוח ("I have no strength.") This is a play on the verse in Lam. 1:6, ויֵלכו בלא כוח לפני רודף ("And they are gone without strength before the pursuer.") The pursuer, according to midrashic interpretation, is the moral obligation from which Israel was forbidden to turn away.

The rabbis were often hardpressed to find sins which justified such severe punishment as was inflicted upon them in all ages. They distinguished the guilt of Israel from that of the other nations, declaring that despite the fact that the other nations sin, it is accounted as nothing. But Israel's obligation is great for, as the commentaries add, she accepted the Torah.[21] The implication of this midrash is that if equivalent standards were applied to Israel and the nations, the latter would have experienced sufferings not unlike those of Israel. However, it is emphasized, Israel's obligation was far greater; hence, her consequent sufferings loom more severe.

In each of the foregoing instances, Israel's sin consisted of her unwillingness to acknowledge her own responsibility during the moment at hand. She viewed herself as part of an ongoing process of relationship between God and Israel which, if not renewed by each generation, would nonetheless maintain itself. She conjectured that sacrifices, angelic hosts, the heritage of the patriarchs or the remoteness of

retribution enabled her to disregard her moral obligations.

We have considered at some length the "smugness" of Israel. Two other sins, more specific in nature, are frequently discussed in Lamentations Rabba and deserve closer attention. One is the sin of the Golden Calf; the other, the death of Zechariah.

One of the earliest Christian works of apology is the Epistle of Barnabas.[22] The author contends that the Covenant no longer belongs to the Jews; it was annulled as long ago as Sinai, when the Israelites constructed the Golden Calf and turned to idolatry and Moses broke the Tablets of the Covenant.[23] Marmorstein has discussed the intense interest of the Amoraim in vindicating Israel of the responsibility for this deed.[24] He acknowledges that Christian polemics gave rise to the construction of fanciful legends proving the pardon granted by God to Israel for the sin. He further notes that the defense was

> of particular importance for the Galilean Jews of the third century, since it was chiefly there that, with the acceptance of the theory that Israel was forsaken as a consequence of the Golden Calf, the doctrine of the abrogation of the Law penetrated into the hearts of Jewish-Christians and Jews.

That God was angered with the idolatry at Sinai could not be controverted by the period of the Amoraim. But a new question may have arisen. Were the consequences of the Golden Calf incident to last for an eternity? Was the Covenant of God with the Jews permanently dissolved at Sinai? R. Berekhiah

proposed that the sin had effective consequences only up to the time that the calves of Jeroboam were made.[25] R. Yishmael b. Nachmani extended the limit to the destruction of the Temple. Whichever version one accepts, it is clear that the rabbis were insisting that in their time ancestral sin did not severe them from God. To be sure, the biblical imputation asserting that the iniquity of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate God[26] was in nowise absent from the thoughts of the rabbis. But Schechter[27] rightly notes that it had been offset by the Deuteronomic verse[28] releasing the children from the responsibility of the deeds of the fathers and the obverse as well. The other reference to the Golden Calf in our Midrash occurs in 1:29 where every generation is believed to receive some punishment for the sin of the Golden Calf. It has been suggested that we interpret this in the light of Sanhedrin 102a where a qualification is inserted, namely, that only when a generation is also punished for its <u>own</u> sins, does it bear some of the consequences of the ancestral sin.

Whether this interpretation be accepted or not, the attitudee of the rabbis towards ancestral sin becomes abundantly clear at the close of our Midrash.[29] The text in Lamentations reads, "our fathers have sinned and are not (<u>וְאֵינָם</u>) We have borne their iniquities." By reading <u>וְאֵינָם</u> with the second half of the verse, the rabbis would translate: "our fathers have sinned. And we have not borne their iniquities."

Hence, the midrash comments, "your own (iniquities) you are enduring." The passage provides us with an outright denial of ancestral sin, particularly noteworthy in that it is diametrically opposed to the scriptural verse upon which it is based.

Beyond the above-cited instances, discussion of the Golden Calf episode does not appear in Lamentations Rabba. The emphasis on other sins, the relative silence on the sin of the Golden Calf, the tendency towards denying that present generations still suffer the consequences of that idolatrous act and the Christian polemical accusations that the Calf permanently annulled the Covenant would imply, but certainly not prove, that the writers of our Midrash, to an extent apologetically, laid importance on the behavior of the present generation as the determinant of Israel's relationship with God.

We turn now to a treatment of another specific sin which was given considerable attention in our Midrash, the death of Zechariah.[30] That he was the object of considerable interest to the rabbis was shown by Sheldon Blank in his article, "The Death of Zechariah in Rabbinic Literature".[31] Blank traces the confusion which developed between the witness Zechariah of Isaiah 8:2, Zechariah the prophet after whom the prophetic book is named and who is three-times referred to in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah,[32] and Zechariah the son of Yehoiada "who, according to II Chron. 24:17-22,

was stoned in the Temple at the command of the King Yoash."[33] Our interest is in the last-mentioned.

We learn in Chronicles that after the death of Yehoiada, the king forsook the Lord and served idols. Zechariah, the son of Yehoiada the priest, stood above the people and, in God's name, asked why the people transgressed the commandments of God. He declared that because they conspired against the Lord, he shall forsake them. But the people turned against him and stoned him. When he was dying, Zechariah said, "may the Lord see and avenge."

A number of elements in this legend appealed to early Christian writers, among them the accusation that Israel has transgressed, that the Lord will <u>forsake</u> them, that the Israelites spilt innocent blood and that the dying prophet anticipates vengeance.

The Targum to Lam. 2:20, after repeating the text,

> shall the priest and the prophet be killed in the Sanctuary of the Lord?

adds,

> As you killed Zechariah the son of Ido, the High Priest and faithful prophet in the Sanctuary of the Lord on Yom Kippur, because he warned them not to do what was evil before the Lord.

Early Christian writers were also interested in Zechariah. Matthew 23:34f represents Jesus as saying:

> Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some of whom you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.[34]

Josephus relates the incident, imputing to the Idumeans and "the zealots" the guilt and omitting any reference to future vengeance.[35] The Zechariah tradition was not unlike the episode of the Golden Calf. Christian homilists would make of it, too, an eternal sin for which Jews of all generations were destined to suffer so long as they remained a "stiff-necked people."

The Midrash to Lamentations relates the Zechariah tradition, in one form or another, seven times. In three instances the incident is brought in the name of the fourth century Amoraim, R. Acha and R. Yudan. The general outline of the midrashic expansion of the story is thus: the question is asked, where did the Israelites slay Zechariah? Note is made that they did not treat his blood as was to be done even for an animal. Further, seven transgressions were committed on that day: a priest was killed, also a prophet and a judge, innocent blood was shed, the Divine Name profaned, the Temple Court defiled and it occurred on the Sabbath which was also Yom Kippur. Nebuzaradan, on attacking Jerusalem, saw Zechariah's blood seething, inquired of its origin, and after deceptive responses, the people admit that it is the blood of

Zechariah which has risen up and reproved them. Nebuzaradan then declares that he shall "appease" the sin by slaying the men of the Great Sanhedrin, the Minor Sanhedrin, priestly novitiates, schoolchildren and others, depending upon the version. He hesitates to annihilate all the people, whereupon God, filled with mercy, has the blood "swallowed up (נבלע)".[36] Another version relates that the blood "stopped (נח)".[37] In both instances, a cessation of the "seething" of Zechariah's blood occurred; through the "appeasement" of Nebuzaradan and the "mercy" of the Holy One, the sin has been compensated for; it has been avenged. There is no indication that it shall impose itself for an eternity upon the children of Israel.

In two other instances, the Midrash relates that Doeg b. Yosef dies, leaving a son who, during the seige of Jerusalem, is eaten by his mother.[38] Lamenting before the Omnipresent, Jeremiah asked how He allows the women to eat their fruit, their own children. The Holy One responded, in the words of Lam. 2:20, asking, "shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?" The Midrash adds that this refers to Zechariah the son of Yehoiada. One has the impression that the sin against Zechariah is repaid measure for measure by the crimes of the nations against Jerusalem. A commentator suggests that "we have here cause and effect, the sin and its punishment."[39]

Blank has theorized that "many were the scenes which might have furnished details for the legend and many the deaths

for which an explanation had to be sought."[40] Nonetheless, one feels that once the sin is atoned for, it shall not be visited upon the children forever and ever. The force of the Hebrew words עלג and חנ reinforces this impression.

The other two references to Zechariah[41] in our Midrash do not bear on the question at hand.

The implication of these references to Zechariah is that the sin which the Christian homilists would utilize to prove that Israel was forsaken is shown by the rabbis in the Midrash to Lamentations to have been atoned for, measure for measure, and the last reminder of the transgression, the seething blood, swallowed up into the earth.

Enumeration of the nation's sins was designed to explain the undue sufferings to which Israel had been subject and to thereby provide her with some hope that righteous living in the future would avert a recrudesence of such catastrophes. But the nature of the punishment was so severe and the explanations oftimes so transparent that new questions arose on the part of the people; doubts as to the justice of it all were always present; people inquired whether it could be the work of a just and omnipotent God.

CHAPTER II

THE SUFFERINGS

It is conceivable that such questioning could arise from the sufferings themselves. But it received an added impetus from the gentile environment, particularly during the second, third, and fourth centuries when the bulk of Lamentations Rabba was composed and the nascent Christian Church was evolving a philosophy and program whereby it might gain adherents for the "New Israel".

In the Clementine Homilies, the Jews are accused of having assumed that God was merely good and not also necessarily just.[42] The Jews are imputed to have presumed that God would not punish them for their sins. Further on, we encounter the suggestion that men sin because they are ignorant that they will, without doubt, be punished for their evil deeds.[43] The Epistle of Barnabas had already stated the axiom more generally: "the Lord will judge the world impartially; each one will receive according to what he has done..."[44]

It was not too large a step for the early Christian propogandist to move from his contention that the Jews suffered for their sins and for their non-recognition of the scheme of reward and punishment to the claim that exhausted is the possibility that the Jews will return to their ancient status. Simon suggests that, to the Christian mind, the destruction of Jerusalem just 42 years after the crucifixion

was proof that the Jews will not be reinstated to their traditional station.[45] The time factor alone -- the proximity of "cause" and "effect" -- served to reinforce the conclusion. Marmorstein writes that national misfortune was, "to the Christian, a weapon in their propaganda that Israel is rejected by God (and His love and grace transfered to the New People.)"[46]

The Jews of the early centuries of the Common Era naturally reacted to these contentions. It is our hypothesis that they reacted in two ways: 1) they generally affirmed the middah k'neged middah principle, for not to do so would have been tantamount to heresy. They affirmed it in the traditional ways, such as their treatment of the sin of Zechariah which we studied in the preceding chapter. But in the rabbis' analysis of their sufferings, which we now consider, one detects a tendency, albeit not a mainstream, to dwell on matters other than the tragic destruction of the Temple, which, for the Christian, was proof positive of loss of God's affection. In their consideration of the nature of the sufferings and their source, the rabbis registered certain "minority reports" which suggested that God did not act with a full heart inflicting suffering upon Israel and that punishment measure-for-measure does by no means imply total rejection. 2) While Israel affirmed the concept of measure-for-measure, she simultaneously questioned it. It is not surprising that she did so, for her sufferings appeared to be totally out of proportion to her sins, no matter how self-defacing an attitude she adopted. Israel begins by questioning, albeit in moderation,

the justice of the suffering. We shall see later in our discussion that she dares to question and even modify the accepted nature of God Himself Who allows such seemingly disproportionate distress.

