

## G O D   A N D   M A N

I N   T H E   P E S I K T A   D E R A B   K A H A N A .

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Pesikta deRab Kahana is known simply as the Pesikta because it is the oldest Midrash using this designation. An exhaustive analysis of the age and name of this work appears in Rabbi Harry Kaplan's thesis on the Relationship between God and Israel in the Pesikta<sup>1</sup> and hence is not repeated here. One or two additions to Rabbi Kaplan's account may be ~~made~~. As he notes, the Pesikta had been known for some time before Buber's publication from manuscripts in 1868 through quotations and citations in Aruk and in Yalkut.<sup>2</sup>

Strack notes that Buber's edition based upon four manuscripts confirmed an attempt made by Zunz to reconstruct the Pesikta from citations in other works. However, Buber found that some one hundred and thirty five corrections were necessary.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Kaplan pp. 4-7
  2. Strack p. 210
  3. Ibid.

Fixing the date of the Pesikta continues to be difficult. Kaplan notes Zunz's estimate of about 700 C. E.<sup>1</sup> and Weiss' analysis which makes the Pesikta a contemporary of Bereshith Rabbah which Strack<sup>2</sup> places ~~the~~ time of the first generation of Amoraim which would be in the third century C. E.

Strack accepts Theodor's proof<sup>3</sup> that the Midrashim Vayikra Rabbah and Ehah are dependent upon the Pesikta. He further points out that the final settlement of the date is dependent upon discovering when the cycle of Haftarothe for the twelve Sabbaths preceding Succoth was established. This, of course, because ~~the~~ the Piskaoth based upon these Haftarothe are arranged in the Pesikta in the specific order of the reciting of the Haftarothe in the Synagogue.

No doubt, says Strack, the Pesikta does not exist today in its original form. It has been subjected to changes and is a collection of discourses and homilies for special festivals and Sabbaths and hence ~~was~~ used. In living use they must have been subjected to change and constant modification.

As ~~it~~ has been noted above, Rabbi Kaplan's study was confined to the treatment of the relationship between God and Israel in this Midrash. This thesis makes use of other materials in the Midrash

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1. Kaplan p. 5
  2. Strack p. 217
  3. Strack p. 211

and brings out a picture of God and Man. The chapters bring together the homilies and descriptions of: the relationship between God and his world and the men He created to populate it; the revelation He gave them; man's response to that revelation; how man may return to God in repentance and finally (perhaps in supplement to Kaplan's study) the picture Israel creates of her relationship to the Peoples of the world.

The Midrash presents no systematic philosophy. No definitions are given us. The Rabbis dealt with something that was living and vital to themselves and their listeners, something that defied definition. In these homilies, they let down the strict bars that guarded formal belief. Here they indulge their rich imaginations with poetry and gorgeous imagery. The God of the Midrash is human and real. He is spoken of with an intimacy that can come only with an unshatterable faith, a faith that doesn't need to be propped or bolstered. He is not the unlimited, all powerful God of the philosophers here. As we shall see, He is finite, subject to the laws He has created, suffering for the fate of His people, learning from man. He is the Master of the world, but He is the Holy One, blessed be He; and being holy, he is moral, just and subject to the laws of truth. He is finally the pattern for mankind. His holiness is man's example for life.

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We must not look to the Midrash for a legal picture of the Torah. Here we find an intimate, rich, portrayal rather of the influence of the Torah upon men's lives. We gain some of the warmth that the Torah radiated to those who immersed themselves in its life-giving waters. It is not the Torah, per se, that is the concern of the Pesikta, but occupying oneself with the Torah. We read that the scribes and teachers of the Torah will sit at God's right hand.<sup>1</sup>

This is poetry and it is not well to press each homily to find inner consistency or to match one passage with another. The huge canvas is consistent. The picture that emerges is an integral whole; but it isn't a static picture. The Rabbis were not dealing with dry formulations but with the living God.

We must not approach the Pesikta with scientific and academic seriousness. On the other hand, we must not treat it lightly because its homilies, its parables, its far-fetched exegeses, its quaint tales and fanciful comparisons give us a truer picture of love and understanding of God, His world, His revelation and His relationship with man than all the profound studies of philosophers and all the scientific works of academicians.

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1. PK 180a

## G O D   a n d   M A N

Like the other Midrashim, the Pesikta does not contain a systematic formulation of the character and nature of God. This is not the method of Rabbinic theology. On the other hand, each reference to the Holy One, blessed be He, is revealing. The Master of the World emerges as the creator, the ruler, the judge, the compassionate Father and as bound up with the fate of man. God and man cannot be separated from each other. God exists for man and man for God.

Throughout the Pesikta, God is called either the Holy One, blessed be He, or, but not so frequently, the Master of the World. We read that His Name may not be pronounced because,<sup>1</sup>

כל מי שהוא מפרש שמו  
של הקדוש י"ב מיתה

"Whosoever expounds the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, merits death."

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1. PK 148a

He is God through revelation. If He were not revealed to man and man did not testify to His existence, it would be as if he did not exist. The text tells us:<sup>1</sup>

אם אתם עדי אט' ה', ואם  
א' אתם עדי כביכל אין  
אט' ה'

"If ye are my witness, I am the Lord;  
and if ye are not my witness, it would  
be as if I were not the Lord."

God is not remote from man. He fills the universe. He was once remote from man; but since the revelation, He is present among men.<sup>2</sup>

לשעבר הקב"ה מקבל קרבנות  
מזמלעה...ועכשיו הוא מקבל למטה

"In the past, the Holy One, blessed be He,  
received sacrifices on high; but now He  
receives (sacrifices) below (on earth)."

This does not mean that God is no longer on high. He is both transcendental and imminent. The Pesikta compares Him in this connection with the sea.

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1. PK 102b.
  2. PK 1a.



1  
 ומה היה אוהל מועד דומה, למערה שהיא  
 נתונה על שפת הים, וצלה הים והציף,  
 המערה נתמללה מן הים, והים לא חסה  
 כך, אוהל מועד נמלא מזיו השכינה  
 (ואין העולם, חסר כלום).

"The tabernacle was like a cave that was next  
 to the sea. The sea rushed in and flooded the  
 cave. The cave was filled, but the sea was  
 not diminished. So the tabernacle was filled  
 with radiance of the divine presence, (but the  
 universe lost nothing of that presence)."

No place was too small to contain the divine presence and  
 no spot was too lowly to be devoid of that presence.<sup>2</sup>

איר אחת ב' כהנא, כתיב (שמות כה"ב)  
 ונוצדתי לך שם, ללמדך שאפילו מה  
 שתחורי הכפורת אינו פנוי מן השכינה

"R. Aha bar Kahana said, it is written, 'and I  
 will meet with thee there', to teach thee that  
 even the small space behind the ark-cover is  
 not devoid of the divine presence."

גוי אחד שאל את ר' גמליאל בשרי ביה  
 נגלה הקב"ה בסנה, אלו נגלה לו על הרוב  
 אחד, או על תאנה אחת הי"ג אומר  
 אלה ללמדך שאין בארץ מקום פנוי  
 מן השכינה.

1. PK 2b. Text in parenthesis from Buber's note.
2. PK 2b
3. PK 2b

"A certain Gentile asked Rabban Gamliel, "Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, reveal himself in a bush (which is so lowly)? Why did He not reveal Himself in a Carob tree, or in a fig tree. He was answered, 'In order to teach thee that no place exists in the world too lowly for the divine presence'."

God's residence in the world of men is influenced by man and his actions. Israel specifically as God's chosen people can bring the divine presence to earth.<sup>1</sup>

כל זמן ישראל מעצין בבתי כנסיות וברבי  
מדרשות הקב"ה עוצר שכינתו עמהם,

"Whenever the Children of Israel assemble in the Synagogues and schools, the Holy One, blessed be He, 'assembles' his divine presence among them."

More specifically and in more detail, it is explained that the presence of God among men and His departure from the world of men is definitely the results of the actions of men.<sup>2</sup>

עיקר שכינה מתהילה בתחנותיה, וכיון שחטא אדם  
נסתלקה לרחוק, עמד דורכין וחטא, נסתלקה מ"א ל"ב  
דור המבול וחטא, נסתלקה מ"ב ל"ג, דור הפלגה וחטאו  
נסתלקה מ"ג ל"ד, מצרים בימי אברהם וחטאו, נסתלקה  
מ"ד ל"ה, הסדומיים וחטאו מ"ה ל"ו, מצרים בימי משה מ"ו ל"ז,  
וכנגדם עמדו צדיקים, והורידו אותו לארץ, עמד אברהם  
גבינה, זכה והורידה מ"ז ל"ח, עמד יצחק זכה והורידה מ"ח ל"ט,  
עמד יעקב זכה והורידה מ"ט ל"י, עמד דוד זכה והורידה  
מ"י ל"א, עמד קהן זכה והורידה מ"א ל"ב, עמד עמרם  
וזכה והורידה מ"ב ל"ג, עמד משה וזכה והורידה  
ל"ד.

1. PK 193 a and b  
2. PK 1b

"In the beginning, (when the world was created), the divine presence was here below; but when Adam sinned, it removed itself to the first heaven. The generation of (Cain) arose and it removed itself from the second to the third. The generation of the Flood caused its removal from the second to the third. The generation of the confusion (the Tower of Babel) sinned and caused the removal to the fourth. The sin of Egypt at the time of Abraham caused the removal to the fifth. The sin of the Sodomites removed the divine presence to the sixth heaven, and the sin of Egypt in the days of Moses caused the divine to remove itself to the seventh heaven. But to counteract them seven righteous men arose and brought the divine presence back to the earth; Abraham, our father, arose; he had merit and the divine presence came down to the sixth heaven. Isaac arose, was worthy, and brought the presence to the fifth; the merit of Jacob brought it to the fourth. In turn the worth of Levi, Kehoth and Amram brought the divine presence to the third, second and first heavens. Then Moses arose, was worthy and brought the divine presence back to the world."

The most dominant characteristic of the Rabbinic idea of God is the uniqueness and oneness of God. Nothing is permitted to stand which in any measure might bring doubt to this fact. God may be referred to as the first,<sup>1</sup>

אני נגלה לך ראשון, זה הקדמ, דאמרי  
 אני ה' ראשון (ישיה ח"א ד')

"I am revealed to you as first, this is the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is said, 'I, the Lord, who am the first' Isaiah 41, 4"

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1. PK 185b

but this can never mean that any other does or can exist. Even when the world was created, two lights were made rather than one in order to prevent the worship of anyone but God.<sup>1</sup>

למה נבראת הלבנה, לפי שצפה הקב"ה שאו"ה  
עתידיים לעמוד ולעשות אותם אלהות, ואמר  
אם בשעה שהם שנים והם מכחשין זה  
את זה, עושין אותן אלהות אילו היה  
אחד אצב"ל.

"Why was the moon created? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that the peoples of the world who would arise in the future would make the sun and the moon deities; and he said, if two lights exist and weaken each other (showing their lack of self-sufficiency) and still they make them into Gods, if there were but one light, it certainly would be made into a God.

A more important statement of the oneness of God is to be found in the discussion of the opening words of the Decalogue.<sup>2</sup>

אנכי ה' אלהיך, לפי שנראה להם הקב"ה בים  
כגבור עושה מלחמה, ונראה להם בסני כסופר  
מלמד תורה, ונראה להם בימי דניאל כזקן  
מלמד תורה, אל הקב"ה לא בשביל שאתם  
רואים אותי בדמיונות הרבה, יש אלהות  
הרבה, אלא הוא שבים אני ה' שבסני  
אנכי ה' אלהיך.

or that he is apprehended according to men's capacity & station

1. PK  
2. PK 109b

"(God said) I am the Lord, they God, because the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to them at the Red Sea like a Mighty One, waging war; and he appeared to them at Mount Sinai like a Scribe teaching the Torah; and He appeared to them in the days of Daniel like an Elder teaching the Torah; therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, says, just because you see me in many forms does it mean that there are many Gods; but He of the Red Sea is I of Sinai. I am the Lord, thy God."

The Holy One, blessed be He, is the ruler of the universe and power to do all things is in his hands. His rule is not from afar; he is described as traversing the whole domain of his universe in a passage that quotes from Proverbs; 30, 4.<sup>1</sup>

"Who hath ascended up into the heavens  
and descended?  
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?  
Who hath bound the waters in his garment?  
Who hath established the ends of the earth?  
What is his name....."

and the Midrash expounds:

מי עלה שמים, זה הקב"ה, דכתיב בו (מלאכים מלאכי)  
עלה אלהים בגרועה, וירד, שמונת יסודות וירדה על קו  
סני, מי אסף רוח (איוג יצי) אשר בידו נפש כל חי  
ורוח כל בשראיש, מי צרר מים בעביו, (נאמא כות)  
מי הקים על אפסי ארץ, (זה הקב"ה שהוא מחיה  
מתים כמלך יחיו מתים נבלתי קומון) (נשיה כל יוש)  
מה שמו ה' שנאמר את ה' הוא שמי (נשיה א"ב ח"ט)

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1. PK 5 a and b

"Who hath ascended into the Heavens?' This is the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written concerning Him, 'God is gone up amidst shouting', Ps. 47, 6. 'and descended?', 'and the Lord came down on Mount Sinai', Ex. 19, 20. 'Who hath gathered the wind etc?', 'in whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind', Job 12, 10. 'Who hath bound the waters etc?' 'He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds', Job 26, 8. 'Who hath established all the ends of the earth?' (This is the Holy One, blessed be He, who revives the dead, as it is written, 'Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall rise', Is. 26, 19. 'What is His Name?', the Lord, as it is said, 'I am the Lord, that is My Name'. Is. 42, 8.)" 1

And as if this were insufficient to establish the power of God to revive the dead, the Midrash through Rabbi Judah gives evidence to be used to answer the skeptics who question the power of God. 2

ר' יהודה א"א אם יאמר לך אדם שאילו לא חטא אדם הראשון  
ואכל מאומו העץ, היה חי וקים לעולם, אמור לו אתה  
כבר היה אליהו שלא חטא, הוא חי וקים לעולם  
ואשר להיות כבר היה, אם יאמר לך אדם שהקדש  
עתידי להחיות לנצח מתים, אמור לו, כבר היה  
על ידי אליהו, ע"י אלישע וע"י יחזקאל.

" R. Judah says, If someone should say to thee, had Adam not sinned and eaten from that tree, would he really have lived and existed forever? Say thou to him, there was Elijah. He lives and exists forever. And what will be in the time to come has already been accomplished in the past.

1. The text here is quite corrupt. The passage in parenthesis was taken from Buber's reconstruction in notes 90 and 91 on page 5b.
2. PK 76a.

If someone should say to thee, will the Holy One, blessed be He, really revive for us the dead? Say unto him, He has already accomplished this through the hands of Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel."

While the Holy One, blessed be He, rules the world and is the absolute master of all things, His ways are just. He is a God of righteousness and truth; His hands are clean.<sup>1</sup>

צדק, זה הקב"ה דכתיב ביה, כי צדק ה'  
צדקות אהב (גמלים ט"ז) וטהר ידיו,  
זה הקב"ה, דכתיב ביה, טהור עיניו  
מראות נע, (חבקוק, א' י"א)

"'Righteous', this is the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written, 'For the Lord is righteous and loves righteousness' Ps. 15,7. And 'pure of hands', this is the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written concerning him, 'Thou are of eyes too pure to behold evil'." <sup>2</sup>

It is a common practice in the Pesikta to establish some attribute or characteristic of God by making a pointed comparison between His ways and man's ways. The fact that God is truth is thus established when the King of all the world is compared with kings of flesh and blood.<sup>3</sup>

כלום אומות ה' הוא אמת, אבל אומות ב"ד אין אמת, אלא שבעולם שבעולם, חזק ב"ד נכנס למדינה, ובני המדינה מקלסין אותו, וערב לו קולסין, חזק למחר את בונה לכם ב'מבוס'אור מרחצאת, למחר את מכניס את אמת המים, ישן לו ולא עמד, היכן הוא והיכן אמותיו, אבל הקב"ה אין כן, אלא ה' אמת, ויהי י"ט ולמה הוא אמת, א"ר לוי, לפי שהוא אלהים חיים ומלך לעולם.

1. PK 166a

2. The verse cited for 'and pure of hands' has nothing to do with hands and Buber in the note can find no other version.

3. PK 30b

"All the statements of God are statements, but the statements of those of flesh and blood are not. An earthly king visits a province and the people of the province extol him and give him praises; so he tells them that on the morrow I will build for you statues and baths, on the morrow I will build covers for your viaducts. He falls asleep and does not arise. Where is he? And where are his promises? But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so. 'But the Lord God is the true God' Jer. 10, 10. And why is he Truth, because, 'He is the living God and the everlasting King.' ibid."

Again God is compared with an earthly king to show that God is righteous.<sup>1</sup>

ר' ברכיה בשם ר' לוי אמר יודע צדיק נכס בהמתו כספי ידע  
יודע צדיק, זה הקדש, שכתוב בתורה (דברים יג) לא תקח  
האם על הבנים, ורחמי ושעים אכזר' (מסעי ס) זה מנהגו,  
שכתוב בו, אם על בנים רשעה (מסעי י"ט)

"R. Berahya said in the name of R. Levi, 'A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast' Pr. 12, 10, this refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written in His Torah, 'thou shalt not take the dam with the young', Deut. 22, 6. 'but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel' Prov. ibid., this refers to Sennacherib of whom it was written, 'The mother was dashed in pieces with her children'. Hosea 10, 14."

So pure is God, we read, that He even avoids the use of the word, 'unclean', whenever he can.

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1. PK 78b



מצטט שצ"קם הקב"ה שנים ושלש גיבולות בגמור  
כדי שלא להוציא דבר טומאה מפיו, הה"ד  
מן הבהמה אשר איננה טהורה כיוצא בזה

"We find that the Holy One, blessed be He, uses  
a circumlocution of two or three words in order  
to avoid saying an unclean word, as it is written,  
'and of beasts that are not clean' Gen. 7, 8."

Ruler, master of all, established as a righteous and a just  
king, God is also the judge as he assures Israel,<sup>2</sup>

כן הקב"ה אומר לישראל, בני הו' יודעין  
שאני דן את העולם

"So the Holy One, blessed be He, says to Israel,  
My son, be assured that I will judge the world.."

And his judgment is complete over all things great and small as befits  
the master of all,<sup>3</sup>

.... בארבעה פרקים האלו, בפסוק על הגבוהה, בעצרת  
על פירות המילון, בראש השנה כל באי לעולם אברין  
לפניו כבני מרון, בחג טדונן על המים, והללו  
שזטה פרקים יוסב אני לדון דיני ממונות, להעשירא  
להעני, להרבות או למעט אצל בראש השנה זמן דיני  
נפשות הוא, אם לחיות או לחיים, כדאמרינו בברייתא  
דרב ועל המדינות בו יאמר אינו לחרב אצלו ושלום  
ובראות בו יפקדו להזכירם לחיים ולחיות.

1. PK 30b
2. PK 156b
3. PK 156b

"...in these four seasons: On Pesah, I pass judgment on produce; on Atseret, on the fruits of the tree; on Rosh Hashanah, all who enter the world come before him like rebels; on Succoth, water is judged; and in these three seasons, I sit in judgment in civil cases: to make rich or to impoverish, to increase or to diminish, but on Rosh Hashanah is the time of capital cases, for life, or death, as it states in the Tekiatah d'Rav,<sup>1</sup> and concerning kingdoms it is designated which are destined for the sword and which for peace; for living creatures it is determined which shall be designated for life and which for death..."

But the righteous judge is not without mercy and His ears are not closed to prayer.<sup>2</sup> The way of repentance is open.<sup>3</sup>

ואם עשיגם תשובה לפני את אקבל אתכם  
לכך זכות, לפי ששערי שמים פתוחים, ואני  
שומע תפלה, שאני חסיד מן החרקים  
עד שלא אחתום גזר דין ביום הכפורים.

"...but if you do repentance before me I will accept you and I will judge you for merit, because the gates of heaven are open, and I hear your prayers. For I look so long out of the windows sparkling through the clefts (of heaven) until I fail to seal the decree of judgment on Yom Kippur."

Not only is God merciful in judgment but he realizes that absolute justice is not possible in the world of reality. Many times it is stated in the Pesikta,

*Life and ethics:*

*The claims of the moral law deny violence to life*

1. This is the prayer אלה זכור in the Misaf service of ראש השנה
2. vid. p.56
3. PK 156b.

אם חשש את מבקש אין עולם, ואם  
עולם את מבקש אין משפט,

"If it is justice that you seek there can be  
no world, and if a world there can be no  
justice."

Even more startling is the interesting statement that God himself  
appears to violate his own laws of justice in his desire to champion  
the oppressed. Even if the righteous oppress the wicked, he does not  
like it. He becomes the protector of the wicked because the latter is  
oppressed.<sup>2</sup>

והאלהים מבקש את נדף, (קריג'ט' ל' הוא בטם ל' יוסי)  
שתי הקב"ה לתבוע דין של נדפים מיד חודפיהם,  
צדיק נדף צדיק, והאלהים יבקש את נדף, ושע חדף  
ושע, והאלהים יבקש נדף, ושע חדף צדיק, והאלהים  
יבקש נדף, ואפ"ל את חוזר ואומר צדיק נדף ושע  
מ"ם והאלהים יבקש נדף

"'And God seeketh that which is pursued' Ecc. 3, 15.  
R. Huna said in the name of R. Yosi, in the time  
to come, God will seek justice for all those who  
have been pursued from the hands of their  
persecutors; the righteous pursuing the righteous,  
the wicked pursuing the wicked, the wicked pursuing  
the righteous, God will seek out the pursued ones.  
Even where the righteous pursues the wicked, God  
will seek out (for his favor) the one who is  
pursued."

- 
1. PK 139a also all 125a and b.
  2. PK 76a.

The Holy One, blessed be He, especially singles out those animals that are persecuted by others as the ones to be honored as sacrifices.<sup>1</sup>

אֶהְיֶה שׁוֹר נִרְדָּף מִפֶּנֶּא אֶרֶץ וְכֹשֶׁם מִפֶּנֶּא הַזֶּה  
וְעַז מִפֶּנֶּא הַנֶּמֶר, לֹא תָבִיא לִפְנֵי קֹדֶם בֵּן  
הַדּוֹפִים אֶלָּא בֵּן הַנִּרְדָּפִים

"The Holy One, blessed be He, says, the ox flees before the lion, the lamb before the wolf and the goat before the panther. Do not bring before Me offerings of the pursuers, only from those pursued."

God created the world, but that task is far from complete. His constant vigilance is necessary to maintain the world so that the tremendous parts do not conflict. His task is to make the world whole, to bring about unity. The Midrash in discussing a verse from the Song of Songs (3, 11. Go forth, ye daughters of Zion and gaze upon King Solomon) sees not the great king as understood but rather the Holy One, blessed be He.<sup>2</sup>

בְּמִלְךָ שְׁלָמָה, בְּמִלְךָ שְׁהֵלָה  
שָׁלוֹם

"On King Solomon...on the King to whom is Peace."

This idea is elaborated and the word שְׁלָו is interpreted not as peace but as "wholeness", or "completeness".

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1. PK 76b

2. PK 3a. Text in parenthesis from note (Buber).

המלך שהשלים מעשיו בריותיו (א"ר יוחנן)  
 כתיב עושה שלום במרומו הרקיע של  
 מים והככבים של אש ואננו מזיקין  
 זה לזה.

"The King who makes one His deeds with His creatures. (R. Jochanan said, it is written, 'He maketh peace in the heights', the firmament of water and the stars of fire exist side by side and while intermingling do not menace each other.)