What was the nature of the punishments which Israel lamented? The pollution and destruction of the First and Second Temples and their priesthood and the resultant exile are, of course, recurrent motifs in the Midrash to Lamentations. This was the taunt of the Christians and gnostics; this was the preoccupation of the Jew in the early centuries of the Christian Era. But certain less familiar by-products of the catastrophe are preserved for us in our Midrash and to these we now turn.

Not only was the place of sacrifices polluted and the ritual system of Israel ruptured, but the source of hochmah was cut off.[47] "When Israel was exiled among the nations, not one of them was able to bring forth a word of Torah from his mouth." A few lines further in the Midrash, we learn that when Israel was exiled among the nations, no one was able to remember his studies.[48] A commentary to the first-cited reference[49] remarks that the Temple Mount was the source of all wisdom and that it was in Jerusalem that doubts were made clear.

The same thread is woven in another Proem, the eighth, where the exile is viewed as lamentable, not because "we have abandoned the land, but because we have abandoned the Torah."

T

This latter interpretation is founded on an ingenious g'zerah shavah based on Job 11:6-9 and Jer. 9:18. In the former, the word ארץ occurs together with חכמה. Since ארץ occurs in the latter passage as well, the word בושנו of that phrase is taken to mean בושנו over the loss of words of Torah.

But this is not to imply that Israel was abandoned. Indeed, the very opposite is explictly stated in our Midrash.[50] Based on a passive reading of the verb שלחתי in Isa. 43:14, the rabbis proved that the Shechinah accompanied Israel when she was exiled to Babylonia. Moreover, Jer. 49:38 and Zech. 9:13f serve as bases for the contention that when Israel was exiled to Greece and to Elam, the Divine Presence similarly went with her. At least one other midrash makes the same point.[51]

These individual citations in nowise suggest a mainstream. Surely the more representative description of the types of punishment inflicted upon Israel are seen in the exaggerated description of Hadrian's slaying of eight hundred million men at Betar![52] But even here the slaughter is qualified by the transformation of a rhetorical future in Ps. 60:12, putting into the mouths of the Jewish warriors at Betar the declaration to God, "do not support us and do not cause (our) defeat. For it is written in the Psalm: have You not, O God, forsaken us, and do not go forth, O God, with our hosts."[53]

The last two-cited midrashim appear at first glance paradoxical. On the one hand, Israel boasts that the Shechinah

accompanies her in her exile; on the other hand, Israel beseeches God not to intervene in the struggle at Betar. Does Israel want God's participation or does she not?

Viewed in terms of Christian and gnostic polemical attacks, the divergent attitudes are part of a single whole. Israel was no doubt hard-pressed by gnostics to explain how a just and merciful God could allow such a brutal attack. It could be explained by God's non-intervention such as provided in the Betar example. But with respect to her exile, Israel stood accused by the Church of having been forsaken. God's accompanying her into exile partially countered this attack.

In the same light do we view the above-cited midrash wherein Israel lamented over her abandonment not of the land, but of the Torah. The land had constituted God's promise to Abraham.[54] Underlying the midrash is Israel's expectation of a return to the land. With Israel's exit from Jerusalem, the very source of wisdom has been closed up.

In addition to the evidence presented in the midrash under discussion and its commentaries, the same motif occurs in Lamentations Rabba 5:2 in the exegesis of the verse in Lamentations, "our inheritance is turned (נהפכה) unto strangers." The rabbis contrast the verse with Ps. 79:1, "... the strangers have come unto your inheritance, they have defiled your Holy Sanctuary... " The rabbis and their commentators saw in the strong word נהפכה an illusion to the overthrow of Sodom, to the extent that it did not imply that the strangers were to take possession of either the

Temple nor the Land of Israel,[55] as they did not in the case of Sodom. The rabbis and the commentators were bothered by the possible implication that the strangers were to take possession of the Sanctuary and the Land. During the early centuries, they may have had the Romans in mind; later the reference may have been primarily a response to the nascent Church claims that the "spiritual Temple" of Christianity was the legitimate successor of the Holy Sanctuary of old. Whatever the reference may have been, the use of the Psalm verse suggests that the very holiness of the Sanctuary went out of it when the strangers entered. This is not unlike the "closing up" of the source of wisdom.

But obviously the world could not permanently endure the "closing up" of the source of wisdom. Israel would be reinstated in Jerusalem. Israel therefore did not lament her assumedly temporary exile so much as she did her severance from the source of knowledge. This midrash, combined with the others which have been brought in this section, serves to answer the polemicists who insisted that the recent events were adequate proof of a permanent rupture between God and Israel. Indeed, the interpretation of "our inheritance is turned unto strangers" explicitly denies that any other group has filled the vacuum which Israel's exile created.

One detects that God is somewhat manipulated in these passages for the sake of Israel. This tendency shall be our major concern in Chapter Three.

Continuing with our discussion of the nature of the

sufferings of Israel, we turn to a consideration of the object of the sufferings. Upon whom were they inflicted? That Israel herself suffered cannot be denied. The afflictions and slaughters related in our Midrash testify to this. The Christian polemicists emphasized this.

But in at least one instance, our Midrash suggests that the Sanctuary was the object of God's wrath, but not the people Israel.[56] Ps. 39:1 reads: "a song (mizmor) of Asaph. O God, strangers have come into your inheritance." The observer is confounded that over so lamentable an episode, Asaph recited a "song". In response, the situation is likened to the story of the king who built a bridal-chamber for his son and then overthrew it on account of the lad's evil ways. Yet the son's tutor played on a flute. When asked how he could be so merry at such a time, the instructor replied that he rejoiced that the king's anger was directed at the chamber and not at the son. For a similar reason, argues Asaph, do I sing out, for God has "poured out His wrath upon wood and upon stones and He has not poured His wrath upon Israel." The Midrash concludes with Lam. 4:11, "and (the Lord) has kindled a fire in Zion and has devoured her foundations (i.e., the foundations of the Sanctuary, but not Israel herself)."

These midrashim serve as "face-savers" for Israel whose chosenness extends beyond the physical boundaries of the Temple itself.

Another midrash, while acknowledging that the people themselves constituted the object of the suffering, declares

that it was not the wicked alone who suffered.[57] R. Yehudah and R. Yishmael b. R. Yosi were studying the Book of Lamentations on erev tish'a b'Av which occurred on the Sabbath. They left one chapter undone and, upon returning home, R. Yehudah injured his finger. He applied to himself the verse, "many are the sorrows of the wicked."[58] But his colleague answered, "even had we not been engaged in this matter and such a thing occurred, I would have said this; now all the more, 'the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken into their pits.'"[59] The commentary,[60] reading with the Jerusalem Talmud, explains that the "breath of our nostrils" refers to the righteous who are "taken into their pits" or punished on account of the transgression of the masses of their generations.

The punishment, as we see, affects the good people as well. This is made explicitly clear in another midrash on the verse: גם נביאיה לא מצאו חזון מיהוה.[61] The word נביאיה referred to the false prophets. It was natural that they should find no "vision from the Lord." But the presence of the word גם gave the rabbis additional leeway. As Heinemann notes in his penetrating discussion of the rabbis' exegesis of seemingly superfluous words,[62] no clear-thinking persons would presume that the author of Lamentations or any other work intended the same interpretation of the text as that of the rabbis who constructed homilies upon them. In truth, the more illogical the exegesis, the more the interpretation reveals the temper and thought of the times in which

it was concocted. In the instance at hand, <u>גם</u> is taken by the rabbis to mean the true prophets as well; that is, both false and true prophets had no vision from the Lord. This is not dissimilar to an earlier example where the very source of wisdom was closed up.[63]

The net result of these examples is to suggest that the object of the sufferings was not always as traditionally thought to be. Early Christian writers described the sufferings as visited upon the "wicked Israel". Our first two midrashim suggest that Israel herself escaped the plight of the destroyed "material"; the latter two proposed that not the wicked alone, but also the righteous of the generation were afflicted. It is a mistake to pursue consistency in these accounts. The contradictions are obvious to the superficial observer; one midrash claims that the <u>people</u> themselves escaped unscathed while the other attributes suffering not only to the wicked <u>people</u> but also to the righteous. Yet, if both are viewed as dissents from the stereotyped analysis of the national catastrophes, they have a single meaning for us: on the one hand, Israel suffered not; on the other, some suffered unjustly. In either case, some vindication of Israel is suggested.

Whether these midrashim would have been written in the absence of Christian and gnostic challenges is difficult to say. Conceivably, the people themselves may have, for a number of reasons, raised these matters. A suffering people,

even when not challenged by so aggressive a body as the early Christian missionaries, spawns doubters and seekers of explanation and consolation. On this subject we shall have more to say after a fuller examination of the material.

Having considered aspects of the nature of the suffering and its recipient, we turn now to a discussion of the inflictor himself. We have already seen the extent to which the rabbis strove to counter Christian arguments that a total breach had occurred between Israel and God. On the other hand, present also were the Marcionite heresies which contended that God was not a perfect Creator but was "envious of the world, inspired by evil desires to make man wicked, and is treating him badly."[64] If misfortune came upon the righteous as well, these contentions would appear verified. To dispute such an attribution of evil designs to God was surely one of the factors which gave rise to a belief on the part of some that God was somehow less than totally involved in the mass slaughters which the people had experienced. Even without the Marcionite challenge, a pious Jew, nursed on a belief in a God, long-suffering and abundant in mercy, must have inwardly prayed that it was not God Himself that was wreaking this misery. If it were God, he must have pondered, then all hope is lost.

But the Jew was prevented from carrying to its ultimate limits the doctrine of God's separation from evil. Had he affirmed a thoroughgoing non-involvement on God's part, he would have denied God's omnipotence and made himself vulnerable

to the proponents of gnostic dualism.

The rabbis' approach to this matter will become clearer as we consider specific examples which place the responsibility for the suffering in significantly varying degrees upon God and others. The sufferings brought upon the Jews were, to be sure, never considered as the "whim" of God. Lam. 2:8 relates that the Lord has purposed (חשב) to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. R. Yochanan interprets the verse as signifying that not from the time of the announcement did the Lord purpose to destroy Jerusalem, but, as indicated in Jer. 32:31, from the time it was built, it so irritated Him that He intended to remove it from before Himself.[65] Such a midrash refutes a dualism, but it leaves us with a concept of God that is not altogether acceptable to the sufferer.

Another midrash affirms, as did the preceding one, that God gave careful consideration (He was שקד) to the calamities which He inaugurated, but it was a consideration with the best interests of Israel in mind.[66] He pondered exiling them in the month of Tevet, the wintertime, concluding that they would perish by virtue of the cold. He found Tamuz preferable for the heat of the summer would permit them to sleep on the road and, according to another interpretation, to sustain themselves with the summer fruit of the trees.

The concern of the rabbis for placing the responsibility for the act of destruction upon God is expressed in the words of the prosecuting attorney who asks God whether He shall allow the wicked person to grow proud and claim, "I have

destroyed the house of God and I have burnt His Sanctuary."[67] After the accuser requests that God cause fire to descend from above, the words of Lamentations are recalled: "from on high He has sent fire into my bones."[68] The question presented to God might well have been placed before individual Jews by their gnostic interlocutors. The answer that God destroys is accompanied by the assertion, in the same midrash, that Babylonia was capable of slaying a lion or grinding meal, but surely not the burning of God's Sanctuary.