But the Master of the World not only rules the stars in their courses and governs men; he also, if we are to take a delightful picture seriously, concerns himself with the intimate doings of the life of men. The famous tale of the Matrona who scoffingly suggests that God has nothing to do since the creation of the universe is here told. She is answered by R. Yosi B. Halaftah:<sup>2</sup>

מזוג זוגים... א"ל הדא היא אף אנא יכולה לעשות  
 כן כמה עבדים וכמה שפחות יש לי ובשעה  
 קלה אני יכולה לזווגם, א"ל אם קלה היא בעיניך  
 קשה היא להקב"ה כקריעת ים סוף... מה עשתה  
 נשמה אלף עבדים ואלף שפחות והעמידה  
 אותן שורג שורג ואמרה פלוני ישא פלונית  
 וזווגת בלילה אחת, לצפרה אתין לגבירון דין  
 רישיה פצוצ, דין עיניה שמיטא, דין רגליה  
 גבירה וגו'

"...He makes matches....she said to him, That is it? Even I am able to do this. So many male and female slaves have I and in a short time, I will match them. R. Yosi b. Halaftah answered her, It may seem easy to thee, but to the Holy One, blessed be He, it is as difficult as it was

1. Ibid.
2. PK 11b and 12a.

to split the Red Sea.....What did she do? She took a thousand male slaves and a thousand female slaves and arranged them in two facing rows and said, this one shall marry this one, and mated them all in one night. The next morning, some returned with broken heads, injured eyes, shattered legs.....etc."

and then the Matrona realized the tremendous task the Holy One, blessed be He, was occupied with. Not only creation is His concern, but everything that happens is by His knowledge and is His concern. Marriage, and the offspring thereof, is important. God's first command dealt with it. It is therefore His providence that governs man's mating which populates His world.

Man is not only watched over and held to account but is also the recipient of God's blessings. When God created the first man He endowed him with wisdom greater than that of the ministering angels.<sup>1</sup>

אדם זה ששני רוצה לבראות בעולם  
הוא חכמן מכלם מלבדך

"This man that I wish to create in My world,  
may his wisdom be greater than yours..."

And Adam proceeded to show his superiority in being able to give names to the various animals. This, the ministering angels were unable to do.

And all the blessings that are showered upon men are acknowledged with so little. In fact, God does not ask for great returns for all that he gives men.

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1. PK 34a

א"ר פנחס, בנהו שבועות שאדם מכבס את  
 כסויו בימות הגשמים, כמה יגיעות הוא יוצ  
 כמה צער הוא מצטער, עד שלא  
 יגובה, והבריות ישנים על בטונותיהן  
 והקב"ה מוציא מצט רוח ומנגבאת  
 הארץ, ואין אנו נוגתה לא אלא  
 העומר בלבד

"R. Pinhas said, Men are accustomed to wash their clothing in the rainy season, and how much difficulty and trouble they have making it dry. Yet, while men sleep in their beds, the Holy One, blessed be He, causes a little wind to blow and dries up the whole world, and we give him nothing but an Omer as an offering."

This is all God demands in offerings, but he delights in righteousness. Acts of righteousness cause Him to increase his blessings. The very shining of the sun is a result of acts of righteousness and good deeds.<sup>2</sup>

כל מה שהבריות מתגדלין מצות  
 ומצט בעוה"ז דיין הקב"ה מזרח  
 להם את השמש.....דיין הקב"ה  
 מחדש פניהם כגלגל חמה

"As much as men increase Mitzvot and good deeds in this world, God decrees for them that the sun shall shine.....God decrees for them the renewal daily of their presence like the return daily of the sun."

These deeds make God rejoice and we are told that in the time to come...<sup>3</sup>

.... הקב"ה לשמח במעשיו של צדיקים...

1. PK 69a  
 2. PK 69a  
 3. PK 171a

"....the Holy One, blessed be He, will rejoice  
in the deeds of the righteous ones."

When Israel obeys the will of God, power is added to Him.  
God Himself derives benefit therefrom.<sup>1</sup>

*God increasing  
through man*

כל זמן שישראל עושים רצון של  
מקום, מוסיפים כח בגבורה

"When Israel does the will of God, power  
is added to Strength."

The righteous too add strength to God by their deeds.<sup>2</sup>

כל זמן שהצדיקים עשין  
רצון של מקום, הם מוסיפין  
כח בגבורה

"All the time, the righteous do the will  
of God, they add power to Strength."

This relationship with man that makes God need man for His own  
development is not limited to the above expressions. The Pesikta  
presents many examples of God actually learning from man. Men  
actually instruct God and remind Him of promises and prevent Him from  
violating His word.

Abraham is a favorite character in these tales.

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1. PK 166b vid. p.  
2. PK 166a and b.



את מוציא עד שלא הביא הקב"ה מבול על  
הסדומים, אמר אברהם לפני הקב"ה, רבון  
העולמים, נשבעת שאין מביא מבול לעולם  
ומה טעם, כי מי נה זאת לי אשר נשבעת  
מעבור מי נתייטי נדש מבול של מים, אי  
אתה מביא, שמא מבול של אש אתה  
מביא, מה אתה מערים על השבועה,  
חלילה לך מעשות כדבר הזה

"You will find while yet the Holy One, blessed  
be He, had not brought a flood upon the Sodomites,  
Abraham said to Him, Master of the world, Thou  
hast sworn that Thou wilt never again bring a  
flood in the world, '...for as I have sworn that  
the waters of Noah should no more go over the  
earth'. Isaiah 54, 9. A flood of water you  
cannot bring. Perhaps then you will make a flood  
of fire. Do not be sly over an oath. God forbid  
that you should do this thing."

The Midrash presents us with a picture of God desiring to mourn over  
the fate of Israel; He has to ask His ministering angels what to do:<sup>2</sup>

אמר הקב"ה למלאכי השרת מלך בשר ודם  
גבול מה הוא עושה, א"ל, גודל שק על  
פתחו, א"ל אף את עושה כן...

"The Holy One, blessed be He, asked the ministering  
angels, When an earthly king mourns, what does he  
do? They answered Him, He hangs sackcloth upon  
his gate. God said to them, I will do likewise...."

And He follows the customs of men completely in His own mourning. And  
finally,<sup>3</sup>

ועוד שאל להן גבול מה הוא עושה  
א"ל מתגבול ומקונן, א"ל, אף את  
עושה כן, איכה ישובה בידך...

1. PK 125a  
2. PK 119b  
3. PK 119b

"...and again He asked them, But what does he (the earthly king) do? They answered, He mourns and he wails. And God said to them, Even I will do this, 'How doth the city sit solitary'."

The Pesikta in another instance points out that God learns to comfort Israel and the Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by observing the treatment Boaz extends to Ruth.<sup>1</sup>

נחמו נחמו עמי, האנוש מאדוה 'צדק ואם  
מעשיו 'שהר גברא יבד' יכ' 'ש אדם  
צד'ק מברוא, אם מעשהו 'שה גבר  
אלא אהקב'ה בועז מנחם, אט  
איני מנחם,

"'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people...' Is.40, 1:  
'Shall mortal man be just before God?  
Shall a man be pure before his maker?' Job 4,17:  
Is it then possible for man to be more just  
than his creator? Can the deeds of man be  
more pure than His? No, says the Holy One,  
blessed be He, Boaz comforted and I shall not  
give comfort?"

And the text explains in detail the comfort Boaz gave to Ruth and concludes:<sup>2</sup>

והרי דברים ק"ו, ומה אם בועז שדבר  
על לבה של רוג דברים טובים וניחומים  
נחמה, כשיבא הקב"ה לנחם את ישראל  
על אהת כמה וכמה,

"...and are not these things an argument a fortiori? If Boaz (who bore no special relationship to Ruth) spoke kindly to Ruth and

1. PK 123b  
2. PK 124a

uttered good and comforting words, all the more should the Holy One, blessed be He (because of His relationship with Israel) come to comfort Jerusalem."

This is not a picture of an infinite deity but of the finite God that our Rabbis understood. He loves His people; they sin; retribution overtakes them; He must comfort them.<sup>1</sup>

אמר הקדוש אנוכי אנוכי הוא מנחם כח

"The Holy One, blessed be He, says, I even I am your comforter."

God Comforts Israel, says R. Samuel B. Nachmeni because He is a Father and a Mother to her.<sup>2</sup>

דרכו של אב לרחם כרחם אב על בנים, נאמר (בבבב)  
 ודרכה של אם לנחם, כאיש אשר אמו מנחמתו כישיהו (בבב)  
 אמר הקדוש, אנוכי עבדך (כרחם אב על  
 בנים) ודאם, כאיש אשר אמו מנחמתו  
 אמר הקדוש, אנוכי הוא מנחם כח

"....it is the way of a father to offer comfort,  
 'Like as a father has compassion upon his children'  
 Ps. 103, 13. and it is the way of a mother to  
 comfort, 'As one whom his mother comforteth' Is. 66,  
 13. The Holy One, blessed be He, says, I act as  
 a father, (like a father having compassion upon his  
 children) and like a mother, as one whom his mother  
 comforteth. The Holy One, blessed be He, says, I, even  
 I, will be your comforter."<sup>3</sup>

1. PK 139a

2. PK 139a. Text in parenthesis from note (Buber).

3. The darshan explains the use of 'אנוכי' twice in this fashion.

This, then, is the picture of God that the Pesikta creates. He is the creator of all things and the Master of the Universe. He is the father of mankind, the redeemer and protector. A finite God, He suffers from His people, shares their sorrows and their joys. He seems to be at times without power, a spectator in the world He has created. He even learns from them not only how to mourn but how to be really just.

The great love that is borne toward him is beautifully expressed in these designations that R. Akiba uses speaking of God in terms of the Lulab.<sup>1</sup>

ר' עקיבה אומר, פרי עץ הדר, נתיק כבוד זה הקב"ה  
 זכתיב ביה, הוד והדר לבשת, נתיק כבוד  
 אמר, זה הקב"ה, זכתיב ביה, כדור כתר  
 יפוח, כסא ע"י אלון עץ עבות, זה הקב"ה  
 זכתיב ביה, והוא עומד בין ההדסים  
 אשר במצודה נזכר א"ח וערבי נחל, זה  
 הקב"ה זכתיב ביה, אלו ללחב  
 בערבות נתיק כבוד

"R. Akiba said, 'The fruit of goodly trees', this is the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is written, 'Thou art clothed with glory and majesty' Ps. 104, 1 'branches of palm trees', This is the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is written, 'The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree' Ps. 92, 13 'and boughs of thick trees', this is the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is written; and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom' Zechariah 1, 8

1. PK 184a

'and willows of the brook', this is the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is written, 'Exalt Him that rideth upon the skies'." Ps 88,5.

Above all, He, the Holy One, blessed be He, as he is so often called, is the great pattern for man. He is just, merciful, patient, full of loving kindness. He emerges a justification of the demand made in Leviticus 20, 26:

"And ye shall be holy unto Me; for I, the Lord, am holy."

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Two types of God, two phases of God — & the one turned toward us in religion is like ourselves; the infinite & natural background is guilt — another God, blind & indifferent to values. The Midrash Teaches guilt frankly the first God

## T H E T O R A H

God revealed Himself to man by means of the Torah. In the Torah, God makes known His wishes and gives man the path to follow to righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

התורה אומרת, באיזה שביל את מצויה,  
בזוכן של עושי צדקות,

"Torah says, in what path am I to be found?  
In the path of those who do righteousness."

The Pesikta tells us that we must not treat the Torah lightly because God, Himself, is the author.<sup>2</sup>

אנכי ה' אלהיך, לא תהיו מזגלגין  
בתורה שנתי' לכם,

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1. PK. 103a

2. PK. 109a

"I am the Lord, thy God', do not treat the Torah sneeringly or hesitatingly because I have given it to you."

And the passage goes on to point out the significance of the 'I'.<sup>1</sup>

אנכי בלשון נוסריקון הוא, אנא נפש  
 כגבית יהבית, רבא" יהיבה כתיבה  
 נעמים אמריה, א"ר ברכיה, אנא נהורק  
 כדילך יאותך, אימא, כשתקבלו עשרת  
 הדברות,

"X is to understand in the language of abbreviation: X.I, I myself, I wrote it, I gave it. Rav said, I gave it, I wrote it, I beautiful, are X its words. R. Berachrya said, X I am thy light, I thy crown, I and thy grace. When? When you accepted the Ten Commandments."