Just as the responsibility for so great a calamity must rest with the Omnipotent, so Nebuchadnezzar did not gather to himself the "wealth" of Israel by virtue of his own desire or whim. This would be insulting to the Holy One if His people were so mistreated. The fourth century Palestinian Amora, R. Acha is recorded as having said that Israel continually asked,,"since Nebuchadnezzar gathered all the wealth of the world, why has he need for our wealth?" The Holy One responded, "as you live, I make your wealth desireable to him... "[69]

In the same vein, II Chron. 14:11f is utilized in one of the Proems to verify that King Asa only "pursued" the Cushites but found himself wanting strength to actually smite them.[70] For that decisive act, he called upon the Holy One. Yehoshafat begged off from the pursuing as well as the slaying, content to direct a song to the Lord. Hezekiah merely slept through it all, for God was to accomplish everything.

But the question of who inflicts suffering was not so quickly clarified for the rabbis. There were times when it was not to their benefit or even conducive to their peace of mind that God should direct it all. Perhaps as a basis for their claims that man makes himself and as a means whereby they might evade attacks directed against their God for His seeming mercilessness, the rabbis composed a number of midrashim that are relevant to this matter. One is based on the Lamentations verse: הכשיל כוחי ונתנני אדני בידי לא אוכל לקום.[71] The sense of the midrash[72] and the commentary of Wolf Einhorn indicate that the rabbis, for purposes of exegesis, read בידי instead of בידו, "the Lord has given me into my hands" instead of "into their hands". The rabbis comment that man becomes like a slave, indentured to himself. If he does not work, he does not eat. We saw in Chapter One that one of Israel's more prominent sins consisted of her refusal to acknowledge her present individual responsiblities.

This is but one instance where the rabbis placed the responsibility for their actions -- and their consequent rewards or sufferings -- squarely upon the individual. Another example, even more striking, occurs in a midrash based on Lam. 3:38, "out of the mouth of the Most High, do not good and evil proceed?"[73] In the context of the Book of Lamentations itself, v. 38 is clearly rhetorical; this is indicated by v. 37 which asks the well-known question, "who is he that speaks and it comes to pass, and the Lord has not spoken?"

But R. Eleazar, commenting on v. 38, answers the question in the affirmative. Good and evil proceed from man. He recalls that God has given man a choice. "From the hour that the Holy One said, 'See, I have set before you this day life and good and death and evil... therefore choose life that you may live,'[74] good has not gone forth to the doer of evil nor evil to the doer of good, but good to the doer of good and evil to the doer of evil, as it is written, 'and the Lord will repay the doer of evil according to his wickedness.'[75]"

The implication of the midrash is that from the moment that God gave man a choice between good and evil, it was no longer from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil proceeded but from man himself. As interpreted, this is a direct reversal of the intention of Lam. 3:38 in its context. The idea is more clearly expressed in another version of the same midrash, also attributed to R. Eleazar, in Deuteronomy Rabba.[76] There the comment is on Deut. 30:19 itself. R. Eleazar states that "when the Holy One said this (Deut. 30:19) at Sinai, at that same hour (it was determined that) out of the mouth of the Most High good and evil do not proceed, (Lam. 3:38) but of itself evil comes to the doers of evil... "

The tendency which we have been tracing, the partial acquital of God as responsible for deeds perpetrated against Israel, appears in full blossom in a midrash to the obviously rhetorical question of Lam. 3:37 which we have already regarded,[77] "who is he that speaks and it comes to pass, and the Lord has not spoken?" The midrash retorts that there exists such a

person: Haman commanded and the Holy One did not command. Haman ordered "to destroy, to slay and to annihilate all the Jews... "[78] while the Holy One only decreed "that his evil design which he purposed for the Jews shall come upon his own head."[79] The proponents of a dualism might find such a midrash fuel for their fires, but it surely provided the rabbis with an aid in maintaining their view that, despite sufferings, God is merciful.

If the rabbis entertained any single purpose in their frequently witholding God from an active role in the evil of the world and, more specifically, the sufferings inflicted upon the Jew, it was because they, as religionists in all ages, were perplexed by the problem of suffering. There appeared throughout the ages a number of explanations to this problem. In his incisive analysis of suffering as a divine discipline, Jim Alvin Sanders writes:

> Just as the prophets proclaimed the necessity and certainty of punishment for sins, orthodoxy asserted that sins preceded suffering. It was a matter of basic conviction both in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism of the post-Biblical period that divine discipline was provoked by the sins of the people.[80]

In our discussion of sin, we observed the rabbis' attempt, albeit sometimes abortive, to establish the principle of middah c'neged middah which corresponds to what Sanders terms the basic orthodox conviction that sins preceded punishment. But in his discussion of suffering in post-exilic Judaism, Sanders contends that

> there was little or no question that the reason a person suffered and experienced God's chastening was that he had been party to some evil, that in his life there had been something distasteful to God.[81]

However, Sanders' generalization runs contrary to a number of midrashim in Lamentations Rabba which, we must emphasize, are not isolated examples.[82] Surely the attempts of fourth century Amoraim to remove God altogether from a causal involvement in certain sufferings is indicative of their questioning of the reward and punishment scheme which, while admittedly constituting the orthodox conviction, is not the unanimous conviction of Rabbinic Judaism insofar as Lamentations Rabba is part of that body of literature.

The rabbis endeavored to balance an individual's suffering with his presumed sin, but they often were unable to achieve their aim. Not infrequently the underlying question of significant midrashim is: why the suffering?

The rabbis made a considerable attempt to prove that sufferings flow from specific sins in an unswerving pattern of middah c'neged middah.

Implicit in most of the Midrash to Lamentations is the notion of the "scale of merit" which Solomon Schechter defines in these terms:

> Assuming a man to be neither particularly righteous nor particularly wicked, and the world in general to consist of an equal number of righteous and wicked men, the fate of the world may be determined by a single action added to the scale which outbalances the other, and so may the fate of the whole world depend on it.[83]

We observed in Chapter One that Israel's sin consisted of her non-recognition of the pervasiveness of the individual responsibility which Schechter elucidates. Schechter's statement is not to be taken completely literaly. Defining the role of such "seeming exaggerations" in his Darche Ha'aggadah,[84] Yitzchak Heinemann suggests that man's responsibility was emphasized by such homiletical techniques whereby decisive metaphysical reality was attributed to human acts. That the cosmic scales actually tipped this way and that with each human action is absurd if taken literally. However, the meaning behind the figure is that the fate of the world is determined by the sum product of human behaviour and that that product consists of its parts, namely, each individual. Israel's refusal to acknowledge this truth constituted one of her sins.

Louis Ginzberg discusses the principle as applied "to explain the punishments of the Egyptians as 'measure for measure'... maintaining that each plague corresponds to a crime committed by the Egyptians against the Hebrews."[85] One of the classic instances of the principle occurss in Avot 2:6, "because you drowned (others), they shall drown you and the fate of those who drowned you is that they shall themselves drown."

While the foregoing mishnah carries the doctrine of measure for measure to its ultimate, many of the midrashim are truly ingenious. George Foot Moore discusses one of these in which diseases are artfully matched with sins.[86] By

means of biblical exegesis, an epidemic of a dread disease which cut off the breath was attributed to neglect of the study of the Law. Lamentations Rabba contains a number of examples, lacking sometimes in ingenuity, but not in clarity of intent. Israel requests of God that her wrongdoings and her rebelliousness be offset by the "wormwood and gall"[87] with which God has caused her to suffer.[88] The implication is that in the divine balance of things the one may be equated with the other.

Far more ingenious is the midrash which relates that with the very object by which Israel sinned, so was she punished and so was she comforted.[89] Nu. 14:4 relates that Israel declared, "let us make a head and return to Egypt." Correspondingly, Isa. 1:5 states, "all the head is sick." But Micah 2:13 comforts them, "and their king has passed on before them and the Lord is at their head." Just as "head" appears in passages of transgression, punishment and comfort, so do the ear, eye, nose, mouth, tongue, heart, hand, foot and other descriptive words.

Among the vaguer attempts to equate suffering with sin is the midrash in which the rabbis note that God, in causing Israel to suffer, is described as כאויב, like an enemy.[90] He was only similar to an enemy, hence he did not inflict punishment absolutely, as would a true enemy. Indeed, state the rabbis, the punishment fits the crime, for Israel did not go to the extreme in her rebellion; the people were _____ כמתאוננים, as murmurers.

The rabbis extended the principle by applying it to the other nations as well. The sins of the Ammonites and the Moabites were, according to one midrash, recorded in four places. Correspondingly, four prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zephaniah sealed the doom of those four peoples.[91]

The theme of "reward and punishment" recurred again and again. Often, however, the relationship between sin and suffering was not as perspicuous as the rabbis desired and they frequently resorted to more vague equations. A midrash brought in the name of "the rabbis" declares that the Book of Lamentations was more beneficial for Israel than the forty years during which Jeremiah prophesied against them.[92] The listener inquires, "how is this (that a description of intense national and personal suffering is more to be desired than admonitions founded on moral truths, etc.)?" The response is revealing: for on the day that God destroyed the Sanctuary, Israel received <u>ציפורי שלימה</u>, full settlement, for her transgressions. In the same midrash, redemption is said to have occurred not through Moses' 40 years of inveighing against Israel, but by means of Pharaoh's authorization of persecutions against Israel, for through the latter did Israel obtain redemption.

The form of the above cited statements ~~are~~ is the same; in both instances, forty years of inveighing against Israel are deemed less beneficial for her than persecutions imposed from without. Nonetheless, a significant distinction exists. In the former instance, involving the Book of Lamentations and Jeremiah, the sufferings serve, as they did in our earlier

examples, to offset the transgressions of Israel, measure for measure. In the latter portion concerning Pharaoh and Moses, the sufferings are media to the redemption of Israel. The traditional explanation of sufferings undergoes modifications.

Faced with defections from their ranks, attractions of secular philosophy and polemical attacks of the nascent Christian groups, the rabbis found the doctrine of retribution inadequate to explain all of Israel's sufferings which, by the third and fourth centuries of the Common Era, had become truly multitudinous.

Sanders prefaces his study with eight Old Testament solutions to the problem of suffering: they are retributive, disciplinary, revelational, probational, illusory (or transitory), mysterious (only God has Wisdom), eschatological, or meaningless.[93] He suggests that "the eschatological solution is found often in post-exilic thinking, while the heretical assertions that sufferings are meaningless are discernible in the books of Ecclesiastes and Job."

A study of Lamentations Rabba reveals that while the eschatological motif is present, as seen in the foregoing midrash contrasting Pharaoh and Moses, it is sometimes qualified and frequently overshadowed not only by the retributive explanation, aspects of which we have already viewed, but by a series of other explanations which we now proceed to consider.

The third century Palestinian Amora, R. Joshua b. Levi, was known for his failure to assail the rising Christian sects;[94]

nonetheless, his statement in Lamentations Rabba concerning the function of suffering would have well served the cause of Jewish apologetics.[95] He comments on the verse, "you have surely not rejected us; you have been exceedingly angry with us."[96] He states that if there is rejection, then there is no hope. But if there is anger, then hope is real, for whosoever is angry, is destined to be reconciled. [Such a comment not only rebuked those who called God's anger to witness as evidence of His rejection of Israel, but it softened the blow of the sufferings for the Jews themselves who, by experience, knew that no one remains angry indefinitely. Suffering importuned hope.]

Among other examples of the same idea in Lamentations Rabba is R. Acha's comparison of Lam. 1:6 and Isa. 59:20. In the former, Israel's pursuer is written fully in Hebrew, רודף in the latter, Israel's redeemer is likewise written fully, with the letter waw included, גואל. R. Acha deduces therefore that Israel's exile foreshadows her redemption.

R. Levi, an Amora of the same century as R. Joshua b. Levi and perhaps subject to similar pressures, draws a comparable lesson from the verse אין לה מנחם.[97] Every time that the word אין occurs, he observes, the future is destined to bring that which is denied. So Israel is certain to have a comforter in the future. This exegesis partakes of the common theme in Rabbinic literature which maintains that "three good gifts the Holy One gave to Israel and all of them

came through trials."98

But at least one voice in Lamentations Rabba asserted that the promise is too amorphous. R. Yudan prefaced his remarks by assuring the Holy One that he knows that eventually God will remember the evil deeds of the nations of the world.99 Yet in the meanwhile, he emphasizes, what shall I do, as "my soul is bowed down within me."100 Then R. Yudan recalls the proverb, "while the fat one grows lean, the lean one expires." In effect, R. Yudan contends that the anticipation of redemption far off is no sufficient explanation of sufferings. The people have suffered much and the promises of a rebuilt Sanctuary or national independence are now several centuries old.101 A measure of despondency has set in and it is likely reflected in this passage.

A number of alternative explanations are offered in Lamentations Rabba. One of them is R. Nathan's exposition of the Haman story.102 "Haman did not come except as a reminder (זכר) for Israel, for it is written: 'and these days of Purim shall not pass from the midst of the Jews nor shall the rememberance (זכר) of them perish from their seed'."103 Earlier in the same midrash the words of Moses are recalled, "I will utterly blot out the rememberance of Amalek from under the heaven." R. Nathan's exegesis is explained by Etz Yosef. It is understood that the two verses are related by the use of "remembrance" (זכר) in both instances. The Haman story is to serve as a remembrance of Amalek, as Etz Yosef summarizes,

> The Lord did not bring this matter except that by means of the miracle the matter of Amalek will be remembered for generations, for before the days of Purim shall pass there is read in the scroll (the subject of) the blotting out of Amalek which is in that generation. And there shall be established a remembrance of that which Amalek did to you even in the exile where we will not be able to blot (it) out...

Haman comes not as retribution for the previous sins of Israel nor as the foreshadower of redemption, but as an instructor, a "reminder."

Another attempt to explain the sufferings of Israel is manifest in the comment on the verse, "therefore is she come down wonderfully." The rabbis proposed that she has come down to trials (לנסיונין).[104] The full significance of the word נסיון is revealed in another midrash, 1:50. Miriam, the daughter of Tanchum, lost seven sons to martyrdom in defiance of the idolatry which the emperor implored them to practice. At the end of the midrash, Miriam addresses herself to Abraham through her son, "do not become overbearing saying, 'I built an altar and offered up Isaac my son.' Behold, our mother (Miriam) has built seven altars and offered seven sons on one day. Yours was a test (נסיון) and mine was an actual thing (מעשה)."

To the mind of the rabbis, a trial was not the real thing. While Miriam's misfortunes partook of actuality, the rabbis explained the sufferings in the first-mentioned midrash, 1:36, as a test, neither retributive nor eschatological. Conceivably, they envisioned some manner of contest between

Israel and God. That such may have been the case is suggested by another midrash.[105] Jeremiah had beseeched Israel to repent before the advent of their enemies. In response they boasted, "if the enemies come upon us, what are they able to do?" (They spoke as those who say,) as it is written, "let Him (the Lord) hurry, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and [redacted] let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come that we may know it."[106] Then Israel assured herself that if a general comes, he will seat her beside himself. Israel then said to Jeremiah, "then we shall know whose word shall be fulfilled, ours or His." When their sins caused the coming of their enemies, they disguised themselves as harlots and the invading officers did, indeed, place them at their sides. The Holy One, by now quite disquieted, asked rhetorically, "shall My word not be fulfilled and theirs shall?" He proceeded to smite the "harlots" with a number of diseases making them repugnant to the invaders. As a result, they became slavegirls or, in at least one instance, dismembered.

A major and minor motif exist in this midrash. The coming of Israel's enemies was a consequence of her transgressions, as it is stated, v'khevan shegarmu 'avonot uva'u son'ehen. This might be termed a "minor motif" in that the point is neither contested nor reiterated; indeed, it is relegated to a subordinate clause. More dominant, however, is the seeming contest in which Israel and God are engaged. The people are not at all persuaded that God's word is destined

to be fulfilled. They entertain the possiblity that their word may emerge supreme. Disguise is regarded as legitimate equipment for the contest. One is impressed that it is no longer because of the past sins of Israel that God inflicts suffering through the enemy, but rather because of the people's present attitude of smugness which disputes God's omnipotence.

Finally, a number of midrashim in Lamentations Rabba either intimate or explicitly challenge the justice of the sufferings. Commenting on the verse, "the Lord has afflicted her on account of the multitude of her transgressions,"[107] the rabbis asked why the explanation (on account of, etc.) was necessary.[108] They respond that one might possibly have theorized that he punished her 'al magen, without reason. Therefore it is written, "on account of the multitude of her transgressions." The answer is totally orthodox, but the question includes a possible response that borders on the heretical. Frequently, a question reveals more than the answer. It specifies what troubles the questioner. Had the text not included the theoretical answer, yakhol 'al magen, we might have deduced it from the question. With the admission of this phrase, how much the more does this midrash suggest that a number of responsible Jews of the period could find no reason for the sufferings.

Even more so, contend the rabbis in a number of midrashim, Israel deserves much better treatment. In one instance,

commenting on the verse in Lam. 3:1, "I am the man who has seen affliction," the Yalkut[109] version places in the mouth of Israel the sarcastic exclamation, "I am experienced in sufferings. All which you request (of me) comes upon me." (The Vilna edition version, if read with Etz Yosef, also yields the sarcastic statement, "what is pleasing to me is also pleasing to you!". This is to say, I accepted your Torah, I did what was pleasing to you, and are the consequences pleasing to me?)[110]

A dialogue between God and Israel follows in which the former maintains that He was the "doer of favors"for He disqualified all other nations in order that Israel might be privileged to receive the Torah. Israel contends, on the other hand, that the other nations rejected the Torah and that she, the last possible recipient, favored God by accepting the Law. Israel brings Scriptural references in support of her position and, in the Yalkut, enumerates additional favors rendered God by her, e.g., she sanctified God's name upon the sea and sang to Him a song. Significantly, Israel emerges with the final word in this midrash. She not only disregards the doctrine of reward and punishment, implicitly denying that her sufferings were due, but presumes herself deserving of far better treatment by virtue of her acceptance of God's Torah when no other nation was willing.

This rebellious theme is not limited to the above cited midrash. In Proem 24 to Lamentations Rabba, Abraham engages in a revealing interlocution with God over the justification

of the exile of Israel and its accompanying sufferings. God retorts that His children have transgressed all of the Torah and, in order to prove His point, beckons the Torah to testify against Israel. But when reminded of the honor accorded her by Israel, the Torah refrains from bearing witness. The same scene is reenacted in connection with the twenty-two letters of the alphabet which had been similarly called to testify. Speaking through Abraham, the rabbis of the early centuries of this era were apparently not content with any of the explanations of suffering which had theretofore been put forth.

The same theme is expressed even more strikingly in the midrash to Lam. 1:21, "they have heard that I sigh... for you have done it."[111] Israel is likened to a lady, married to a king who bid her to have no relationships with her companions. Do not borrow from them nor lend to them, he instructed. The lady's obedience notwithstanding, the king became angry and expelled her from the royal house. She returned to her neighbors, but was not received. Upon her return to the palace, the king accused her of acting impudently, at which she responded, "had you allowed me relationships with them, would they not have received me?" Similarly, when the Holy One rebuked Israel, the latter maintained: "O Sovereign of the World, did You not write in Your Torah, 'and you shall not marry with them, your daughter you shall not give to his son... '[112] If we had had relations with them and intermarried with them," Israel concluded, "would they not have received us? Therefore, 'You have done it'."

Obedience to God's command yielded a large measure of the suffering which Israel underwent. The net result of the foregoing midrashim, questioning the rationality and justification of Israel's sufferings, is to place God Himself on the defensive. Can such variations from the doctrines of retributive, eschatological or instructional sufferings be reconciled with the traditional concept of God? To a consideration of this matter we now turn.

CHAPTER III

GOD

A. The Rabbis' Dilemna

We observed in Chapter One that the rabbis accepted divine retribution insofar as it made man feel responsible for his own actions, at the same time denying the eternality of sin. Sons did not experience suffering as a result of the sins of their fathers. A large measure of individual responsibility was affirmed. We detected hardly a hint of rebellion as the rabbis struggled piously to link specific suffering with sin pursuing a perfect equation on the cosmic balance sheet.

This effort notwithstanding, an intimate view of the sufferings themselves cast new light on the problem. Divine retribution seemed no longer an adequate explanation, the sufferings being so great that, by the retributive principle alone, they implied that Israel had perpetrated inconceivably great misdeeds. This simply did not accord with what seemed to be the facts nor the response of common sense; neither could such a conclusion be admitted in a time when nascent Christianity was utilizing just such arguments to prove that Israel's utter corruption had moved God to chastise, yea, to reject his children. New, sometimes inadequate, explanations appeared. We have considered a number of them, including those viewing suffering as a foreshadowing of redemption, as

an instrument of instruction, and as a test. A significant group of midrashim in Lamentations Rabba suggested that there was no explanation; Israel's sufferings were downright undeserved!

The rabbis then faced several alternatives. They could have contended that the sufferings were not products of God's will and hence did not imply His rejection of Israel. But such an explanation created havoc among the traditional Jewish concepts of an omnipotent God and, more important, it played directly into the hands of the gnostic dualists who would utilize just such evidence to prove the weakness of Israel's God.

The other alternative, which Israel did choose, began with an acknowledgement that God's rule extended over all. But she could not stop there, for this implied that God, perhaps willingly, perhaps capricously, inflicted sufferings upon Israel. This suggested that any meaningful covenant which had existed between the two was now broken. It also demonstrated that God was neither perfectly just nor perfectly merciful.

(Israel herself would not have been so stringent upon her own interpretations, but the Christian polemicists were her logicians, so to speak, drawing every possible pejorative implication from her attitudes.)

Consequently, certain qualifications were introduced. A number of the midrashim in Lamentations Rabba suggest that

God limited Himself. Dominant also is the theme that throughout the periods of sufferings God empathized with Israel and that He "needed" Israel for the fulfillment of His purpose. Israel and God are often engaged in "contests" and, finally, God goes against His own nature to spur Israel's repentance. We shall now consider these qualifications individually and in detail. They reveal the extent to which Israel manipulated her concept of God in order to answer the polemicists, to maintain her own integrity in the face of unexplainable sufferings, and to hold out the hope of redemption.

Except for a handful of scattered passages, the prevailing biblical attitude is that the world is wholly in God's hand, that He controls good and evil.