For the Torah was given particularly to Israel. The other nations we are informed were given the opportunity of accepting the revelation but failed to do so. This legend is told in many places in Midrashic literature. The Pesikta version is as follows:<sup>2</sup>

ויאמר ה' מעט בא וגו' ודברים רבים חלמך שהחזיר הקב"ה  
 על כל האומות לקבל את התורה, ולא קבלוה, שם  
 שמעו ודעו לקבל את התורה, עד שבא מיכה המורשת  
 ופירשה, ועשיתי באך ובחיימה נקם את האומות אשר  
 לא שמעו כמיכה ה' ה' הא למדת ששמעו ולא קבלו,  
 בא דוד ונכון עליו הודאה, אתה הוא האלהים  
 עשה פלא הודעת בעמים עוזך נהיה ב' שט  
 אמר דוד לפני הקב"ה פלאים שעשית בצולמך  
 שהודעת את תורתך לכל אומות העולם, שאין  
 עוזך האמור כאן אלא תורה, שגא"ה עוז  
 לעמו יתן (שם כס"א)

1. ibid.  
 2. PK. 200a

"'And he said, 'The Lord came from Sinai'  
Deut. 33, 2. This is to teach us that the  
Holy One, blessed be He, went to all the  
peoples of the world asking them to accept  
the Torah but they would not. Perhaps they  
did hear and did want to accept the Torah?  
But Michah the Morashtite came and explained  
to us, 'And I will execute vengeance in anger  
and fury upon the nations because they  
hearkened not'. Micah. 5, 14. Here you  
learn that they did listen and did not accept  
it. David came and gave evidence also, Psalms  
77, 15. 'Thou art the God that doeth wonders.  
Thou hast made known Thy strength among the  
peoples.' And 'Thy strength' is not said here  
except to mean 'Torah', as it is said, 'The  
Lord will give strength unto His people',  
Ps. 29, 11."

In fact, as we read in another passage, God picked out a special  
time in which to give the Torah in order that the other peoples  
might change their minds and accept the revelation.<sup>1</sup>

למה בחדש השלישי, שלא ליתן כמחון פה  
לאומות העולם לומר, אלו נתן לנו את התורה  
היינו עושין אותה, אמר הקב"ה ואו באי זה חדש  
נתתי את התורה בחדש השלישי, במסל תאומים,  
שאם בקש עשו הוצע להתגיר ולעשות תשובה,  
ולבא ללמוד תורה יבא וילמוד ומקבלו את,  
לפיכך נתנה בחדש השלישי,

1. PK. 107a

Why Israel chosen  
- were all the others  
equally loved?  
difficult + important  
- the yes & the no  
should have been brought  
out more fully



"Why (was the Torah given) in the third month?  
In order not to give the nations of the world  
an opportunity to say, If He had given us the  
Torah, we would have kept it. Look, in what  
month I gave the Torah. In the third, the  
month with the astrological sign of The Twins,  
so that if Esau (the twin of Israel) desired  
to become converted and do repentance and to  
come and study Torah, he should come, he  
should study and be received by Me. There-  
fore, it was given in the third month."

The Torah is considered of such tremendous worth that one Rabbi  
calls it more valuable than the world itself.<sup>1</sup>

כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא לששק  
ימים... אבל התורה ניתנה לה' יום

*as being its  
goal & meaning*

"All the world was created in six days...  
but the Torah took forty days and forty  
nights."

Its significance in the lives of men is all the more stressed by  
its mechanical structure. Not only the laws contained in the Torah  
are important but the very number of these laws is full of meaning.<sup>2</sup>

אבל את בסיס נצטווה תרי"ג מצות, רמ"ח  
מצות עשה, ושס"ה מצות בלא תעשה, רמ"ח  
מצות עשה, כנגד רמ"ח אברים שיש באדם.  
כל אבר ואבר אומר לאדם בבקשה ממך  
עשה בי את המצוה הזאת, ושס"ה מצות  
בלא תעשה, כנגד יסודות החמה, כל  
יום ויום אומר לאדם בבקשה ממך  
אל תעש בי את העבירה הזאת.

1. PK. 178b, 179a

2. PK. 101a

"You at Sinai commanded us to perform six hundred and thirteen commandments; two hundred and forty eight positive commands and three hundred and sixty five negative commands. Two hundred and forty eight positive commands for the two hundred and forty eight members of the body each of which says to man, Perform with me this command. And three hundred and sixty five negative commands according to the days of the year. Each day says to man pleadingly, Do not commit this violation on me."

The Torah not only contains the commands of God, it is called the source of all wisdom and knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

בן הנויה אמר, אם בקשת לבנות  
ואין אתה יודע לבנות, הבט בתורה  
ואת למד

"Ben Hanuya said, If you seek to understand and you do not know how to understand, look in the Torah and learn."

Man may consider occupation with the Torah difficult and laborious; and, thinking of Ecclesiastes 1, 3. "What profit hath a man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun", decide not to concern himself with this labor because it cannot profit him according to the verse. The Pesikta amusingly but gravely assures him otherwise.

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1. PK. 105a

אמר ר' יודן.  
 גחתי השמש הוא דאין לו, אגבז למעלה  
 מן השמש יש לו וזהו תורה, דכתיב  
 ה' קנני ואשית דרכו במשלה כגל

"R. Yudan said, anything under the sun, he can reject, but above the sun that is his, And that is what the Torah is, as it is said, Prov. 8, 22. 'The Lord made me as the beginning of His way.'"

In fact we are assured that the Torah is one exception to Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes anyway, an exception derived by some interesting exegesis.<sup>2</sup>

כך היה נראה צריך לומר מה יתרון  
 לאדם בכל עמלו יכול אפי' בעמלו של  
 תורה בכלל, וזהו ואמר איזו אמר  
 הכתוב בכל עמל ושתק היינו אומרים אפי'  
 בעמלה של תורה, כשהוא אומר בכל  
 עמלו, בעמלו שהוא אינו מועיל,  
 אגבז בעמלה של תורה מועיל.

"It was necessary for Solomon to say, 'What profit hath a man for all his labors' because the verse may be taken to mean the labor of Torah altogether, they returned and they said, If the verse had said, 'for all labor' and stopped, they might say even the labor of the Torah. But as he said, 'all his labor', it means, the labor with which he does not occupy himself (gives him no profit). But with the labor of the Torah man does occupy himself."

1. PK. 68b
2. PK 68b

But the Torah is not labor in the unpleasant sense of that word. It cannot be considered by any stretch of the imagination as something burdensome. The Midrash comments the verse in Proverbs 3, 17. "All her paths are peace" and says that this refers to the Torah. God wanted the Torah to be received in peace, to be the source of peace.<sup>1</sup>

אמר הקב"ה התורה כולה שלום, ולמי  
אני נותנה לאומה שהיא אוהבת שלום,  
מה' כל נתיבותיה שלום (משלי ג)

"The Holy one, blessed be He, said, the Torah is altogether peace. And to whom shall I give it? To a people that loves peace."

And so we read that God did not give the Torah to the Children of Israel immediately after the Exodus when they were murmuring and fighting but waited until all was at peace and then revealed himself on Mt. Sinai and gave the Torah.<sup>2</sup>

Again we see, that the Torah could be no burden. The Torah was to refresh and give life to the people. The verse from the Song of Songs is so interpreted.<sup>3</sup>

רפדני בתפוחים כהן  
אל דברי תורה שרתן טוב כתפוחים

"Refresh me with apples' Songs 2, 5.  
These refer to the words of the Torah  
whose fragrance is like the apple's."

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1. PK. 105b  
2. ibid.  
3. PK. 101b

The Torah is ever new; its freshness is never diminished.<sup>1</sup>

ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני (שמי' א')  
וכי ביום הזה באו, אלא כשתהא  
למד תורה לא יהא בעיניך ישנים  
אלא כאילו היום ניתנה תורה,

"On this day they came to the wilderness of Sinai.' EX. 19, 2. And does it mean that on this day they came? But, to point out that when one studies Torah, it should not appear in eyes as ancient but as if on that very day the Torah was given."

Also it is without end.<sup>2</sup>

ומפט מה נתנה במדבר, מה המדבר  
הזה אין לו סוף, כך דברי תורה אין  
להם סוף,

"And why was it given in the wilderness? Just as the wilderness is without end so the Torah is endless."

For the Torah is needed to maintain man. It upholds the one who makes use of it.<sup>3</sup>

דברי תורה נמשלו לזין, מהין  
הזה מתקיים את הבעלים כן דברי  
תורה מתקיימין למי שהוא עמל  
בן כל ערכן.

1. PK. 107a

2. PK. 107a

3. PK. 102 a and b

"The words of the Torah may be compared to wine.  
Just as wine upholds its possessors, so the  
words of the Torah upholds those who concern  
themselves with them in all their needs."

But the Torah is also like fire and those who occupy themselves with  
it should realize this.<sup>1</sup>

Consuming, but rather  
in the midst of  
magnificent  
flaming fire

כל מי שבא לעסוק בתורה יראה עצמו  
כאלו עומד באש לכל אור מים  
אש דת למו (דברים לג ב')

"Anyone who occupies himself with the Torah  
should fear for himself, because it is  
as if he stood in fire, for so it is said:  
'At His right hand was a fiery law unto  
them'." Deut. 33, 2.

But great are the rewards for those who occupy themselves with the  
Torah.<sup>2</sup>

שכל מי שהוא עוסק בדברי תורה וב"ת  
זוכה לחסות בצילו של הקדוש

"...all who occupy themselves in the words  
of the Torah and in good deeds merit pro-  
tection in the shade of the Holy One,  
blessed be He."

1. PK. 200a  
2. PK. 140b

Being occupied in study itself is of tremendous merit. It takes the place actually of many of the commands that must remain in abeyance during the Exile.<sup>1</sup>

עכשיו שאין אנו מקריבים קרבנות,  
ומתעסקים בהם, אמר להם הקב"ה  
הואיל ואתם מתעסקים בהם, כאילו אתם  
מקריבים קרבנות,

"..now that we do not offer sacrifices,  
why should we occupy ourselves studying  
about them. The Holy One, blessed be He,  
answers them, 'Because you study about  
them (in the Torah) it is as if you  
offered the sacrifices.'"

Just as the rewards for Torah are great, so the doom that comes to those who forsake the Torah is great. Cities, we are told, are uprooted because of neglect of the Torah and its teachers.<sup>2</sup>

הנה ר' שמעון בן יוחאי אם ראית עיר  
נתדשות במקומן בארץ ישואל, דע  
שלא החזיקו בשכר סופרים ומשנים,  
מה טעם על מה עבדה הארץ וגו' (ירמיה ט"ז)  
מה כתוב בתורה, על עזוב  
את תורת (שם שם יצ')

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1. PK. 60b  
2. PK. 120b

"R. Simeon ben Yochai taught, if you see cities that are destroyed to their foundations in the Land of Israel, know that it is because they did not provide pay for the scribes and the teachers. And why did this happen? Because it is said, 'Wherefore is the land perished' Jer. 9, 11, and after this it says, 'Because they have forsaken my law'." Jer. 9, 12.

The Torah is primary, it is greater than all things. God begs his people to give the Torah primacy over Him. The ethical law stands higher than anything in the universe. God, by implication here, is to be reached only through the Torah. He can be found no other way.<sup>1</sup>

*Important  
metaphor -  
Sicily -*

ל' הוּא וְל' יְרֵמְיָהּ בִּשְׁמִי חֵיָא בַר אַבְבָּא, כְּתִיב  
אֲנִי עָזְבוּ וְתוֹרָתִי לֹא שָׁמְרוּ (יְרֵמְיָהּ י"א) שְׁמַע  
תּוֹרָתִי שָׁמְרוּ הֲלֹא אֲנִי עָזְבוּ וְתוֹרָתִי  
שָׁמְרוּ, חֲמוּק שְׁמִי מִגְּעַעֲקִין בִּה  
הַשְׁאִיר שְׂבָא הִיא בַחֲזִירִין ל'

*Should have been  
more developed*

"R. Huna and R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Hiyya bar Abba, it is written, 'they have forsaken me and have not kept My law', Jer. 16, 11. Would that they would desert Me and keep my Torah....for, if they would desert Me and keep my Torah, the result would be that they would return to Me."