This orthodox attitude is expressed in a number of places in Lamentations Rabba. Striking is the passage in 1:50 relating the discourse between a Roman official and the youngest son of Miriam, the daughter of Tanchum. The king asked the lad why the Lord has not delivered him as He had done with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who were miraculously saved from the evil designs of Nebuchadnezzar. He responds that Nebuchadnezzar was deserving that a miracle be performed through him, but the Roman is not. Furthermore, if you do not kill us, he declared, the Omnipresent has executioners. There are many bears, wolves, lions, etc.

The same view was attributed to Hadrian himself in another midrash.[113] The emperor was shown the corpses of Jews slain in battle. A warrior boasted that he had killed

them, whereupon Hadrian theorized, if their God had not slain them, who was able to slay them?

Such a statement as that ascribed to Hadrian, as well as the response of Miriam's youngest son, serve at one and the same time to reinforce and undermine the Jewish position. On the one,hand, it refutes the proponents of dualism and emphasizes, for example, that it was God's decision that a miracle be performed through Nebuchadnezzar. In both the above cited midrashim, God remains the central agent. On the other hand, God's "involvement" per se was not sufficient evidence for the Jewish position. If the sufferings were truly unjustified, that involvement might be termed capricious. If the sufferings were justified, it seemed to imply God's rejection of Israel. Neither alternative being wholly acceptable, the rabbis chose a third path; it consisted of an attempt at qualifying God's involvement without denying His omnipotence. They were not always successful.

This approach, which we proceed now to elucidate, was not preconceived in a consistent pattern. More likely, it was a pragmatic response to challenges of the moment. At times, it will appear as an effective argument against omnipotence. This aspect we shall consider later. For the time being, it is important only to note that if the rabbis tended, in their explanations, to leave themselves vulnerable to the attacks of the dualists, at the same time, they fortified themselves against the early Christian missionizing. Consequently, the rabbis preferred to concede a point on the

question of omnipotence in order to further their central purpose, the affirmation of God's continued relationship with Israel.

B. God Qualified Through Limitation

That this relation was in question is discernible not solely from sources external to our Midrash. The ambiguity of Israel's relationship with God was lucidly expressed in the midrash to Lam. 1:1, "(Israel has become) as a widow." Utilizing a number of analogies, the rabbis endeavored to explain what it means to become as a widow.[114] They compared the situation to a king who was angry with his wife and wrote for her a get. But he took it from her and whenever she desired to marry another, he would ask, where is your get? When she sought her provisions, he retorted, "have I not already divorced you?" So with Israel, every time that she desired to worship idols, the Holy One would ask, "where is your bill of divorcement?"[115] Conversely, whenever Israel requested that God perform for her miracles as it had been in the beginning, God responsded, "I have already divorced you."[116] Israel was free neither to abandon her distinct way of life nor to call upon God for protection.

Schechter writes that the father-child relation, or, we may add, the husband-wife association, such as Israel enjoyed with God, does not end when the children sin.[117] This may be the Rabbinic attitude when viewed over a number of

centuries; but periods of crisis and external pressure surely gave rise to feelings of ambiguity such as expressed in the foregoing midrash.

We encounter in Isaiah one of the early attempts to analyze and eventually resolve the ambiguity. In Isa. 63:17, Israel assails God, demanding to know why He "causes us to go astray (תַּתְעֵנוּ)" from His paths. In the succeeding chapter, 64:4, the accusation is more closely analyzed. If we make several plausible emendations, as proposed by Blank,[118] the verse reads, "behold, because you were angry, we are presumed guilty; you hide yourself and we stand convicted."

Such precisely was the situation in which the rabbis found themselves. That God was angry seemed clear through the sufferings. Israel was surely presumed guilty by her neighbors. The first half of the verse pictured Israel's plight. The second half provided an answer similar to that which the rabbis evolved. It might be said that it was because God hides Himself that we stand convicted and not on account of the force of our transgressions.

We consider now the various ways in which God "hides Himself" or, more generally, limits Himself.

By a number of anthropopathetic devices, God does not see the destruction which visits Israel. In Proem 24 of Lamentations Rabba, at the time when God sought to destroy the Sanctuary, He prefaced His action by reaffirming that "all the time that I am in its midst, the nations of the world

will not touch it." God's omnipotence having been affirmed, He announces: "I will close My eyes from (seeing) it and I shall swear that I shall have no need for it until the time of the end." God temporarily relinquishes His relationship with Israel, but it is of His own free will and accomplished by self-limitation, by closing His eyes.

The theme is not a new one in Jewish tradition. God threatens in Deut. 31:17ff. to hide His face and abandon Israel for following after other Gods and breaking her covenant with God. The tenor of the threat in Deuteronomy is one that implies finality.

The theme appears several times in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah.[119] In both instances, it is accompanied by opportunities for redemption; it is not final. Indeed, the temporality of God's hiding is explicitly expressed in one of the verses, "in a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have compassion on thee,' says the Lord your Redeemer."[120] Similarly, Ps. 69:18 beseeches of God, "and hide not Your face from Your servant; for I am in distress; answer me speedily."[121]

In the Deuteronomic passage, God's hiding His face implied that He had forsaken Israel. Perhaps partly in rebuttal of this suggestion, later writers, such as Trito-Isaiah, tending toward the eschatological, view the phenomenon as portending redemption; it remainded for Rabbinic writers to carry it one step further, utilizing the phenomenon as a means by which

God brings sufferings on a people without forsaking them, without doing it with a full heart.

Marmorstein has discussed similar anthropopathetic phenomena, in particular, the tendency to ascribe to God sleep.[122]

In the same connection, our midrash relates that God withheld His "right hand", placed it behind Him, and allowed the invaders to raze the Sanctuary.[123] Schechter writes that the "'right hand' represents the attribute of mercy, which is also called 'the strong hand', inasmuch as it has 'to repress the attribute of justice.'"[124] He further observes that it is the right hand which, when stretched out, offers repentance to the penitent. This midrash serves to qualify God's involvement in the catastrophe without impinging upon His omnipotence nor upon the ultimate possibility of Israel's redemption, which shall come in "the end".

The imprisonment of God's right hand is carried even further in the midrash to Lam. 2:3, "He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy." God acknowledges in the midrash[125] that He has promised in the Law that "I will be with him in trouble."[126] In view of His children's present tribulations, He says, He is with them by drawing His hand behind His back, which the commentator Etz Yosef interprets as bearing the insults of the nations and not taking vengeance upon them, "as a warrior whose hands are bound and is not able to effect his vengeance."

The same midrash continues, in a dialogue between Daniel and God, to once again assure the temporality of the situation by noting that God has set a limit for His right hand. When His people are redeemed, so will be His right hand.

The rabbis pictured God as preferring to be with His children in time of distress, in fulfillment of His promise, than to reveal to the world His power to avenge. God's relationship with Israel is, so to speak, more important to Him than His worldwide reputation. Or, as we shall observe,[127] that reputation may be more dependent upon the relationship with Israel than upon the maintainance of a behaviour consistent with that of an omnipotent.power.

Lamentations Rabba itself contains at least two passages in which the present power or authority of God is in question. They are, to be sure, but a reflection of the polemics of their gentile neighbors.

In one case, God is depicted observing the patriarchs who, with garments rent, had arrived weeping at the gates of the Temple.[128] At such a sight, God laments, saying about Himself, "woe to the King who in His youth succeeded and in His old age did not succeed."

In another midrash God notes that He would have had honor had He not attached Himself to Israel. He overhears the nations of the world as they comment on His past vengeance upon Israel's oppressors,[129] They inquire whether He can remain young forever. The answer being in the negative,

the midrash remarks that they made God old. The proof text is Ezek. 36:20 which the midrash reads in the following manner, "and when He (God) came unto the nations whither they had come, they profaned My holy name saying, if these are the people of the Lord then why have they gone out from the land?"

The Massoretic text to the Ezekiel verse begins with the singular (ויבוא), which commentators traditionally interpreted as a collective verb whose subject is "the people Israel" who have been exiled. The context reinforced this reading. In order to make its point, the midrash under discussion takes the singular more literally, consideringtitsas a reference to God, who Himself goes to and fro among the nations giving ear to their observations.

The traditional interpretation of the text, while also linking God's reputation with the exile of Israel and the resulting observations of the nations, nonetheless maintains an image of God who is less intimately involved in the plight of His people. He does not go about listening to the comments of the nations. The continuation of the Ezekiel passage[130] clearly states that the redemption of Israel shall occur not for the sake of Israel, but for the name of God. The midrash, on the other hand, emphasizes God's regret over His attachment to Israel, implying a desire to annul the covenant, but expressing an inability to do so. At first glance, such a feeling of displeasure on God's part would seem to suggest a deterioration in relationships. In truth, it serves to reaffirm that

no matter what the exigency, the relationship may not be dissolved. Coupled with God's eavesdropping, the midrash serves to place God in a rather degrading position, dependent not only upon Israel, but upon the comments of the nations.

The difference between the biblical text and the midrashic interpretation is one of emphasis. God's reputation as dependent upon Israel is an element of both. Yet from Ezekiel God emerges supreme, using Israel's redemption as a means by which His name shall be reinstated: "but I had pity for My holy name... I do this not for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name... for I will take you from among the nations, and gather you... "[131] However, in the midrash, God is indeed subordinate; His mastery of the situation is in question. One matter, however, is abundantly clear. Israel is not forsaken by God. On the contrary, by virtue of God's joining Israel in her suffering, His own regret over the covenant, and the nations' comments, the relationship is greatly reinforced.

In the movement from Ezekiel to Lamentations Rabba, God has suffered. Indeed, Israel herself can no longer ascribe to her God many of the qualities which had been formerly attributed to Him. But these were not the burning questions of the day. We have discerned that Israel stood accused of having been forsaken. Our midrash refutes such a contention.

Midrashim discussed in the foregoing section served to temporarily qualify God's power, rendering him quasi-passive, in order to reaffirm that Israel's sufferings neither come

wholly from God nor suggest a cleavage between God and Israel. We turn now to a dominant theme in Lamentations Rabba which portrays God as not only passive with respect to the inflicting of the sufferings, but as active with regard to the reception of them. God joins with Israel in her suffering, frequently to the point of empathy.

C. God Qualified Through Empathy

Robert L. Katz has discussed at length the phenomenon of God's empathizing with Israel in the 'aggada.[132] Primarily intent upon an examination of empathy in light of modern psychotherapy, Katz has brought together a host of Rabbinic references which reveal God's active role in the reception of suffering. In a few isolated instances, he indicates his understanding of the "need" of the people for this relationship.

> The Rabbis reflected the aspirations of their contemporaries for a feeling of intimacy and security in their relationship to God and in His immanent presence. The people sought consolation in the assurance that their fate was keenly appreciated by the Divine Spirit.[133]

A student of human relations and not of theology, Katz brushes aside the problem of anthropomorphism which such portrayals raise.[134] Schechter, on the other hand, maintains that he is not "certain as to the wisdom of the allegorical method... " but he is "convinced that the Rabbis hardly understood the real significance and the inevitable consequences

of their use."[135] Conceivably, the rabbis were aware of the dangers involved, as Schechter himself notes in the accompanying marked tendency in the direction of a literal interpretation of Scripture.[136] It is plausible that allegorizing served as the best medium whereby the rabbis might express, forcefully and simply, what they considered to be an intimate relation between Israel and her God.

One of the most characteristic activities of God as pictured in Lamentations Rabba is that of weeping. Commenting on Jer. 9:18, "for a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion... for we have left the land," the midrash inquires as to who is left to weep.[137] Can it be the trees and stone? The rabbis respond that the weeping comes from God Himself.

Another midrash relates that a number of disasters were visited upon the Jews.[138] Three ships full of Jewish men throw themselves into the sea in order to avert the pederasty which awaited them in Rome; the legions of Hadrian and Trajan slew such a multitude that the trail of their blood extended as far as Cyprus. Over each of these misfortunes, our midrash asserts, God wept.

In Proem 24, to which we have already referred a number of times, God laments and weeps when He realizes that His Shechinah had dwelt on earth only for the sake of Israel, and, the latter having sinned, God removed His Presence to the heavens. The angel Metatron entreated God to allow him to weep in God's place. Over these objections, God insisted

upon weeping, threatening to remove Himself to a secret place[139] if not permitted to weep. Metatron has been identified in tradition as the "prince of the world" and "the prince of the ministering angels."[140] He has been frequently viewed as an intercessor with God on behalf of Israel.

A fragment of a controversy between a Jew and heretic which casts further light on the function of Metatron is found in Sanhedrin 38b. A min reminded R. Idit of Exod. 24:1, "and unto Moses he said, 'come up to the Lord'," But if it was God who called Moses, should it not have been, "come up to Me"? The rabbi responded that the word he referred to the angel Metatron who ordered Moses to go up to God. The rabbi noted that his name was similar to God's.[141] The min contended that such being the case, Metatron should be worshiped. The rabbi retorts, "we would not even accept him as a messenger." Although God's name is contained in Metatron,[142] the Jews are implored, "exchange Me not for him". Returning to our midrash, Proem 24, Metatron may have been rejected as a "weeper" because of the danger of idolization of him. But it is at least as likely that Metatron was barred because the Jews of the period were challenged as to their relationship with God Himself.[143] God's weeping was cogent evidence for the rabbis' argument; an angel's weeping was not.

Commenting on Lamentations Rabba 1:27,[144] Buber refers the reader to the fuller version of the midrash, as it appears in Yalkut Shimoni.[145] There the rabbis interpret Jer. 9:16-17,

which reads,

> Thus said the Lord of hosts:
> Consider ye, and call for the mourning women...
> And let them make haste and take up a wailing for us,
> That our eyes may run down with tears...

The use of the first person plural ("for us, that our eyes") serves as proof for the rabbis of God's intimate participation in the sufferings.

> It comes to say that all the time that Israel dwells in distress, so the Holy One is in distress with them.[146]

To further emphasize God's empathy, the rabbis represent the very works of God's creation as similarly immersed in mourning:

> At that same hour, He (God) called for mourning by all the works of creation, as it is written, I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth her covering.[147]

The humanizing of God and a number of the heavenly bodies is carried to its fullest in the opening midrash of the body of Lamentations Rabba.[148] The Holy One inquires of His angels as to the mourning procedure of a human king when a close relative dies. As the angels relate the customs, God responds with an activity which corresponds to that of the human mourner. As a man suspends sackcloth over his entranceway, God declares, "I will clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering." As a human king extinguishes his lamps, God causes the sun and the moon to become black and the stars no

longer to shine. A man overturns his couch; so God overturns thrones. Similarly, scriptural verses are brought to indicate that God too walks barefoot, rends His clothing, sits in silence and sits in weeping.

Not only Israel's suffering, but her exile as well elicits considerable empathy from God. "When Israel was not in the land, He (God) said, 'Oh, would that Israel were with Me, although they provoke Me,' and we have three verses (which serve as proof-texts for the statement)."[149] The foregoing constitutes a "yearning" on the part of God.

A number of midrashim in Lamentations Rabba depict the Shechinah going into exile together with Israel.[150] In one instance, God, together with Jeremiah, is bound in chains.[151]

Marmorstein has pointed out that the theme of God's exile and servitude accompanying that of Israel is wide-spread in Rabbinic literature with "R. Akiba being credited with the teaching that the Exodus of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt meant much more than the freeing of the serfs from bondage. It signified the release of God Himself..."[152]

Surely, the sufferers were comforted, as Marmorstein suggests, by the belief "in the immutable presence of their God." But Marmorstein adds, appropriately, that R. Joshua b. Chananyah, in whose name Akiba's statement was made, "frequently defends Israel and the Torah against the calumnies and misrepresentations" of the Christians engaged in anti-Jewish campaigns.[153]

We have traveled from a concept of a "limited" or "less-than-totally-involved" God to one who actively empathizes with Israel. A number of the midrashim thus far discussed have included suggestions that God's reputation in the world was bound up with Israel's fate. We dwelt at length upon a verse in Ezekiel, used as a proof text in Lamentations Rabba, from which God emerged thoroughly transformed into a tool by which the God-Israel relationship was reinforced.[154]

However, God can conceivably refrain from self-limitation or empathy at any time. His empathy appears voluntary. Of particular interest, therefore, are a group of midrashim in Lamentations Rabba in which God appears dependent upon Israel.

D. God Qualified Through Dependency

The rabbis comment on Lam. 5:19, "You, O Lord, are enthroned forever; Your throne is from generation to generation."[155] They question what the second half of the verse, regarding the throne, adds to the meaning of the statement. The reply, as presented in the midrash, is couched in a rhetorical question, "is there enthronement without a throne and is there a king without a lady?" The midrash was likely intended to imply that whereas God reigned forever, so His throne (Jerusalem or His Temple) and His wife (Israel) are destined for eternal life. The midrash suggests that the King of the Universe is unthinkable without His people, for His kingship is dependent

upon them.

A widespread assumption existed that the Sanctuary was God's. In the eyes of the heathen, it was Israel's as well. In one of our midrashim, Israel notes that God has written in the Torah, "remember that which Amalek did to you."[156] The "you" refers to Israel. But Israel is threatened, refusing to admit that she "goes it alone". She issues a rejoinder to God, asking, "did he (the enemy) do it to me and not to You? Did he not destroy Your Sanctuary?"[157] Israel aggressively challenges God to acknowledge that an attack upon Israel is equivalent to an attack upon God Himself.

God does acknowledge this relationship when He realizes that the removal of His presence results in His becoming an object of laughter (s'hok) to the nations and a mockery (la'ag) to mankind. This picture is clear. We have almost run the full gamut. Whereas the first midrashim which we considered in this paper consisted of attempts to understand Israel's sufferings in terms of the principle of "reward and punishment", we here encounter parts of midrashim relatively unconcerned with the question of justice; they are, rather, feverishly engaged in substantiating the eternality of the relationship between God and Israel.

Not only God's reputation, but His power (g'vurah) is also, to an extent, dependent upon the deeds of Israel. A midrash, brought in the name of R. Yehudah b. Simon, asserts that "when Israel does the will of God, she adds strength to

the Heavenly Power."[158] Conversely, the midrash continues, when Israel fails to do the will of God, she weakens, if it is possible to say (kivyakhol),[159] the strength of the One above.

Both Schechter[160] and Moore[161] take note of the above-cited midrash in connection with a passage from the Sifre.[162]

> "As often," says God, "I desired to do good unto you, you weaken the power from above by your sins... You stood at Mount Sinai and said, "all that the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient." (Ex. 24:7), and I desired to do you good but you altered your conduct and said to the golden calf, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 32:8), and thus weakened the Power.

We considered in Chapter II the effect which the rabbis attributed to an individual sin of man. Theoretically, it contained the potential to tip the cosmic scales of good and evil. The sins were not, however, directly related to the power of God. In the midrashim discussed in Chapter III, we encountered the very thwarting of God's purposes by Israel. She appears to play a major role in the cosmic drama which God, in some manner, directs, produces or perhaps simply creates.

Marmorstein informs us of a sermon preached by R. Abbahu, a native of Caesaria, which was one of the centers out of which came violent anti-Jewish campaigns on behalf of the Greco-Roman civilization and the new Christian communities.[163] Basing his remarks on Ps. 91:15-16, Abbahu, a celebrated Amora of the fourth century, said, "whenever salvation is granted

to the Jews, this means simultaneously the salvation of the Holy One, blessed be He." Marmorstein includes in his discussion another sermon of R. Abbahu wherein "he (Abbahu) proclaimed that this idea of Israel's salvation being simultaneously the salvation of God, is taught in many passages of the Scriptures."[164]

Katz has remarked on this phenomenon as well. "The very sources which support the conception of an identity of feeling between God and Israel also suggest that God's own salvation is contingent upon the salvation of Israel."[165]

We have observed a number of midrashim wherein God is reminded that attacks upon Israel are tantamount to onslaughts against the Holy One Himself and that His might, yea, His very salvation, is in part a function of Israel's actions and deeds. In at least one of the midrashim, God Himself acknowledges the intimacy of the relationship.

R. Yannai, a third century Palestinian Amora, expressed the relationship in commenting in Exodus Rabba 2:5 on a verse from Song of Songs 5:2. The Hebrew for "my pure one" (תמתי) is read by Yannai as "my twin sister" (תאומתי) commenting, "(the relationship between Israel and God is) just as those twins; if one suffers affliction in his head, the other feels likewise. So it is with God, if it is possible to say, 'I will be with him in trouble.'" The imagery of "twins" is an interesting one. Its origin is found not in any preconceived philosophical concept which was herein anthropomorphized.

Admittedly, the text lent itself to the interpretation and it would not have been formulated in precisely this manner had the text not been so constructed. But if Yannai's words are viewed in context, sandwiched as they are between two other statements likewise intended to express the God-Israel relationship, they assume more significance. Preceding Yannai's words, Israel is described as having attached themselves (נתמר) to God at Sinai when they affirmed that "all that the Lord has spoken will we do... "[166] This portion of the midrash recalls the establishment of the covenant and casts light, in particular, upon Israel's obligation.

The passage following Yannai discusses the Psalm verse, "I will be with him in trouble," which Yannai brought as evidence for his comments. The midrash which succeeded him, however, derived from it the meaning that when in trouble, Israel calls only upon God. This is a totally diffent emphasis.

In light of the forgoing comparisons, Yannai's comments serve to denote that God and Israel are bound together not only because Israel has obligated herself or that Israel calls only upon God, but because God feels everything which Israel feels. The midrash concludes with God's affirming to Moses that He is "a partner" (shutof) with Israel in her troubles.

Yannai's exegesis, as contrasted with those preceding and following him, graphically illustrates the distance we have traveled. Israel attempted an explanation of her sufferings, but found it, to an extent, wanting. Her covenant

relationship with God threatened from within and without, she found it frequently necessary to reaffirm that God limits Himself so as not to be involved in afflictions of Israel. He empathizes with His people, yea, He is even dependent upon them as a twin or a partner is dependent upon his counterpart.

In our discussion of the varied explanations for the sufferings of Israel, we observed that a number of midrashim denied any justification for the misfortunes. Our examination of the concept of God has, thus far, dealt with a number of qualifications attributed to God in order to maintain the substantiality of the God-Israel relation. God's omnipotence has suffered in the process, while He has become increasingly endowed with human emotions. To this point, the "rightness" of God's activities has not been questioned. Empathy, self-limitation and dependence may have been difficult to explain to the gnostic, but the rabbis found them "just." However, the rabbis did, in a measure, question the justification of the sufferings, so God Himself did not evade this attack.

E. God Reminded and Challenged

A number of midrashim suggest that God must be reminded and challenged. Indeed, He must be told, in no uncertain terms, that He has acted contrary to His very nature.