1. PK. 108a



## THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

God revealed Himself to mankind and made known the laws by which men should govern their lives. Those who live according to these laws are the righteous while those who fail to do so are considered in rebellion against the Holy One, blessed be He, and are considered wicked. Some examples of sinners are given us. These are certainly rebels against the moral law.<sup>1</sup>

שלושה הן שנקראו רשעים, ואילו הן,  
הפושט ידו לחבירו, והלואה ואין  
משלם, ומי שהוא בצל  
מחלוקת.

"Three are called sinners: he who stretches out his hand against his fellow, he who lends and does not repay, and he who creates disputes."

While the Master of the world created and governs all things, man is endowed with free will to follow either the טוב, the Good Inclination, or the רע, the Evil Inclination. The Pesikta

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1. PK 189b

does not contain many references to the Yetzers. It takes for granted knowledge of them and the references to them are without extended explanation. Their significance is obvious in such passages as, for example, the following:<sup>1</sup>

וְהוּא שֶׁאֵין דָּוִד כָּל עֲצָמוֹתַי גִּאֲוִנָה  
 ה' מִי כְמוֹן מִצִּיל עַם מִחֶזֶק מִמֶּנּוּ גִּבּוֹרִים לִי  
 זֶה יֵצֶר טוֹב מִיֵּצֶר רָע וְעַל אֲבִין  
 מִגִּזְלוֹשׁ וְכִי יֵשׁ גִּזְלָן גָּדוֹל מִזֶּה

"And that of which David spoke, Psalms 35, 10.  
 'All my bones shall say, who is like unto  
 Thee, Who delivereth the poor from him that  
 is too strong for him..' that is the Good  
 Inclination (delivering) from the Evil  
 Inclination; (for as the verse continues)  
 'Yea, the poor and the needy from him that  
 spoileth him', and is there possible a  
 greater spoiler than this? (the Evil  
 Inclination)."

The exercise of man's will to the way of the Good Inclination  
 causes God to extend his hand in aid. If man but begins to attack  
 the Evil Inclination within him, God helps him in the difficult  
 task.

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1. PK 89b

כִּי כִשְׂלֹג בְּעוֹטֵיךָ, כְּהֹשֵׁעַ יִזְבֹּחַ אֶרֶץ מִיָּמַי לְצוּר  
 גְּבוּהָ עוֹמֵד בַּפִּתְשֵׁת דְּרוֹכִים, וְהָיוּ בֵּט אָדָם  
 כְּכַשְׂלִים בּוֹ, אָמַר לָהֶם הַמֶּלֶךְ מִתְגַּבֵּר  
 קִימְעָה קִימָה עַד שְׁתֵּהָא גְבִיָּא הַשְׁעָה  
 וְאַתָּה מַעֲבִירוֹ מִכּוֹלָם,  
 הִהָד וְהַסִּירוֹתִי אֶת לֵב הָאֲבִן  
 מִבְּשָׂרָכֶם, (יִשְׁקָא לֵב כֵּס)

"For thou hast stumbled in thine iniquity'  
 Hosea 14, 2. R. Simai said, This is like a  
 high rock that stands at the fork of the  
 road, and men stumble thereon. The king  
 said to them, Chip it bit by bit (as much  
 as you can), until the time arrives when  
 I will come and remove it entirely, as it  
 is written, 'And I will take away the  
 stony heart out of your flesh.'  
 Ezekiel 36, 26."

Sin makes its first appearance in the world with Adam's  
 rebellion against God's command in the garden of Eden. This sin  
 brought about his fall. And in his fall, mankind that came  
 after him were to see the inevitable consequences of accepting  
 evil instead of good. God almost pathetically insists that He  
 cannot help Himself. The decision was not in His hands. The  
 consequences are automatic and irrevocable.<sup>2</sup>

אֶהְיֶה אָדָם הַרְשֵׁן הַכִּנְסָנִי לָגֶן  
 עֵדֶן וְצִוִּיתִי עָלָיו וְעָבַר עַל צִוִּי  
 וְדָנְנוּ בְּגִירוּשֵׁין וְדָנְתִין בְּשִׁילּוּחִין  
 וְקִנְטִי עָלָיו אֵיכָה

1. PK 165a  
 2. PK 119b

"Said the Holy One, blessed be He, I brought Adam into the garden of Eden and I gave him command and he transgressed against My command. Therefore, I condemned him to be driven forth, I condemned him to be sent away. But I mourned for him א'כח."

And this sin removed power for Adam for;<sup>1</sup>

עד שלא יהא אדם נוגטין לו א'מח  
ויראה, וכיון שהאז חוטא נוגטין עליו  
א'מח ויראה

"Until he sinned, fear and dread were given over to Adam; but when he sinned, he was given over to power and dread."

Not only this but Adam's stature became lessened by his action.<sup>2</sup>

באותה שעה גרעה קומתו  
של אדה"ר עד שנעשיג של  
מאה אמה

"And that instant Adam's stature was diminished to a hundred cubits."

And Adam was well aware that it was not God but himself that he should blame for his fate. He knew the consequences when he sinned.

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1. PK 44b  
2. PK 45a

למה אהל'ר דומה, לחולה שנכנס הרופא  
 אצלו, ואמר לו סדון גאכל ופלדון לא  
 גאכל, וכיון שעבר על דבריו גרם  
 מיגה לעצמו, נכנעו קרוביו אצלו,  
 א"א לא גאמר שהרופא עובר על דין  
 מדת הדין א"א חס ושלום,  
 שגרמתי מיגה לעצמי

"To what is Adam compared? To one sick  
 to whom a physician goes and says to  
 him, this food you may eat, and this  
 food you may not eat. And when the  
 patient fails to obey and transgresses  
 he brings death to himself. When his  
 relatives came to him and said, Did  
 the physician decree your fate? He  
 answered, God forbid, I brought death  
 to myself...."

So it was with Adam. He was expressly commanded and trans-  
 gressed knowing the penalty. He is the prototype. All men since  
 are like him. They know sin; they have the choice; they bring  
 penalty on themselves.

And so it was with Israel. We read, so long as Israel did not  
 rebel, her people were not afraid...they had mastery over fear.  
 But when they sinned and rebelled against God, they were afraid  
 and could not gaze upon even the face of Moses who was the  
 representative of God:

ואמר אבא בר כהנא, שבע מחיצות של  
 אש היו בוססות זו בזו והיו ישרות  
 ואינם ולא בתיירות, ולא בגפחותים,  
 וכיון שחטאו אפילו פני המסרסר  
 לא היו יכולים להסתכל.

"R. Abba bar Kahana said, Seven courses of  
 fire there were intermingling with each other  
 and Israel saw and had no fear and was not  
 afraid; but when they sinned, they were un-  
 able to gaze upon even the face of the inter-  
 mediary (Moses)."

God cannot be unmindful of sin because it weakens his power.

Righteousness, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> strengthens it.

Just as punishment came irrevocably to Adam for his sin, so  
 rewards and punishments came to all men for their reactions to  
 God's commands. The righteous are destined for rewards in this  
 world and the next. The Pesikta makes an interesting interpreta-  
 tion of Psalms 16, 11.<sup>3</sup>

שבע שמחות את פניך יהוה ישי  
 לא גהי קורא כן, אלא שבע שמחות,  
 אלה שבע שמחות של צדיקים  
 שהן עתידין להקביל פני השכינה

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1. PK 45a
  2. Vid. page
  3. PK 179b

"Th Thy presence is the fulness of joy'  
do not read it so, שֶׁבַע, but, שֶׁבַע ,  
the seven joys, the seven joys of the  
righteous when they will in the future  
pay their respects before the divine  
presence."

The rewards of the righteous are without measure, and similarly,  
the doom of the wicked is tremendous.<sup>1</sup>

צדקתך כהררי אל, מה הרים הללו  
אין להם סוף, כך אין סוף למתן  
שכרן של צדיקים לעתיד לבא,  
ומתן שכרן של רשעים תהום רבה.  
מה התום הזה אין לו חקר, כך אין  
חקר למדת פורענות של רשעים  
לעתיד לבא.

"Thy righteousness is like the mighty  
mountains', Ps. 36, 7. Just as these  
mountains have no bounds, so the reward  
to be given in the future to the righteous  
will be without end. And the payment of  
the wicked will be the great deep. And  
just as this deep cannot be measured, so  
the punishment to be meted out to the  
wicked in the future cannot be measured."

For inevitably, reward is the natural consequence of righteous-  
ness and cannot come from evil. We read further:<sup>2</sup>

מה ההרים הללו נזרעים ונושם  
פירות, כך מעשיהם של צדיקים נושם  
פירות, מה תהום הזה אין נזרע  
ואין נושם פירות, כך מעשיהם  
של רשעים אינם נושם פירות.

1. PK 73b

2. Ibid.

"Just as these mountains are seeded and yield fruit, so the deeds of the righteous yield fruit.....and just as this deep is not seeded and cannot yield fruit, so the deeds of the wicked cannot yield fruit."

It is pointed out that while the Psalm tells us "The righteous shall inherit the earth" (37, 29), we are not informed of the position of the wicked. This is succinctly described as follows:<sup>1</sup>

...והושעים היכן הן פורחין, פורחין באויר.

"...and the wicked, where do they exist?  
They hang in the air."

It is further demonstrated that while reward and punishment are inevitable, God favors the righteous by making the punishment for such sins they may commit take a lesser significance than the rewards they are to receive. So also, the wicked are given the reward for their meagre good deeds in order to prepare the way for the punishment they so richly deserve.<sup>2</sup>

ו' ישמאלא" הצדיקים שהם עושים את הגורל שנגנה  
מהררי אל, הקב"ה עושה להם צדקה כהררי אל, אבל הושעים  
שגין עושין את הגורל, שנגנה בהררי אל, הקב"ה מדקדק  
עמם עד תהום רבה, ד' עקבה א"ן אלן ואלן הקב"ה  
מדקדק עמם, מדקדק עם הצדיקים וגורל מהם  
כיצט מעשים רעים שעושין בעולם הזה בשביל לאן  
לקן שכר טוב לעתיד לבוא וכן משפיע טובה ושלום  
לרשעים בעולם הזה ואלו להם מינוס מעשים טובים שעושין  
בעולם בעולם בשביל ליפוצ מהם לעתיד לבא

1. PK 1b.

2. PK 73a. This is given a slightly different form also in 161b.



"R. Ishmael says, The righteous who observe the Torah that was given them from the mountains of God are dealt with righteousness as great as the mountains of God by the Holy One, blessed be He; but the wicked who do not observe the Torah that was given on the mountains of the Lord, are humiliated by the Holy One, blessed be He, to the great deep.

R. Akiba says, The Holy One, blessed be He, humiliates them both. He humiliates the righteous and exacts payment from them for the few evil deeds they have committed in this world in order to give them a goodly reward in the time to come. And similarly he gives abundant goodness and contentment to the wicked in this world and pays them for the few good deeds they have here performed in order to punish them in the time to come."

R. Akiba's exposition reveals the difficulties that must have disturbed those who see the righteous suffer and the wicked flourish. The question is asked, why did God create both the righteous and the evil doers and we are told:<sup>1</sup>

כדי שיהא מצורין לא אלא על אצל

"...in order that the one (the righteous) shall atone for the other (the wicked)."

In other words, it is the work of the righteous that justifies the existence of the world and overcomes the deeds of the wicked.

- the great mystery of our mutual

responsibility for each other -  
1. PK 191a.  
of our being a single "body"

(In this connection it is also worthy of note to consider the statements with regard to the rich and the poor.<sup>1</sup>

חפץ מה ברא הקב"ה עניים ועשירים,  
כדי שיהיו מתפרנסים אלו מאלו

"Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, create rich and poor? In order that the poor may be sustained by the rich."

Poverty, according to this, was created to present an opportunity for righteousness.)

However, despite the irrevocability of punishment for doing evil, despite the fact that we are so often assured that the punishment of the Holy One, blessed be He, is inevitable, the way is open for redemption. The distance between heaven and hell is narrow, and the wicked can be saved from hell.<sup>2</sup>

חפץ מה ברא הקב"ה גהינם וגן  
עדן, כדי שיהיו מצילוג זו מזו,  
וכמה ריוח יש ביניהם, ליוחנן א'  
כואל, ל' חנינא אמה טפח,  
ורבנן אמרי שתייהן שווה.