A not uncommon tradition in rabbinic literature is the institution of "those who remind" (מזכירים). In the tractate Sotah,[167] the rabbis commented on the passage,

"awake (_'urah_), why do You sleep, O Lord? Arouse Yourself, do not cast us off forever."[168] The Talmud asks who were the arousers (_m'or'rim_). We learn that during the time of Hyrcanus there existed an institution of awakeners of God.

In Trito-Isaiah we encounter a comparable activity. The demanding prophet establishes watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem.[169] Their function is to remind the Lord. Blank terms Ch. 62-63 the Promethean element in Isaiah, for "hope has become a contest."

That God must be accused and reminded is a common theme in _Lamentations Rabba_. When the Temple was destroyed, the prosecutor or accuser leaped before God to remind Him that the enemy will boast of having destroyed God's house.[170]

The bulk of the lengthy twenty-fourth Proem to _Lamentations Rabba_ consists of a dramatic contention between God and Israel's defenders, the Ministering Angels, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and Rachel. The Angels ask God how He has allowed the highways to lie waste, the cities despised, yea, the covenant broken![171] The rupture of the covenant is all the more amazing, insist the angels, in light of the fact that it was the through the covenant with Abraham that the world was settled and God's greatness acknowledged in heaven and earth! Abraham's binding of Isaac is offered as further evidence of Israel's right to mercy. God relents only after Rachel reveals the extent to which she protected her sister from shame and refused to be consumed by jealousy on the night that Jacob

was deceived into marrying Leah. If I, a frail human, can so behave, argues Rachel, why must God be jealous of idolatry, causing His children to suffer exile?

If Ch. 62-63, be termed the Promethean element in Isaiah, then Proem 24 is its counterpart in Lamentations Rabba. The rabbis, speaking through their ancestors, strive not to justify the sufferings, but to contend with God, offering reasons for Israel's salvation.

Returning to Isaiah, the laudation of God in 63:7-14 is not solely innocent praise. Rather, God has given us reason to put our faith in Him; He must not be fickle.

> ...God Himself has, so to speak, restricted His own freedom. Once in the past, when He chose Abraham and the seed of Abraham forever, God exercised His freedom -- and in doing so limited that same freedom henceforth.
>
> ...they could have respect only for a God whose word was sure.[172]

Blank notes that by the time of the Trito-Isaiah, "the doctrine of the covenant has wholly recovered from the challenge of the first Isaiah, and Amos, and Micah... That 'God is with us' is beyond all question... "

But as Israel engages in a "contest" with God, a new argument emerges. It is one which "Abraham proposes, which God accepts as valid, and which all but saves Sodom."[173] "Shall the judge of all the earth not do justice."[174] God must not go against His nature. This He did in permitting certain of the sufferings inflicted upon Israel. To this

extent, states the midrash explicitly, He was wrong. R. Isaac reminded God that while Israel is subject to forgetfulness, God is supposedly not.[175] Therefore, he contends, the Psalm verse, "remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem,"[176] must be invoked. Fickleness is unbecoming to God. Moreover, it is contrary to His nature to be forgetful.

R. Berekhiah notes that the Egyptians, who had been termed asses, were accorded a burial.[177] But to His own children, Israel, He granted no burial. It is for this reason, states the rabbi, that they cried: "which is not according to your law."[178]

At least one other midrash in Lamentations Rabba accuses God of allowing misfortunes which not only inflict grave suffering, but are directly contrary to the law of the Torah.[179] Lev. 22:28 reads, "Whether it be a cow or ewe, you shall not kill it and its young both in one day." Moses describes the scene when the wicked Chaldeans slaughtered a son in the presence of his mother. He maintains that God stands accused, for while many mothers and sons were slain, God remained silent.[180]

Another midrash[181] accuses God of promising to spare the righteous in the destruction of Jerusalem, as it is written: "go through the city after him and smite; ... but do not approach any man who has the tav upon him; and begin at My Sanctuary."[182] The rabbis and their commentators read this

verse as protecting the righteous ones. How is it possible, they ask, that the enemies "begin at the elders that were before the house"? The prophets cried out, "will you destroy all the remnant of Israel?"[183] The remnant is none other than the righteous, state the rabbis. God has gone against His word. "The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob."[184]

In Buber's edition,[185] as in the Vilna version, a "prosecutor" argues with God that Israel has given over none of her men for the sanctification of His name; hence, he concludes, she has none deserving of protection. In Buber's edition alone, God states that the prosecutor has taught well and God Himself concludes that the elders shall perish first. In the Vilna edition, R. Abba reads not "and begin at My Sanctuary (ולמקדשי),"but rather, "and begin with My sanctified ones (ולמקודשי)." While they are not termed "sanctified ones" in the Buber edition and the rabbinic "emendation" is missing therein, the conclusion may still be drawn -- God has promised well and gone against His word!

Blank has pointed to the presence of this theme in "the thinking of the biblical man."[186]

> A promise is a promise, they [pre-exilic prophets] insisted; a commitment is a commitment. God can no more repudiate a promise than He can be unjust. He cannot be capricious. Constancy is the very essence of God.

Blank further suggests that the pre-exilic prophets imposed another limitation on God, His justice, "which is so much a part of His nature that it limits His freedom."[187] Our consideration of Rabbinic thought has increasingly revealed that such restrictions are placed upon God in later times only when they served to meet the exigencies of the hour. The demand for consistency on God's part was merely a "device", as becomes abundantly clear in the following observation.

The expectation that God should act according to His nature serves to support the argument that God must pardon Israel. It is argued in the name of R. Yosef that Israel's having "transgressed and rebelled"[188] is not surprising, for such is her nature! But God "has not pardoned" and this is contrary to His nature.[189]

The above example notwithstanding, at least one midrash in Lamentations Rabba proposes precisely the opposite. It suggests that in order to extend mercy, God compromises with Himself.[190] Commenting on Lam. 2:17, "the Lord has done what He has 'devised' (בצע)," the midrash reads another meaning for בצע, "compromised". It suggests that while Lev. 26:18 states, "and if you will not yet hearken unto Me for these things, then I will chastise you seven times more for your sins," you should not think that God acts in such a manner. He compromises!

Schechter has observed that "... repentance is so beloved by the Holy One, blessed be He, that He is ready to overrule His own Law for its sake."[191]

The accusation that God has "gone against His nature" was, as we have just seen, useful to the rabbis in arguing that the sufferings experienced were unjustified. They seemed to say that there is no conceivable guilt that would result in mothers and their sons dying together. Such is not retribution; retribution partakes of laws; what we have experienced is illegal; how could God have allowed it?

When the rabbis arrived at the subject of pardoning, whatever consistency had been previously exhibited no longer prevailed. The central concern of the rabbis was the reconciliation of Israel and her God. For this purpose, God may exhibit whatever characteristics He desired -- accordance with His nature or opposition to His Torah. Both phenomena were utilized to convey the belief that God forgives. We observed in Lamentations Rabba 3:__ that pardoning was part of His nature. In 2:21, it was contrary to His Law and required "compromise". So long as the end product was reconciliation, the rabbis achieved their objective.

SUMMARY

Henry Slonimsky has dealt with a number of the themes of this thesis.[192] He does, for example, understand that

> where the suffering is out of all proportion to the spiritual results which ensue; and above all where the suffering falls to the lot of those who do not deserve to suffer... that becomes the most stunning and paralyzing experience of the human soul.[193]

This has been the problem which we have traced. But for Slonimsky, the progressive limitation of God, such as we observed, demonstrates that God is not yet actualized. All of Israel's problems are God's problems. According to Slonimsky, man must yet finish the work of creation. God is potentiality in this world; man's function is to actualize Him.

It was Israel's failure to recognize her ongoing responsibility that constituted part of her sin. This we observed in Chapter One. She failed to understand what Slonimsky might term her "obligation to actualize the Almighty". To this extent, the first chapter of this thesis accords with Slonimsky who writes,

> But in a very real sense the fate of God and of the future rests on the heroism of man, on what he elects to do... [194]

However, our study in nowise suggests the latter half of the statement, "for he (man) is the manifesting God... " Nor have our investigations indicated that the rabbis believed God ontologically to have depended upon "man for His strength and for His failure... "[195]

Slonimsky, on the other hand, has erected a metaphysic

by means of which suffering becomes meaningful.[196] Man and God are mutually related; a polarity of "give and take or reciprocal enrichment" exists. It results "in the slow change and growth not merely of man but of God."

Slonimsky maintains that "there can be no question of our reading a modern thought into an ancient text."[197] Our investigations, however, have indicated that no such metaphysic existed. Indeed, it was Israel who required that her relationship with God be buttressed. God was her device.

The foregoing notwithstanding, Slonimsky's structure is not incompatible with the midrashim <u>per se</u>. Although they likely did not contain his metaphysic as part of their original meaning, a close examination of them may "lead" us to an explanation not unlike Slonimsky's.

The key issue is that Slonimsky, like the rabbis, brings a predisposition to his study: confronted with a problem similar to that of the rabbis, Slonimsky, too, seeks "justification" or "explanation" for sufferings. That the midrash "lends" itself to such a modern metaphysical exposition is, to an extent, demonstrated by Slonimsky. However, that this was a dominant theme, yea even an "implicit philosophy" of the rabbis, is not manifestly evident.

The Midrash may "lead" to an idea or "lend itself" to an exposition. For Slonimsky, it has done precisely that. This is not to maintain, however, that such concepts were ever contained in the original intention, as Slonimsky further maintains.

In our study, we have seen that God's weeping, going into exile and other indications of His "less-than-omnipotence" were devices by which the rabbis retorted to the polemics of the early Christian era which maintained that God had forsaken the Jews. To be sure, the midrashim also served to bolster a discouraged people, long crushed under the weight of foreign oppression.

So when six million Jews are slaughtered, one cannot explain the misfortune by axioms of reward and punishment. Slonimsky found such an approach grossly wanting in modern times as did the rabbis in their age. His explanation still finds us inquiring as he did at the outset of his article: what can we say when "the suffering is out of all proportion to the spiritual results which ensue"?[198] One wonders whether the Hitler era permits itself to be understood in such a manner. Are the spiritual results in any way compensatory for the sufferings? Can we say, with Lamentations Rabba, that God empathized with the six million, that He was with them in their distress? The rabbis depicted God thusly in order to deny the breach in the Covenant. Slominsky would understand that God weeps, for His glory in the world is dissipated. God mourns, for His actualization in this world is further delayed.

The six million died because they symbolized, if they did not acknowledge, allegiance to powers more exalted than local loyalties. The Jews' ultimate fidelity has been with

God, a relationship disturbing to a totalitarian. Indeed, the Jews' very martyrdom in modern times often bore witness to their relationship with God, as it did in the eyes of the rabbis 1600 years ago. There is no "justifying" the extermination. Indeed, Job never secured "justification" and the rabbis never fully resolved the enigma raised by their sufferings. Slonimsky's explanation by means of "the tragic-heroic sense of destiny" may be consoling, but it is less than satisfying. While its psychological value may be plausible, its ontological basis is highly questionable.

A Job, yea, a people, contests with God, acknowledges the incomprehensibility of suffering, and then returns to living as best it can. From these experiences there often emerges a new understanding, such as Job secured, of the relationship between God and man. That the rabbis struggled with their concepts of God is clear from our study. Sufferings propelled them into such grapplings and the "New Israel" gave them no rest. The interplay between the Jews and their neighbors and the musings of their own minds yielded new conceptions of the God-Israel relationship that could accomodate the demands of the times. Occasionally, it produced a real contest in which Israel faced the Lord more boldly and, we might, theorize, confronted her enemies more confidently.