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1.. PK 191b.

2. PK 191b.

"Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, create both heaven and hell? In order that they (the wicked) should be rescued from one to the other. And how much is the distance between them? R. Jochanon said, a wall's thickness. R. Chanina said, a handbreadth. The Rabbis said, they are both joined together."

The way for this redemption is through  $\alpha\lambda\iota\omega\lambda$  and the Holy One, blessed be He, points out that way Himself.

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## R E P E N T A N C E

Sin is to the Rabbis rebellion against God. The only forgiveness is the result of תשובה . Nothing else can purify from sin. To the unrepentant God says,

"For if thou wash thee with lye and use exceeding much soap, yet thy guilt remains a spot before me." Jer. 2, 22.<sup>1</sup>

No form of expiation approaches repentance in efficacy.

שאלו לחכמה חוטא בה עונשו (א"ל חטאים תרדף רעה כחשד ירמיה)  
שאלו לנבואה חוטא בה עונשו (א"ל הנפש החטאת הא גמולת כחשד ירמיה)  
שאלו לתורה חוטא בה עונשו, א"ל יביא אשם ויגכפרו לו  
הה"ד ונרצה לו לכפר עליו טיקח אדני שאלו להקדשה  
חוטא בה עונשו, א"ל יעשה גשובה ויגכפרו  
בו

"Men asked Wisdom, What is the doom of the sinner? (It answered, 'Evil pursues sinners' Pr. 13, 21; they asked Prophecy the same question) and it answered, 'The soul that sins shall die' Ezek. 18, 4; they asked the Law and it answered, 'Let him bring a

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1. PK 156b

trespass offering and it shall be forgiven him', as it is said, 'And it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him; Lev. 1, 4. They asked the Holy One, blessed be He, and he answered, 'Let him repent and it shall be forgiven him'.<sup>1</sup>

This is not to be understood as Moore<sup>2</sup> and Schechter<sup>3</sup> point out, that the three parts of the Bible contradict each other but to indicate that, while there is a place for expiation by suffering the consequences of sin, by death and by sacrifice, repentance is greater than any other form.

תשובה must not be understood as mere regret, a mere psychic event. It is 'as real as life and death'.<sup>4</sup> In Bereshith Rabbah<sup>5</sup> it is pointed out that Repentance was one of the pre-existent bases of the universe. In this the Rabbis follow the ideas of the Prophets whose conception of repentance is "turning back to the allegiance and obedience of God, corresponding to their conviction that moral as well as religious evils are in their essence falling away from God and his righteous will. They use for such a turning back from wrong-doing and return to God the every day Hebrew word for 'turn about, go back' (שׁוּב) leaving it to the context of their indictment to make the

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1. PK 158b. The part of the passage enclosed in parenthesis is in Buber's note to the passage and should be so added.
  2. Moore, I p. 533f.
  3. Schechter, p. 294
  4. Slonimsky, Notes.
  5. Bereshith Rabbah, I, 4.

application plain. By this association, the transparent primary sense of repentance in Judaism is always a change in man's attitude toward God and in the conduct of life, a religious and moral reformation of the people or the individual."<sup>1</sup>

Martin Buber<sup>2</sup> calls תשובה, as the rabbis understand it, a human event taking on a world wide character. It is the greatest form of human creativeness, because it involves, not merely a return to sinlessness, but a shift in the direction toward God. אלהים places the repentant sinner on the path to God.

א'ר'פנחס זמרה הוא טוב שהוא ישר זמרה  
הוא ישר שהוא טוב, על כן יורה חסידים בדרכו  
שהוא מורה להם דרך שיצאו תשובה,

"R. Pinhas says, Why must He be called Good if He is called Upright; why is He called Upright if He is already called Good? Because the verse continues, 'therefore will he instruct sinners in the way.' For he teaches them the way that they may do repentance..."<sup>3</sup>

Repentance is an act that causes God to place the repentant sinner on the road toward Him.

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1. Moore I, 507.
  2. Quoted by Slonimsky, Notes.
  3. PK 158b

The Ten Days of Penitence begin with ראש השנה , the day of the rebirth of the world. The Pesikta gives us the frequently quoted passage concerning the three books containing the names of the righteous, the wicked and the בינונים , those who are in between. And concerning the last it states,<sup>1</sup>

אל הבינונים שנתן להם הקב"ה עשרה  
ימים שבין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים  
אם עשו תשובה נכתבים עם הצדיקים.  
ואם לא נכתבים עם הרשעים.

"to whom the Holy One blessed be He grants ten days, those between ראש השנה and יום כפור , if they do תשובה they are inscribed with the righteous and if not they are inscribed with the wicked."

Thus the rebirth of the man who does אשמה coincides with the rebirth of the world.<sup>2</sup>

מעלה אני עליכם כאלו היום  
בראתי אתכם בריית חדשה.

"I consider it to you as if today, (Rosh Hoshanah) I re-formed you in a new creation."

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1. PK 153a
  2. PK 153b

God, the creator of גשורה, desires it. Access to  
is without any barrier. The Pesikta says,<sup>1</sup>

נמשלה תשובה בים, מה הים הזה  
לצולם פגוח, כך שער תשובה לצולם  
דם פותחים ואצל פ"כ לא יקא אדם  
חושב בלבו אחטא ואשוב ואחטא  
ואשוב ויה"כ מכפרה

" is compared to the sea. Just as the sea  
is forever wide and open so are the gates of  
גשורה always open. (But, nevertheless, a man  
must not bear in mind to sin and repent and sin  
again and atone on יום כפור).

It is also told us that God may be approached at any time. There  
are no special occasions set aside.<sup>2</sup>

אף שער תפילה לצולם פגוחים...

".. the gates of prayer also are always open."

All God seeks is true repentance. The verse in Psalm 34, 19 is  
quoted,

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken  
heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit."<sup>3</sup>

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1. PK 157a Text in parenthesis added in Euber's note.
  2. PK 157b
  3. PK 158b



The Midrash goes on to say,

כל שפסול בבהמה הכשיר באדם, בבהמה  
פסול, עורג או שבור או חרוף או יבלת ניקמ כג' ב"ד  
הכשיר באדם, לב שבור ונדכה (הגלים נא י)

"...that which makes an animal unfit makes a man fit (for redemption). In an animal, unfitness is due its being one of those described in the verse, 'Blind or broken, or maimed or having a wen, etc.' These make a man fit. 'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise'."

Blemishes make an animal unfit for God, but they make man acceptable because they are the signs of his true repentance, as the Midrash goes on to point out,<sup>1</sup>

אם הדיוט משמש בכלי שבור גנאי הוא לו  
אבל כל שימושין כלים שבורים, קרוב ה'  
לשבור לבנהגים לו ש'הרופ' לשבור' לב (שם קמ"ט)  
לב שבור ונדכה נא י' לפיכך הוסיף  
מזהיר את ישראל, ואומר, לבן, שבורה ישראל.

"if an ordinary person make use of a broken vessel it is a matter of shame for him, but with the Holy One, blessed be He, it is not so. All those who attend Him are broken vessels: 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are broken of heart' Ps. 34, 19, 'who healeth the broken in heart' Ps. 147, 3, 'A broken and a contrite heart' Ps. 51, 19, therefore Hosea warns Israel and says to them 'Return, O Israel!'"

More than  
repentance -  
a different  
plane of being  
where values  
are reversed  
& where  
tragedy is the  
mark of man

1. PK 158b

It is further demonstrated that in his desire for man's repentance, God's ways are not like those of man. Earthly judges mete out harsh treatment to the confessed sinner while God gives redemption after *אסור*. The sinners who repent are compared to robbers.<sup>1</sup>

לדעתן שהוא טרן לפני הקוסטיר, כל זמן  
שהוא מגריר הוא לוקה, הודק הוא נוטל פרקודה,  
(אבל הקב"ה אינו כן, אלא עד שלא הודה  
הוא נוטל פרקודה) הודק הוא נוטל  
דימוס,

"like robbers who are being examined by the torturer. As long as he is stubborn, he is smitten, but when he confesses, he gets the furcilla (is doomed to die); (not so acts the Lord, as long as the offender does not confess, he gets the furcilla), but when he confesses, he is pardoned."

The idea is elaborated by the Midrash in another passage where direct comparison is made with Israel by bringing citations from Hosea.

God again is compared to the earthly judge.<sup>2</sup>

אבל הקב"ה אינו כן אלא בתחילה הוא קורא אנגלין  
ויעשו להם מסכה (הושע יג) ואח"כ הוא מכה אותם,  
הוכה אפרים שרשם יבש נפש וישיא ואח"כ הוא נאמן  
להם כחם, צורצון אפרים צפונה חטא נפש ישיא  
ואח"כ הוא נאמן להם פרקודה גאשם שומרון כי  
מרתה בגלהים (ישעיהו) ואח"כ הוא מחזירין  
בתשובה, שובה ישראל,

1. PK 159a Text in parenthesis added in Buber's note.
2. PK 159b

"But God is not so. First he reads his charge, 'and now they sin still more and have made them a golden image' Hosea 13, 2; then he smites them, 'Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up' ibid. 9, 16; then he imposes upon them as it were a burden, 'the guilt of Ephraim is bound up in a bundle, its sin is laid in store' ibid. 13, 12; and after that he passes sentence upon them, 'Samaria shall pay the penalty, because it has rebelled against its God' ibid. 14, 1; and finally he brings them back in repentance, 'Return, O Israel' ibid. 14, 2,"

This is because God wants *חַיִּים* but,<sup>1</sup>

*אין הקב"ה חפץ במותן של רשעים,*

"God does not desire the death of the sinner."

Verses from Ezekiel<sup>2</sup> and Amos<sup>3</sup> are cited which substantiate this statement.

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1. PK 157a
  2. Ezekiel 33:11 "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel."
  3. Amos 5:4 "Seek ye me, and live."

Only if the sinner persists in his wrongdoing and attempts to hide the fact will he suffer the consequences; but if he freely confess in doing *אשובה* he will be dealt with mercifully:<sup>1</sup>

מכסה פשעו לא יצליח ומודה ועוזב  
ירחם, א"ר יצחק ומודה על חטא  
ועוזב ירחם,

"...as it is written, 'He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy.' R. Isaac said: 'and confesseth' for the sake of 'and forsaketh', he will be dealt with mercifully."

No sin, says the Midrash, is so great that *גטענה* will not bring forgiveness. Even the greatest of sins, denying God, can be washed away with *אשובה*.<sup>2</sup>

א"ר יודה בר סימון, שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך  
אפילו כפרת בעיקה

"R. Judah bar Simon said: Return, O Israel to the Lord, your God, even though you have been guilty of denying God."

No amount of sins, however great, should dismay a man from turning to *אשובה*. The Pesikta takes the verse from Job and continues:<sup>3</sup>

כי הוא יודע מה שוא וירא און ולא  
הגבולן כמציאות בכוהג בעולם אדם עושה  
גדישים גדישים של עבירות, ועושה אשובה  
כביכול וירא און ולא הגבולן.

1. PK 159a
2. PK 163b
3. PK 163 bf

"For He knoweth base men; and when He seeth iniquity will he not then consider it.' Job. 11, 11. This is like a man who commits heaps and heaps of sins and then repents. Just as if, he saw sin; despite that shall he not consider (to עושה גשורה)?

Because God eagerly seeks an opportunity to grant forgiveness. To illustrate this, the Midrash tells a beautiful legend of the time of the destruction of the Temple.

א"ר יונתן, שלש עשרה שנים ומחצה עשתה שכנה  
שחיה בהר הזיתים ומכרזת ג' פעמים ואומר  
(שובו בנים שובבים ארפה משובו ג' כם ניהיה ג' כם)  
וכיון שדא חזרו התחילה פורחת באויר ואומרת  
אלכה ואשובה אל מקומי הראשון עז  
אשר יאשמו בצי דהם ישחרני (משע ה"ט)

"R. Jonathon said: The שכנה tarried on Mt. Olives for thirteen and a half years and announced three times saying ('Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding.' Jer. 3, 22; and when despite this they did not return, the שכנה began to fly in the air and to say, 'I will return to my place until they acknowledge their guilt, and seek My face; in their trouble they will seek Me earnestly'."

Even at that tragic time, redemption would be given the children of Israel if they would turn from their sins to God. God seeks but the opportunity to grant redemption. The Pesikta tells us that God says,<sup>2</sup>

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1. PK 115a. Text in parenthesis from Buber's note.
  2. PK 163b

פתח לי פתח כהררר טל מחט ואני  
פוגח לכם פתח שיהיו אהליי  
ובצרייך נכנסין בו

"Open unto me the door (of repentance), be it even as narrow as the sharp point of the needle, I will open to you an entrance through which tents and great timbers can pass."

Here God is actually begging man to *תשובה*. He assures him that the minute man considers *תשובה*, accepts it in his mind, it is effective. Its effect is instantaneous. It works like *הקף עין*, "the wink of an eye."

Great and powerful is *תשובה*. The Midrash tells us that should something evil befall a man, he should immediately take refuge in it in order to be delivered.<sup>2</sup>

ואם נדחוק לך יום רע, ראה אין  
לעשות תשובה ולהציל ממנו.

"...and if an evil day be joined to you, examine how you may do *תשובה* and be delivered."

No greater evidence of the great power of *תשובה* may be brought than the fact that it is one of the three great forces that can avert the decree of God's punishment.<sup>3</sup>

שלושה הן שמבטלין את הגזירה  
ואלו הן, הגמילה, והתשובה, והצדקה.

1. Pk 163b
2. PK 191a
3. PK 191a

"Three are they that make naught the decree,  
prayer, גְּשׁוּבָה and charity."

Its power is such R. Aha points out in interpreting Deut. 31, 17:

"Then my anger shall be kindled against them in  
that day, etc."

that the significance of the words "in that day" must be understood  
as follows:<sup>1</sup>

יום אחד היה חרון אפו של הקב"ה,  
א"ל עשו גְּשׁוּבָה פֶּשֶׁן

"... Only for one day would the anger of the  
Holy One, blessed be He, endure if they  
would do גְּשׁוּבָה, is their explanation."

For גְּשׁוּבָה has the power of being able to move God from the divine  
attribute of justice to the divine attribute of mercy:

... גְּשׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, עַד שֶׁהוּא עוֹמֵד  
בַּמִּדָּת רַחֲמִים (שֶׁנֶּבֶן בְּעוֹד שֶׁהִשְׁכִּיחַ בַּמִּדָּת  
הַשֵּׁם, שֶׁהוּא מַדַּת רַחֲמִים וְעַזְבוּ מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם  
הַרְצִים טוֹם שִׁבְגָּ וַיֵּאָחַז בַּמַּשְׁפָּט יְדִיו  
וַיַּעֲלֶה לַמִּדָּת אֱלֹהִים שֶׁהוּא מַדַּת הַדִּין)

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1. PK 131a
  2. PK 164a. Text in parenthesis from Buber's note.

"...Return, O Israel, to the Lord Thy God' until He stands on the divine attribute of mercy..."  
 (return while the  $\text{שכינה}$  is still  $\text{במדת השם}$  for that is the attribute of mercy; and forsake your evil deeds before He siezes Judgment and mounts the  $\text{גדל גלים}$  which is the attribute of judgment.)

God's forgiveness is inevitable if there be  $\text{שובה}$ . He even points out the way to reach Him when the sinner is doubtful about his reception. He is told to have no shame but to come forward, confess, forsake the past and turn back to God. The Pesikta tells us how God urges the people to repent through Jeremiah and how He tells them through the Prophet that only false shame stands between them and reconciliation with God:<sup>1</sup>

אהרבה ליתחיה לך אמור להם לישואל, עשו גשובה  
 בא ואמר להן לישואל, א"ל רבינו, הלאק את עושין גשובה  
 באילו פנים באים לפני המקום, לא הכעסו אוגו, ולא  
 הקנטו אוגו, אוגם ההרים והגבעות שהיט עובדים  
 שם עבודה זרה, איין קיימין, על ראשי ההרים יזבח  
 וגו' (הושע ד' יט) ... ~~שכינה~~ בבשתינו וגו' (יהושע ג' כ"ט)  
 בא לפני הקב"ה ואמר כן, אמר לו לך אמור  
 להן, אם אתם באים אצלי, לא אצל אביכם  
 שבשמים אתם באים, כי הייתי לישואל  
 לאב ואפרים בכור הוא (שם לא ט')

"Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Jeremiah, 'Go and bid Israel do repentance.' He went and delivered his message. Thereupon they said to him, 'With what face can we enter before His presence? Have we not made him angry; have we

1. PK 165a (Shecter's translation p. 324f).



not provoked his wrath? Are not these mountains and hills upon which we worshipped the idols still existing.....We lie down in our shame and our confusion covers us.' He came back to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said so (repeating their answer). Then God said to him, 'Go back and tell them, "If you return to Me, is it not to your Father in Heaven that you come? For I am a Father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn".'"

Even if the sins be of such a nature that they touch God himself, they should not prevent a man from seeking forgiveness in לפניו. The words, אלהינו, "unto the Lord, thy God" are interpreted to mean that even when a man denied the very existence of God or committed blasphemy,<sup>1</sup> even then he should not be ashamed but should seek forgiveness.<sup>2</sup>

שבטולם אדם מבזה את חבירו ברבים ולאחר  
זמן מבקש להתרצות לו, וזה אומר לו, אתה  
מבזה אותי ברבים ומגרצה לי בית וביתך,  
לך והביא אותך האנשים שבדיג אותי לפניהם,  
ואני מגרצה לך, אבל הקב"ה אינו כן,  
אלא אדם נאמד ומקורף ומגדף בטורף, והקב"ה  
אומר לו עשה גטובה בית וביתך ואני  
מקבלך.

"It is customary when a man insults his neighbor publicly and after some time seeks reconciliation with him, the latter says to him, 'You insulted me publicly and now you wish to placate me privately?' But the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so. Man rises and blasphemes in the market place, and the Holy One, blessed be He, says to him, 'Do repentance between thee and Me and I will receive thee'."

1. vid. supra.  
2. PK 163b.

As it has already been demonstrated by inference, Israel is the special recipient of God's favor through גְּשׁוּבָה . This is specifically brought out by the Pesikta in the following passage:

כְּתִיב, יֵשׁ אֵל "פְּנִים אֵלַי כְּמִצְוַת יְיָ  
וְכִתְּבֵנִי, אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵשׁ אֵל פְּנִים (דְּבָרִים י"ג)  
עוֹשֶׂה גְּשׁוּבָה נוֹשֵׂא פְּנִים,  
יִכְוֹל לִכְתֹּב, גַּ' אֵלַי, וְלֹא לְאַחֵר  
אֲחֵר.

"It is written, 'The Lord will show favor to thee' Num. 6, 26, and yet in contradiction it is written, 'He regardeth not persons' Deut. 10, 17. He who does penitence, He shows him favor. It might be inferred that God's favor is implied for all. But the text teaches us, 'to thee' and not to any other people."

And the Midrash goes on to make very clear the fact that God's favor comes to Israel but only with גְּשׁוּבָה . For:

לֹא עָשׂוּ גְּשׁוּבָה אֵין נוֹשֵׂא פְּנִים

"If they do no repentance, I do not show them favor."

And despite this, Israel is overburdened with sin and still fears to approach God, and asks:<sup>1</sup>

אֲמַר יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ, רַבּוֹן הַעֲוֹנוֹת,  
אִם עָשִׂים אֲנִי גְּשׁוּבָה, מִקְבֵּלְנִי אַתָּה

1. PK 160a

"Israel says before the Holy One, blessed be He,  
Master of the Universe, if we do penitance, wilt  
Thou receive us?"

And the Midrash has God answer in his love for Israel:

"The repentance of Cain I received and yours  
shall I not accept?"<sup>1</sup>

"The repentance of the men of Anathoth....<sup>2</sup>

The repentance of Ahab....<sup>3</sup>

The repentance of the men of Nineveh....<sup>4</sup>

The repentance of Manassah....<sup>5</sup>

The repentance of Jehania....<sup>6</sup>

I received and yours shall I not accept."

He even assures Israel that their repentance needs no surety. God  
accepts it freely at its face value:<sup>7</sup>

אמר ישראל לפני הקב"ה, רבון העולמים,  
אם עושים אנו גטובה, מי מעיד בנו, א"ל  
לרעה את נענה דק עד, ולטובה  
אין נענה זכר עד,

"Israel said before the Holy One, blessed be He,  
'Master of the Universe, if we do repentance,  
who will testify for us', He said unto them,  
'For evil I will need for you testimony; but  
for good, I need no testimony for you'."

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1. PK 160a
  2. PK 160b
  3. PK 160b
  4. PK 161a
  5. PK 162a
  6. PK 162b
  7. PK 164b

In fact, God himself, will be their witnesses and act in their defense and the binding of Isaac will be remembered in their behalf.<sup>1</sup>

כך יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהי שבשעה שיהא  
בנו של יצחק נכנסים לדי צרה ואין להם  
מי ילמד עליהם סניגוריא, אתה אהא מלמד  
עליהם סניגוריא, ה' יראה, את נזכר להם  
עקידתו של יצחק אביהם,  
ואת מלד עליהם רחמים,

"May it be Thy will, O Lord, my God, when the children of Isaac come to time of trouble and no one is present to act in their defense, do Thou act in their defense, 'the Lord will show'. May the binding of their father, Isaac, be remembered concerning them, and be Thou filled with mercy toward them."

Israel is cleansed by repentance, and the Midrash takes the verse from Jeremiah (Thou hope of Israel, the Lord. 17, 13) and translates

הקוה as a place of cleansing waters:<sup>2</sup>

מה המקוה הזה מטהר את הטמאים,  
אף הקדש מטהר את ישראל.

"Just as this מקוה cleanses the unclean, so will the Holy One, blessed be He, cleanse Israel."

And Israel is told what great power גשורה has:<sup>3</sup>

אלוהו הו' ישראל עושים גשורה יום  
אחד, הו' נגאדין

1. PK 154b Note (Buber)
2. PK 157b
3. PK 163b

"Would that Israel would do repentance but for one day and they would be redeemed."

This tremendous power of גשורה is constantly stressed. David is made to realize it when he says to God:<sup>1</sup>

רבן העולמים, אם את מקבלני בגשובה,  
יודע את ששלמה בנ עומד, ובונה בית  
המקדש, ובונה את המזבח, ומקרב  
עלי כל הקרבנות,

"Master of the Universe, if you will accept me in repentance, I know that Solomon, my son, will arise and build the Temple, and build the alter, and offer on it all the sacrifices."

Adam, too, finds out about the tremendous power of repentance when he meets Cain:<sup>2</sup>

... כשהוא יוצא סגור בו אדם הראשון, אל מה  
נעשה בדיןך, אל עשימי גשובה ופירשתי,  
באורו טעה הגחיל אדם הראשון טופח על  
פניו ואומר כך הוא כחה של גשובה  
ולא הייתי יודע

"...as he (Cain) went out, he met Adam. The latter said to him, 'What was done in your case?' He replied, 'I did repentance and was freed. At that time, Adam slapped his own face and said, 'Such is the power of גשורה and I did not know'."

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1. PK 158a
  2. PK 160a

In such high esteem does God consider those who do repentance that:<sup>1</sup>

מִיֵּן לָזֶה שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה גְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁהַקִּדָּה מַעֲלָה  
עָלָיו, כִּאֲלֹן הוּא עוֹלֶה לְיְרוּשָׁלַיִם וּבֵנָה אֶת  
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּמִקְרִיב עָלָיו כָּל הַקִּרְבָּנוֹת,

"How does the Holy One, blessed be He, consider him who does repentance? It is as if he went to Jerusalem, built there an alter, and offered all the sacrifices upon it."

R. Joshua Ben Levi goes so far to say that אֱלֹהִים will save your children from future suffering because:<sup>2</sup>

אִם קִרְבַּתֶּם לִבְכֶּם בַּגְּשׁוּבָה אֵין אֱלֹהִים  
קוֹרֵץ בְּגִדֵיכֶם עַל בְּנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיכֶם.

"If you tear your hearts in אֲשׁוּבָה you will not be tearing the clothes from your sons and daughters."