Perhaps the signal accomplishment for Israel was her ability to brave God as she did, demanding of Him justice. Only a strong and intimate relationship could bear such

exactions. Israel's questioning may have been proof positive that the Covenant was not so easily dissolved, for it was sufficiently broad to accomodate everything from empathy to altercation.

NOTES

1. Leopold Zunz, Had'rashot B'yisrael. Jerusalem, Mosad Bialik, 1954, pp. 1-6.
2. A. Marmorstein, Studies in Jewish Theology. London, Oxford Press, 1950, pp. 12ff.
3. Zunz, op. cit., pp. 78-79.
4. Ekhah Rabba, ed., Salomon Buber. Vilna, Wittwe and Begruder Romm., 1899, p. 5. See also Hermann L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1931, pp. 218-9.
5. Ibid.
6. Marcel Simon, Verus Israel. Paris, E. De Boccard, 1948, p. 92.
7. Ibid., p. 91.
8. Saint Justin Martyr, trans., Thomas B. Falls. New York, Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948, pp. 163-5.
9. Harry A. Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Church Fathers. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1956, I, p. 575.
10. Haggai 1:9-11.
11. Lamentations Rabba. Vilna ed., 1887, 2:2. (This edition hereafter referred to as LR.)
12. Ibid., 2:5.
13. Wolfson, op. cit., p. 511.
14. Ibid., p. 506.
15. LR 2:11.
16. Ibid., Proem 12.
17. Ezek. 12:27.
18. LR 1:20.
19. Ibid., 2:4.
20. Ibid., 1:33.
21. Ibid., 1:35.

22. Apostolic Fathers, An American Translation, trans. Edgar J. Goodspeed. New York, Harper Bros., 1950. In his Introduction, Goodspeed dates the document ca. 130-175. A. Lukyn Williams places him nearer 100 A.E. (Adversus Judaeos. Cambridge, University Press, 1935, pp. 14ff.) In any event, it was among the earliest epistles and came to be held in high regard in the fourth century, the time in which Lamentations Rabba was composed.

23. Ibid., p. 26.

24. Studies in Jewish Theology, pp. 198-206.

25. LR 2:3.

26. Exod. 20:5.

27. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology. New York, Behrman House, 1936, pp. 185ff.

28. Deut. 24:16.

29. LR 5:7.

30. A definitive discussion of the Zechariah episode is presented by Leo Baeck, Aus Drei Jahrtausenden. Tubingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1958, pp. 215-21.

31. Hebrew Union College Annual. Vol. XII-XIII (1937-38), pp. 327-46.

32. Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:16.

33. Hebrew Union College Annual. Vol. XII-XIII (1937-38), p. 328.

34. Translation according to the Revised Standard Version.

35. Flavius Josephus, The Works of Josephus. New York, A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1893. Book IV, Ch. 5, Par. 4, (III, pp. 113-5).

36. LR 4:16 and 2:4.

37. Ibid., Proem 23.

38. Ibid., 1:51 and 2:23.

39. Lamentations Rabba, trans A. Cohen. London, Soncino Press, 1951, p. 134, (1:51).

40. Hebrew Union College Annual. Vol. XII-XIII (1937-8), p. 341.

41. LR, Proem 5 and 5:18.

42. Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Edinburgh, T. &. T. Clark, 1870, Homily XVIII, Ch. XVIII-XIX. (XVII, p. 286).

43. Ibid., Homily XX, Ch. IV (XVII, p. 315).

44. Apostolic Fathers, An American Translation, p. 27.

45. Simon, op. cit., p. 90.

46. Studies in Jewish Theology, pp. 69-70.

47. LR, Proem 21. (The comment is on Lev. 13:45, ועל שפם יעטה.)

48. Ibid., Proem 23.

49. Etz Yosef to Proem 21.

50. LR. 1:54.

51. Ibid., 1:32.

52. Ibid., 2:4.

53. ואל תצא is read: "and do not go forth with our host," instead of, "and you shall not go forth with our host?"

54. Gen. 12:17.

55. See Lam. Rabba 5:2, including the commentaries of Etz Yosef and Wolf Einhorn.

56. Ibid., 4:14.

57. Ibid., 4:23.

58. Ps. 4:20.

59. Lam. 4:20.

60. Matanot K'hunah.

61. LR 2:13.

62. Yitzchak Heinemann, Darkhe Ha'aggadah. Jerusalem, Masada, 1953, pp. 117ff.

63. See above, pp. 21-22.

64. Studies in Jewish Theology, p. 10.

65. LR. 2:12. A similar theme is found in Genesis Rabba 24:2, wherein God revealed to Adam all of the generations to come.

66. Ibid., 1:42.

67. Ibid., 1:41.

68. Lam. 1:13.

69. LR Proem 5.

70. Ibid., Proem 30.

71. Lam. 1:14.

72. LR 1:43.

73. Ibid., 3:5.

74. Deut. 30:15, 19.

75. II Sam. 3:39.

76. 4:3.

77. See above, p. 29.

78. Esther 3:13.

79. Ibid., 9:25.

80. Jim Alvin Sanders, "Suffering As Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism," Colgate Rochester Divinity School Bulletin, XXVIII (November, 1955), p. 106.

81. Ibid.

82. In fairness to Sanders, it should be noted that he did not include a study of Lamentations Rabba in his investigation.

83. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, pp. 189-90.

84. pp. 60ff.

85. Louis Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1910, V, p. 427, N. 172. The reader is referred to Sanhedrin 90a for closer examination of the phrase [redacted] which he adds, "is of very frequent occurence in post-Biblical literature."

86. George Foot Moore, Judaism. Cambridge, Harvard University, 1927, II, p. 249.

87. Lam. 3:19.

88. LR 3:7.

89. Ibid., 1:57.

90. Ibid., 2:8.

91. Ibid., 3:7.

92. Ibid., 4:25.

93. Sanders, op. cit., p. 1.

94. Herman Abramowitz, "Joshua b. Levi" in Jewish Encyclopedia, VII, p. 293.

95. LR 1:23.

96. Lam. 5:22.

97. Ibid., 1:2.

98. B'rachot 5a. Cf. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, p. 52.

99. LR 3:7.

100. Lam. 3:2.

101. This is not unlike the despondency of the time of the Trito-Isaiah. Cf. Sheldon Blank, Prophetic Faith in Isaiah. New York, Harper & Bros., 1958, p. 180.

102. LR 3:ת.

103. Esther 9:28.

104. LR 1:36.

105. Ibid., 4:18.

106. Isa. 5:19.

107. Lam. 1:6.

108. LR 1:32.

109. Yalkut Shimoni to Lamentations, ed. Salomon Buber. Berlin, Vereins M'kitze Nirdamim, 1894, p. 168.

110. LR 3:1.

111. Ibid., 1:56.

112. Deut. 7:3.

113. LR 2:4.

114. Ibid., 1:3.

115. Isa. 50:1.

116. As written in Jer. 3:8, "I have sent her out and given her a bill of divorcement."

117. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, pp. 52ff.

118. Prophetic Faith in Isaiah, p. 192.

119. 54:8 and 64:6.

120. Isa. 54:8.

121. Further examples include Ps. 27:9; 44:25; 88:15; 102:3; 143:7.

122. A. Marmorstein, The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God. London, Oxford University Press, 1937, II, p. 70.

123. LR Proem 24.

124. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, pp. 322-3.

125. LR 2:6.

126. Ps. 91:15.

127. See below pp. 61ff.

128. LR Proem 8.

129. Ibid., Proem 15.

130. Ezek. 36:21ff.

131. Ezek. 36:21-4.

132. "Empathy in Modern Psychotherapy and in Aggada," Hebrew Union College Annual, Vol. XXX (1959), pp. 191-215.

133. Ibid., p. 197.

134. Ibid., pp. 197 and 201.

135. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, p. 39.

136. Ibid., p. 40.

137. LR Proem 8.

138. Ibid., 1:45.

139. The threat was based on an exegesis of Jer. 13:17.

140. Ludwig Blau, Jewish Encyclopedia, VIII, p. 519.

141. Cf. Ex. 23:20-1.

142. Blau, op. cit., p. 519.

143. Similarly in the Yalkut Shimoni, p. 157, Jeremiah asks the Holy One, "who shall begin the lamentation for Israel, You or the ministering angels?" The Holy One responded, "I begin."

144. Ekhah Rabba, ed., Buber, p. 31b.

145. p. 157.

146. Ibid.

147. Isa. 50:3.

148. 1:1.

149. LR. 3:7. The proof texts are Jer. 9:1, Ezek. 36:17 and the passage under discussion in the midrash, Lam. 3:20.

150. LR 1:32 and Proem 34.

151. Ibid., Proem 34.

152. Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God, p. 71. Taken from Mechilta p. 17a.

153. Ibid., p. 72.

154. See above, pp. 54ff.

155. LR 5:19.

156. Ibid., 5:1; the biblical verse in Deut. 25:17.

157. The connection between Amalek and Edom, the latter being party to the destruction of the Temple, is made through Esau, father of Edom, who was also the grandfather of Amalek. (Lamentations Rabba, Soncino ed., p. 236.)

158. LR 1:33.

159. For a fuller discussion of this term, the reader is referred to Marmorstein, op. cit., pp. 126-132.

160. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, pp. 238-9.

161. Moore, op. cit., I, p. 472.

162. Sifre, ed., Friedmann, Vienna, 1864, pp. 136b-137a.

163. Marmorstein, op. cit., p. 73. The sermon is taken from Midrash Tanchuma, ed., Buber, iii, p. 71.

164. Ibid., p. 74, taken from Midrash to Psalms, ed., Buber, p. 89 and 111; also, Tanchuma, ed., Buber, p. 71.

165. Katz, op. cit., p. 201.

166. Ex. 24:7.

167. 48a.

168. Ps. 44:24.

169. Isa. 62:6, as interpreted by Sheldon Blank in a lecture. Cincinnati, 1959.

170. LR 1:41.

171. Isa. 33:8.

172. Prophetic Faith in Isaiah, pp. 201-4.

173. Ibid., p. 204.

174. Gen. 18:25.

175. LR 5:1.

176. Ps. 137:7.

177. LR 1:37.

178. Ps. 119:85.

179. LR Proem 24.

180. The Midrash to Psalms utilizes the two cited examples in commenting on Ps. 119:85, "the proud have dug pits for me, which is not according to Your Law." The use of the plural for "pits" denotes, for the rabbis, that the young shall be killed with the parent, on the same day.

181. LR 2:3.

182. Ezek. 9:5-6.

183. Ezek. 9:7-8.

184. Lam. 2:2.

185. p. 50a.

186. "Doest Thou Well to Be Angry?", Hebrew Union College Annual, XXVI (1955), p. 39.

187. Ibid., p. 37. See above, pp. 68ff in which just such a limitation is imposed upon God, thereby supplying the rabbis with plausible arguments for their contention that God has not acted justly.

188. Lam. 3:42.

189. LR 3:1.

190. Ibid., 2:21.

191. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, p. 322.

192. "The Philosophy Implicit in the Midrash," Hebrew Union College Annual, XXVII (1956), pp. 235-290.

193. Ibid., p. 250.

194. Ibid., p. 251.

195. Ibid., p. 263.

196. Ibid., p. 274.

197. Ibid., p. 263.

198. Ibid., p. 250.

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