For so tremendously great is the power and strength of that it reaches up to the place of the Holy One, blessed be He:<sup>3</sup>

מִנְהַג שֶׁל עוֹלָם אָדָם יוֹרֵה חֵץ כַּמָּה מֵהָלָךְ  
בֵּית כּוֹר אוֹ בֵּית כּוֹרִים, גְּדוֹל כַּתֵּף שֶׁל גְּשׁוּבָה,  
שֶׁמִּגַּעַת עַד כִּסֵּא הַכְּבוֹד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר  
שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֵלֶיךָ.

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1. PK 158a
  2. PK 161b
  3. PK 163b

"When a man shoots an arrow, how far can it travel?  
The distance of a field in which a Khur of seed  
can be sown or perhaps two Khurim, but so great is  
the power of אלהים that it reaches up to the  
Throne of Glory, as it is said, 'Return, O Israel  
(up) to the Lord Thy God.'"

Man's physical powers cannot begin to approximate the tremendous  
spiritual power of אלהים , the great act of human creativeness.

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## ISRAEL AND THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

Israel is the Chosen people of God. The Pesikta abounds with stories, explanations and descriptions of the unique relationship that exists between Israel and God. This, as has been noted in the introduction,<sup>1</sup> has been dealt with exhaustively elsewhere. In discussing Israel and her relationship with God, our Midrash reveals to us many interesting conceptions of the relationship between the chosen people and the other peoples of the world.

It is brought out many times that it is most natural that the Holy One, blessed be He, should select Israel rather than any other nation because, after all, only Israel chose to accept the Torah which was freely offered to all the others first, before Israel had an opportunity to say, "We will do and we will obey."

In fact, we are informed in one passage that the nations of the world actually fled from Sinai, something that Israel could also have done but did not.

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1. Vid. page 3

*Apologizing  
for Chosenness  
& yet feeling  
that there  
is no reason for  
love in the last  
analysis*



כך ברחו כל אומות העולם  
מלפני הקדש ביום מתן תורה.  
יכול אף ישראל כן.

"So the peoples of the world fled before  
the Holy One, blessed be He, on the day  
of the giving of the Torah. Even Israel  
could have done so."

The result therefore is that God makes Israel his people and Moses  
is made to say as if surprised:<sup>2</sup>

כך אמר משה לפני הקדש, רבונו  
של עולם, משבעים אומות שיש לך  
אין אתה מצוה אלא על ישראל

"...Master of the world, of all the seventy<sup>3</sup>  
peoples that are yours, you command me  
only with regard to Israel."

And as if God were answering Moses, we find such passages as:<sup>4</sup>

אך אתם עדי אלהי, ואני אי אלהי  
עדי, כביכול אין אלהי

"If you, (Israel) are my witness, I am  
the Lord. And if you are not my witness,  
it is as if I were not the Lord."

standing for all men

|| God's dependence  
on man for  
his own reality

1. PK. 103b
2. PK. 16a
3. There are always "seventy peoples" in Jewish ethnography.
4. PK. 102b

and:<sup>1</sup>

ולא עוד, אלא בעולם הזה, כל  
מי שעושה מלחמה עמכם,  
כאילו עמי הוא עושה.

"And not only that, but all who war  
with you in this world, it is as if  
they were making war with Me."

So great is the tie that exists between God and Israel. So far  
away are the nations of the world from Israel's position.

The distinction between Israel and the other peoples is well  
established. It is clearly brought out that God separated them  
away from the peoples as one would separate something fine from some-  
thing unworthy. Israel's pre-eminence ethically and morally is  
established.<sup>2</sup>

ר' לוי פתח, והיינו לי קדושים וגו' ואבדיל  
אתכם מן העמים כדכתיב ר' יודן בשם ר' חמא  
ב' חטא וברכיה בש"ר אבהו, אלא אחר ואבדיל  
אומות העולם בכם, לא היגה תקומה לאוה  
אלא, ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים, כזה שהוא  
בורר אתהיפה מן הרעה, א"ל בכל מעשיהם  
ישאל בשונו מן אוה, בחרישתו, ובצרותו,  
ובקצרותו, בעמיו, ובדישתו, ובגרנו,  
וביקביו, ....

1. PK. 187a

2. PK. 46a

"R. Levi began: 'And ye shall be holy unto Me, etc.' 'and I have set you apart from the peoples' Levit. 20,26. R. Yudon in the name of R. Hanna bar Hanina and R. Berahya in the name of R. Abahu: If He said, I will separate the peoples of the world from you, there could have been no existence for the peoples of the earth. But 'and I have set you apart from the peoples' this is like setting apart the beautiful from the evil....R. Ishmael said, In all her actions, Israel differed from the peoples of the world: In her methods of plowing, sowing, gathering, leaving the Omer in the field, in the treading place, in the threshing floor and in the wine-press..."

Because Israel was commanded not to plow with an ox and an ass together;<sup>1</sup> not to sow diverse seeds;<sup>2</sup> not to reap the corners of the field;<sup>3</sup> to leave the forgotten Omer in the field for the needy;<sup>4</sup> not to muzzle the ox in the treading place;<sup>5</sup> and to give liberally to the freed slave from the threshing floor and the wine-press.<sup>6</sup>

But Israel is superior and more worthy than the nations of the world not only because of her ethical and moral supremacy but also because she recognizes God as the source of all blessings and points out to the Almighty that she alone of all the peoples of the world offers benedictions and thanks to Him for His bounty.

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1. Deuteronomy 22, 2.
  2. Ibid. verse 9.
  3. Leviticus 19, 9.
  4. Deut. 24, 19.
  5. Ibid. 25, 4.
  6. Ibid. 15, 14.

אלו אומות העולם שהן אוכלין ואין  
מברכים, אלו ישראל שהם  
אוכלים ומברכים,

"....these are the peoples of the world,  
who eat without making a blessing.....  
these are the people of Israel who eat  
and make blessings."

Israel also points out that the peoples of the world have many  
festivals just as she has; but the way these festivals are  
commemorated are very different. And the difference demonstrates  
the greater worth of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

אומות העולם אתה חברה להם ימים טובים,  
חן אוכלים שותים ופוזזים, ונכנסין לבג  
טרטיות ולבג הקיסיות, ומכעיסין אותך  
בדבריהם ובמעשיהם, אבל ישראל אינו כן, אתה  
נותן להם ימים טובים, ואוכלים ושותים, ושמחים,  
ונכנסין לבג כנסיות ולבג מדרשות, ומרבים  
בתפלות, ומרבים במוספים,

"You give many holidays to the peoples of  
the world and they eat and drink and act  
licentiously and go to their theaters and  
circuses and they anger Thee with their  
words and their deeds. But Israel does not  
do so. You give them holidays; they eat,  
drink and rejoice and they go to their  
synagogues and houses of study, and they  
increase prayers and they increase addi-  
tional prayers....."

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1. PK. 190b.
  2. Pk 190 a and b.

Look how differently we rear our sons, Israel points out. They bring them up to worship idols; while we act in Thy honor.<sup>1</sup>

אומות העולם, אתה נותן להם בן זכר הוא  
 מושך לו ערלה, ומגדיל בלורית, הגדיל  
 הוא מוליכו לבית עץ שלו ומכניסך אבל  
 ישאל אם אתה נותן, לאחד מהם בן זכר  
 הוא מונה ח' ימים ומל אונן, ואם הוא בכור  
 כוהן זשליש'ים יום, הגדיל הוא מוליכו לבג  
 כנסיות ולבג מדרשות, ומברך בכל יום ויום

"If You give to one of the peoples of the earth a son, he stretches out his foreskin; he rears him to wear a wreath; he leads him to his houses of idol worship and angers Thee. But if you grant a son to one of Israel, he waits eight days and circumcises him; if he is a firstborn, he redeems him at thirty days; he rears him and leads him to the synagogues and houses of study; and he praises Thee daily..."

These peoples of the world are said to rejoice when Israel sins and God punishes them. It is as if a favorite child does wrong and is chastised; the other children take a great delight. And so we find the Midrash telling us that in order to confound the joy of the peoples at Israel's sin and punishment, God even minimizes the sin of the worship of the Golden Calf and finds Israel guiltless. The whole incident is dismissed by God after an examination into the matter. The story is related of a Matrona<sup>2</sup> who was suspected of doing wrong with one of the nobility. The king searched out the matter and came to the conclusion that the Matrona was innocent. What did the

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1. PK. 190a.

2. PK. 67b

King do? He made a great feast and placed the man against whom the charge was made at the head of the table that all might see that he was considered guiltless. Our Midrash tells us God did the same with Israel.<sup>1</sup>

כך לפי שהיו אלה מונים את ישראל  
ואומרים להם אתם עשיתם את העגל,  
ובדק הקדש בדברים, ולא מצא בהם חמס,  
לפיכך נעשה שור ראש לכל הקרבנות,  
ההד, שור או כבש או עז ואיל

"So because the peoples of the world charged Israel and said that they had made them the Calf, the Holy One, blessed be He, searched the matters out and found nothing. Therefore he made the ox first of the animals that are sacrificed, as it is written, '...an ox or a lamb or a goat'."

But, after all, sin must not go unpunished; and so R. Joshua warns that sin on Israel's part causes the peoples of the world to rejoice; and not only that, but Israel's sin places her in the power of the other peoples.<sup>2</sup>

ר' יושיע א", צדקה תחמם גוי אלן ישראל  
ומסד לאומים חטאת, הטיה היא לא"ה,  
בשעה שישאל חוטאין שהן חוזרין  
ומשעבדין בקן,

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1. PK. 78b  
2. PK. 12b

"R. Joshua said, 'Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people', Pr. 14, 34. 'Righteousness exalteth a nation', this is Israel, 'but sin is a reproach to any people' means it gives pleasure to the peoples of the world. For when Israel sins, she is enslaved by them."

Israel, however, observes her lot. True, she is chosen of God. True, she is loved by God and is precious to Him. But why, she asks, do these peoples who violate God's laws prosper, while she, obeying God's commandments, suffers.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the Midrash tells us that the peoples of the world egg Israel on to this expression; but at their attack Israel once more expresses her faith in God.<sup>2</sup>

א"ה מוטן ד'שואל ואומרים להם, עד מתי  
אתם מומתים על אלהיכם, ונותנים נפשותיכם  
עליו, ונהרגין עליו, כמה צער הוא מביא עליכם  
בואו לכם אצלנו, ועושין אנו אתכם, דוכסין  
ואפרוכין ואיסטרטיליטין, וישואל נכנסין לבתי  
נכסיות ובתי מדרשות, ונוטלין מט' וקורין בו  
ופטית אליכם והפריתי אתכם והרביתי  
אתכם והקימותי את בריתי אתכם וגו' (ויקרא כ"ט)  
ומתנחמין.

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1. PK. 119b.
  2. PK. 139b.

"...The nations of the world point out to Israel and say to them, how long will you wait upon your God? And give your souls up for Him? And be slain for Him? How much trouble He brings upon you, how much contempt and pain he brings to you. Come to us and we will make for you commanders, prefectures and paved ways. And Israel goes to the synagogues and houses of study and takes out the book of the Torah and reads in it, 'And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you; and will establish My covenant with you', Lev. 26, 9; and she is comforted."

Her faith is strengthened when she is told that her day must come.

This is the day of Esau, but Jacob's day will eventually arrive.<sup>1</sup>

כז כך זמן שאורו של עשו מבהיק בעולם,  
אין אורו של יעקב מפורסם, שקצאורו  
של עשו, נתפרסם אורו של יעקב.

"While Esau's light brightens the world,  
Jacob's light is not uncovered. But  
when Esau's light will set, Jacob's  
light will be revealed."

And when that day arrives, Israel will receive her reward for her  
faithfulness. The nations of the world will look to Israel's holy city,  
Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

כתידה ירושלים לעשות קמילפנס  
לאומות העולם, הן מהזכין לאורה,  
ומה שטעם, והלכו גוים לאורק נשמה

1. PK. 54b.

2. PK. 144b.



"In the future, Jerusalem shall be a torch  
for the nations, and they shall walk by its  
light, as it is said, 'And nations shall  
walk at thy light.' Isaiah 60, 3."

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